

THE PURIM STORY



MEGILAT ESTHER

Mini Megillah

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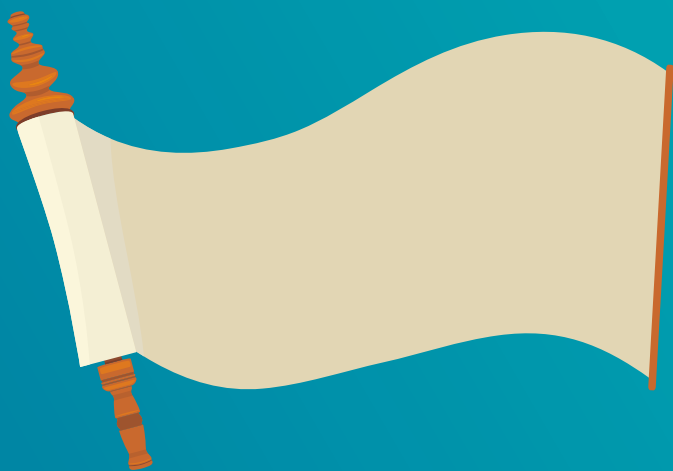
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INTRODUCTION

The story of Megilat Esther reads as more of a modern-day political thriller than a biblical narrative.

The miracles are replaced with manipulation and maneuvering, the heroes engage more in subterfuge than kindness, and the epic speeches are delivered by messengers whispering in the dead of night. It all culminates in the climax where salvation arrives in a sudden twist, a knife in the back of an unsuspecting enemy. It's the kind of twist that works best. It takes first-time readers by surprise but the second time through, they notice enough details that they are amazed they couldn't see it coming.

In order for the twist to work, the narrative needs to get darkest right before the dawn. Megilat Esther lingers on the despondency of the Jewish people in the face of their impending doom. To the very end, Mordechai and Esther believe their plan to be nothing more than a last-ditch Hail Mary effort. The reader becomes more and more invested in their plight, making their sudden salvation feel "earned." In this way, their descent into despair becomes just the first step on their ascent to ecstasy. There is a sudden "Venahafoch hu"—a reversal, where darkness turns to light so quickly that in retrospect, the line between them begins to blur.

Purim sometimes feels like a holiday for kids with its bright costumes and sugared treats. The story at its core, however, is fundamentally mature. It is a story about embracing imperfection and brokenness, and finding the pattern amongst the chaos. It posits that when we are struggling, God is there—just beyond view—struggling too. It teaches us that even at our darkest points, we are just one plot-twist away from being okay.

SUMMARY

Following the destruction of the First Temple, the Jews were exiled from Israel. This exile was prophesied to last 70 years, but both the Jewish people and the Persian King Achashverosh miscalculated. Assuming that the 70 years had passed and God had forgotten the Jewish people, King Achashverosh threw a lavish party with the remaining vessels from the temple. The king also donned the garments normally reserved for the priests (kohanim) in the Temple to celebrate what seemed to be his permanent kingship over the "forsaken" Jewish people.

The story of Esther, as recounted in the Megillah, tells the story of Achashverosh, guided by his assistant Haman, wanting to exterminate the Jewish people and the efforts of Esther and her cousin Mordechai to ensure the survival of the Jewish people.

The story, both tragedy and comedy, illustrates the hidden hand of God in Jewish history.

SCENE SUMMARIES

Scene 1 - Partying Like It's the End of the World

- * After assuming God has abandoned the Jewish people, King Achashverosh throws a party to celebrate.
- * King Achashverosh has one drink too many and makes a bad decision. He orders his wife Vashti to be executed.

Scene 2 - A Persian Beauty Pageant

- * Once King Achashverosh recovers from his hangover, he starts to feel lonely and begins to search for a new queen.
- * His search leads him to Esther. A great girl. A pretty girl. Just one problem...she's Jewish.
- * Esther is advised by her cousin Mordechai not to tell the king that she is Jewish.
- * Mordechai stops a plot by two of King Achashverosh's officers to assassinate the king. Mordechai saves the king's life.

CHARACTERS



King Achashverosh

The Persian king in the megillah who was known to have a clear anger problem. Aside from his anger, he was rather susceptible to persuasion.



Queen Esther

Esther, an orphan, was chosen by King Achashverosh to serve as his Queen. Her cousin Mordechai urged her to accept the position even though it was clearly not an ideal environment for a Jew. While serving as the Queen, she kept her Jewish identity secret.



Mordechai

One of the last remaining prophets, Mordechai was the moral compass for the Jewish people. When most Jews had already assumed God had forgotten them, Mordechai inspired the people to reconnect with Him.



Haman

An avowed anti-Semite, Haman had one goal: Killing all the Jewish people. As the king's right hand man, he was in the perfect position to get the job done. It seemed like it would take a miracle to stop him.



Bigtan and Teresh

A pair of palace guards who had a bone to pick with the king.



Charvona

A character with limited screen time, dubious allegiance, and impeccable timing.



God

God does not have any speaking roles during the entire story of Esther. In fact, He is not mentioned at all. If you look closely though, you may realize He was directing the story all along.

CHAPTER 1

"It was in the days of Achashverosh—this was the Achashverosh who reigned from Hodu to Cush—one hundred and twenty-seven colonies." (Esther 1:1)

The opening chapter of Megillat Esther begins by setting the stage for what looks like a classic underdog-comeback story. It describes the immense power of King Achashverosh whose kingdom spanned from "Hodu to Kush"—essentially the entire world. His mighty super-power controlled over 127 provinces and was far more powerful than any modern day country. After an insanely lavish 180-day party, King Achashverosh begins another week-long feast to show off his riches and power. During this ostentatious spectacle the king invites Queen Vashti to dance before him and his guests wearing only her crown. When she refuses, he consults with his advisors and orders her execution. At this point we need to take a step back and remember the golden rule of the Megillah: "*Venahafoch hu*"—everything gets turned on its head and nothing is what it seems.

First of all, King Achashverosh does not become the villain, in fact he ends up sharing his entire kingdom with Queen Esther, glorifying Mordechai the Jew and saving the Jewish people.

Secondly, Queen Vashti isn't as innocent as you might think. The Talmud tells us that Vashti used to force Jewish girls to dance on Shabbat against their will and as a direct consequence she was asked to do the exact same. However, under regular circumstances Vashti wouldn't have any issue with acting this way. She only refused because she was struck with leprosy. To top it off the Midrash tells us that Queen Vashti prevailed on King Achashverosh to halt the construction of the Jewish Temple. She would say, "Do you seek to build what my ancestors destroyed?"

As you read through the Megillah, it's essential that you keep an open mind and prepare to uncover the vast depths of this ancient and mystical text.

וַיְהִי בַיָּמֵי אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ הוּא אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ הַמֶּלֶךְ מֵהַדּוּ וְעַד כּוֹשׁ שֶׁבַע וְעֶשְׂרִים וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה: בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם כָּשְׁבַת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ עַל פֶּסַא מְלָכוּתוֹ אֲשֶׁר בְּשׁוֹשַׁן הַבִּירָה: בַּשָּׁנָה שְׁלוֹשׁ לְמַלְכוֹ עָשָׂה מִשְׁתֵּה לְכָל שָׂרָיו וְעַבְדָּיו חֵיל פָּרַס וּמְדֵי הַפָּרְתָּמִים וְשָׂרֵי הַמְּדִינּוֹת לְפָנָיו: בְּהָרְאוֹתוֹ אֶת עֶשֶׂר כְּבוֹד מְלָכוּתוֹ וְאֶת יָקָר תַּפְאָרֶת גְּדוּלְתוֹ יָמִים רַבִּים שְׁמוֹנִים וּמֵאֵת יוֹם: וּבְמִלּוֹאת הַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה עָשָׂה הַמֶּלֶךְ לְכָל הָעַם הַנִּמְצָאִים בְּשׁוֹשַׁן הַבִּירָה לְמַגְדוֹל וְעַד קֶטָן מִשְׁתֵּה שֶׁבַעַת יָמִים בַּחֲצַר גִּנַּת בֵּיתוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ: חוּר כַּרְפֵּס וּתְכֵלֶת אַחוּז בַּחֲבֵלֵי בּוּץ וְאַרְגָּמָן עַל גְּלִילֵי כֶסֶף וְעֻמוּדֵי שֵׁשׁ מִטּוֹת זָהָב וְכֶסֶף עַל רַצְפַּת בֵּהַט וְשֵׁשׁ וָדָר וְסַחֲרֹת: וְהִשְׁקוֹת בְּכֵלֵי זָהָב וְכֵלִים מְכֻלִּים שׁוֹנִים וְיֵין מְלָכוּת רַב כִּיֵּד הַמֶּלֶךְ: וְהִשְׁתִּיחַ כְּדַת אֵין אֵינֶס כִּי כֵן יֵסֵד הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל כָּל רַב בֵּיתוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּרָצוֹן אִישׁ וְאִישׁ:

גַּם וְשִׁתֵּי הַמֶּלֶכָּה עָשְׂתָה מִשְׁתֵּה נָשִׁים בֵּית הַמְּלָכוֹת אֲשֶׁר לְמֶלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ: בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי כְּטוֹב לֵב הַמֶּלֶךְ בֵּינָן אָמַר לְמַהוּמָן בַּזָּתָא חֲרֻבוּנָא בְּגִתָּא וְאַבְגָּתָא

It was in the days of Achashverosh—this was the Achashverosh who reigned from Hodu to Cush—one hundred and twenty-seven colonies. In those days, when king Achashverosh had established himself on his imperial throne, in the capital city of Shushan. In the third year of his reign, he tendered a feast for all his ministers and servants, the forces of Persia and Media, the nobles and the colonial ministers, in his presence. Where he exhibited the affluence and eminence of his kingdom, the glory and splendor of his magnificence; for many days—one hundred and eighty days. At the completion of these days, the king tendered, for all the people present in the capital city of Shushan, from the greatest to the least significant, a feast for seven days, on the grounds of the garden in the royal orchard. [There were] pure white drapes, fine woolen cushions, bluish emerald techeiles wool, brocaded with strands of linen and mauve, woolen argaman threads, over silver columns and marble pillars; gold and silver couches on a floor inlaid with rare gems and marble, set in parallel circular patterns. As for drinking; golden utensils, other sundry vessels, and plenty of royal wine, with majestic largesse. The drinking was proper, with no coercion; for the king had so basically instructed all his palace officials—to satisfy each individual's desire.

Queen Vashti, as well, tendered a feast for women, at king Achashverosh's palace. On the seventh day, when the king was exhilarated by drink, he instructed Mehuman,

Your wife, the Queen, refuses to entertain "a party of drunk idiots!"

HOW DARE SHE!!! Something must be done!

People will never take you seriously so long as she remains alive! She must be executed!

► CHAPTER 1

זָתַר וְכִרְפַּס שִׁבְעַת הַסְּרִיסִים הַמְּשֻׁרְתִּים אֶת פְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ: לְהִבְיֵא אֶת וְשִׁתֵּי הַמַּלְכָּה לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּכֹתֵר מַלְכוּת לְהִרְאוֹת לְעַמִּים וְהַשָּׂרִים אֶת יָפִיָּהּ כִּי טוֹבַת מְרֹאָה הִיא: וְתִמְאֵן הַמַּלְכָּה וְשִׁתֵּי לְבוֹא בְּדָבָר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר בְּיַד הַסְּרִיסִים וַיִּקְצֹף הַמֶּלֶךְ מְאֹד וַחֲמָתוֹ בָּעָרָה בּוֹ:

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְחַכְמָיִם יִדְעֵי הָעֵתִים כִּי כֵן דָּבַר הַמֶּלֶךְ לִפְנֵי כָל יִדְעֵי דַת וְדִין: וְהִקְרַב אֵלָיו כְּרִשְׁנָא שֶׁתֵּר אֲדַמְתָּא תְּרִישִׁשׁ מְרַס מְרַסְנָא מְמוּכָן שִׁבְעַת שָׂרֵי פְּרַס וּמְדֵי רֵאִי פְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ הַיֹּשְׁבִים רֵאשְׁנָה בְּמַלְכוּת: כְּדַת מַה לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּמַלְכָּה וְשִׁתֵּי עַל אֲשֶׁר לֹא עָשְׂתָה אֶת מֵאֲמַר הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ בְּיַד הַסְּרִיסִים:

וַיֹּאמֶר (מוֹמְכָן) [מְמוּכָן] לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַשָּׂרִים לֹא עַל הַמֶּלֶךְ לְבַדּוֹ עֹנְתָה וְשִׁתֵּי הַמַּלְכָּה כִּי עַל כָּל הַשָּׂרִים וְעַל כָּל הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל מְדִינוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ: כִּי יֵצֵא דָבָר הַמַּלְכָּה עַל כָּל הַנְּשִׁים לְהַבְּזוֹת בְּעַלְיָהּן בְּעִינֵיהֶן בְּאַמְרָם הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ אָמַר לְהִבְיֵא אֶת וְשִׁתֵּי הַמַּלְכָּה לִפְנֵיו וְלֹא בָּאָה: וְהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה תֵּאמְרֶנָּה שְׂרוֹת פְּרַס וּמְדֵי אֲשֶׁר שָׁמְעוּ אֶת דְּבַר הַמַּלְכָּה לְכָל שָׂרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וּבְדִין בְּזִיוֹן וְקִצְפוּ: אִם עַל הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב יֵצֵא דָבָר מַלְכוּת מִלְּפָנָיו וַיִּכְתַּב בְּדַתִּי פְּרַס וּמְדֵי וְלֹא יַעֲבוֹר אֲשֶׁר לֹא תְבוֹא וְשִׁתֵּי לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ וּמַלְכוּתָהּ יִתֵּן הַמֶּלֶךְ לְרַעוּתָהּ:

Bizesa, Charvona, Bigsa, Avagsa, Zeisar, and Charkas, the seven servants who attended King Achashverosh's person—to present Queen Vashti before the king [clad] in the royal crown, to flaunt her beauty before the nations and the ministers, for she was of beautiful appearance. Queen Vashti refused to attend as ordered by the king through the servants—and the king was extremely angered, his fury consumed him.

The king consulted the sages who were well versed in the affairs of the times, for the king would thus place matters before all who were versed in procedural and legal concerns. Most intimately associated with him, were Karshena, Sheisar, Admasa, Sarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memuchan, the seven ministers of Persia and Media who were in personal contact with the king, and who occupied the highest seats of power in the kingdom. Concerning the proper procedure to follow with Queen Vashti, since she did not do as directed by King Achashverosh through the servants.

Memuchan spoke before the king and the ministers: "It is not only his majesty that Vashti has aggrieved, but all the ministers and all the peoples in all of King Achashverosh's colonies. For the affair of the queen will extend to all women, so that they will disparage their husbands, saying, 'King Achashverosh commanded that Queen Vashti be brought before him, but she never came!' This very day, the noblewomen in Persia and Media will say—those who have heard about the affair of the queen shall report it to the king's ministers causing enormous disparagement and rage! If his majesty deems it proper, let him issue a royal edict, to be recorded in the bylaws of Persia and Media—never to be revoked—that Vashti must never again appear before King Achashverosh; and let his majesty bestow her regency on a companion of hers who is superior to her. Now when the news of his majesty's writ and its implementation reverberates throughout the kingdom—vast as it is—then all the wives will honor their husbands, from the greatest

הטובה ממנה: ונשמע פתגם המלך אשר יעשה בכל מלכותו כי רבה היא וכל הנשים יתנו יקר לבעליהן למגדול ועד קטן: וייטב הדבר בעיני המלך והשרים ויעש המלך בדבר ממוכן: וישלח ספרים אל כל מדינות המלך אל מדינה ומדינה ככתבה ואל עם ועם כלשונו להיות כל איש שרר בביתו ומדבר כלשון עמו:

to the least significant." The advice was viewed favorably by the king and his ministers, and the king acted on Memuchan's recommendation. He dispatched scrolls to all of the king's colonies—to each and every colony in its own script, and each and every people in their own language—instructing that every husband be dominant in his home, and that his people's language be the one spoken.

CHAPTER 2

"[Mordechai] had been exiled from Jerusalem with the captives exiled with Yechaniah, king of Yehudah, driven into exile by Nevuchadnezzar, king of Babylon." (Esther 2:5)

In Chapter two of the Megillah we are introduced to the heroes of the Purim story, Mordechai and Esther. We are told that Mordechai was exiled from Jerusalem. Something that makes the Megillah a unique book is the fact that it is the story of the Jewish people's exile and how we will be living till this very day.

The Jewish people went from a time of supernatural miracles in Israel to exile. In exile miracles occur in a more subtle and hidden way. There are no longer miracles like the splitting of the sea, rather the miracles are the right people being put into power at the right time, such as Mordechai and Esther. Esther was anointed as queen and Mordechai was written down in Acheshverosh's book of chronicles for saving the king.

Purim, unlike other holidays, is not the holiday of God's revelation. Rather, it is a time for us to celebrate God's existence. God hid Himself in the Purim story, His name cannot be found. This does not mean He was absent, it was an opportunity for us to search for Him and to celebrate us finding His presence.

While we are living in exile, God's plan is not clear. It is unclear why certain people were put into power such as Acheshverosh or Haman. It was not clear to Mordechai and Esther why Esther had to become queen. Only later did it become more clear that Esther's position was to be utilized to save the Jewish people.

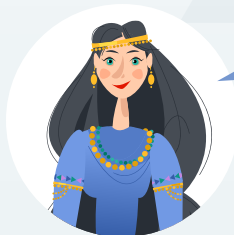
While in exile, we learn to find the miracles in the twists and turns of history. Despite us living in dark times the Jewish people learn to maintain their faith and know that there is still hope.

אחר הדברים האלה כשך חמת המלך אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ זָכַר אֶת וַשְׁתִּי וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂתָה וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר נִגְזַר עָלֶיהָ: וַיֹּאמְרוּ נַעֲרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁרָתָיו יִבְקְשׁוּ לַמֶּלֶךְ נַעֲרוֹת בְּתוּלוֹת טוֹבוֹת מֵרָאָה: וַיִּפְקֵד הַמֶּלֶךְ פְּקִידִים בְּכָל מְדִינוֹת מְלָכוֹתָיו וַיִּקְבְּצוּ אֶת כָּל נַעֲרָה בְּתוּלָה טוֹבָה מֵרָאָה אֶל שׁוֹשַׁן הַבֵּירָה אֶל בֵּית הַנָּשִׁים אֶל יַד הַגָּא סָרִיס הַמֶּלֶךְ שֶׁמֶר הַנָּשִׁים וְנָתַן תַּמְרוּקֵיהֶן: וְהַנַּעֲרָה אֲשֶׁר תִּיטֵב בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ תִּמְלֹךְ תַּחַת וַשְׁתִּי וַיִּיטֵב הַדָּבָר בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיַּעַשׂ כֵּן:

איש יהודי היה בשושן הבירה ושמו מרדכי בן יאיר בן שמעי בן קיש איש ימיני: אֲשֶׁר הִגְלָה מִירוּשָׁלַיִם עִם הַגְּלָה אֲשֶׁר הִגְלָתָה עִם יְכָנְיָה מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה אֲשֶׁר הִגְלָה נְבוּכַדְנֶצַּר מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל: וַיְהִי אִמּוֹן אֶת הַדְּסָה הִיא אֶסְתֵּר בֵּת דָּדוֹ כִּי אֵין לָהּ אָב וְאִם וְהַנַּעֲרָה יָפֵת תֹּאֵר וְטוֹבוֹת מֵרָאָה וּבִמּוֹת אֲבִיהָ וְאִמָּהּ לָקַחָה מֵרַדְכָי לֹו לְבַת: וַיְהִי בְהִשְׁמַע דְּבַר הַמֶּלֶךְ וְדָתוֹ וּבְהַקְבֵץ נַעֲרוֹת רַבּוֹת אֶל שׁוֹשַׁן הַבֵּירָה אֶל יַד הָגֵי וְתִלְקַח אֶסְתֵּר אֶל בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל יַד הָגֵי שֶׁמֶר הַנָּשִׁים: וַתִּיטֵב הַנַּעֲרָה בְּעֵינָיו וַתִּשָּׂא חֶסֶד לִפְנָיו וַיְבַהֵל אֶת תַּמְרוּקֵיהָ וְאֵת מִנּוֹתָהּ לְתַת לָהּ וְאֵת שֶׁבַע הַנַּעֲרוֹת הָרְאִיוֹת לְתַת לָהּ מִבֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיִּשְׁנֶה וְאֵת נַעֲרוֹתֶיהָ לְטוֹב בֵּית הַנָּשִׁים: לֹא הִגִּידָה אֶסְתֵּר אֶת עֲמָהּ וְאֵת מוֹלְדָתָהּ כִּי מֵרַדְכָי צִוָּה עָלֶיהָ אֲשֶׁר לֹא תִגִּיד:

After these events, as King Achashverosh's ire dissipated, he remembered Vashti and how she had acted, and the decree against her. The king's youthful valets suggested: "Let them seek, for his majesty, young maidens of beautiful appearance. And let his majesty appoint officials in all the colonies of his kingdom, who shall assemble all the young maidens of beautiful appearance at the capital city of Shushan, in the harem residence, in the custody of his majesty's eunuch Heige, the harem overseer, and let them be supplied with their cosmetics. And the young woman whom his majesty views with approval shall reign in place of Vashti." This suggestion was viewed favorably by the king, and he implemented it.

There was a Yehudite man in the capital city of Shushan. His name: Mordechai, son of Yair, son of Shim'i, son of Kish, a Binyaminite man. Who was exiled from Jerusalem with Yechaniah, king of Yehudah, driven into exile by Nevuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. He was the foster parent of Hadassah—this was his cousin Esther—as she had neither father nor mother. The young woman was beautiful in form and appearance, and when her father and mother died, Mordechai adopted her as a daughter. Now it happened, when the king's edict, his bylaw, was made public, and a large number of



Achashverosh is forcing all young women to go to the palace to find a new queen! What an awful fate for a nice Jewish girl!

It will be alright! Just make sure to never reveal that you are a Jew and you will be safe.



► CHAPTER 2

וּבְכֹל יוֹם וַיּוֹם מְרֹדֶכְי מִתְהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי חֹצֵר בֵּית הַנָּשִׁים לְדַעַת אֶת שְׁלוֹם אֶסְתֵּר וַיֵּמָר יַעֲשֶׂה בָּהּ: וּבִהְיֶינָהּ תֹר נִעְרָה וְנִעְרָה לְבוֹא אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרוֹשׁ מִקֵּץ הַיּוֹת לָהּ כְּדַת הַנָּשִׁים שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר חֹדֶשׁ כִּי כֵן יִמְלֹאוּ יְמֵי מְרוֹקִיָּהּ שְׁשֶׁה חֳדָשִׁים בְּשִׁמּוֹן הַמֶּר וְשֶׁשֶׁה חֳדָשִׁים בְּבִשְׂמִים וּבְתַמְרוֹקֵי הַנָּשִׁים: וּבִזְהָ הַנִּעְרָה בָּאָה אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵת כָּל אֲשֶׁר תִּאמַר יִנְתֵּן לָהּ לְבוֹא עִמָּה מִבֵּית הַנָּשִׁים עַד בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ: בְּעָרֵב הִיא בָּאָה וּבְבֹקֶר הִיא שָׁבָה אֶל בֵּית הַנָּשִׁים שְׁנֵי אֶל יָד שַׁעֲשֻׁגַת סָרִיס הַמֶּלֶךְ שִׁמְר הַפִּילִגְשִׁים לֹא תָבוֹא עוֹד אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי אִם חֹפֵץ בָּהּ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְנִקְרָאָה בְּשֵׁם: וּבִהְיֶינָהּ תֹר אֶסְתֵּר בַּת אֲבִיחַיִל דָּד מְרֹדֶכְי אֲשֶׁר לָקַח לוֹ לְבַת לְבוֹא אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ לֹא בִקְשָׁה דָּבָר כִּי אִם אֵת אֲשֶׁר יֹאמֵר הַגִּי סָרִיס הַמֶּלֶךְ שִׁמְר הַנָּשִׁים וְתֵהִי אֶסְתֵּר נִשְׂאֵת חֵן בְּעֵינָי כָּל רְאִיָּה: וְתִלְקַח אֶסְתֵּר אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרוֹשׁ אֶל בֵּית מַלְכוּתוֹ בְּחֹדֶשׁ הָעֵשִׂרִי הוּא חֹדֶשׁ טֵבֵת בְּשַׁנַּת שְׁבַע לְמַלְכוּתוֹ: וַיֵּאָהֵב הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵת אֶסְתֵּר מִכָּל הַנָּשִׁים וְתִשָּׂא חֵן וְחֹסֵד לִפְנֵי מְכַל הַבְּתוּלוֹת וַיִּשֶׂם כֶּתֶר מַלְכוּת בְּרֹאשָׁהּ וַיִּמְלִיכָהּ תַּחַת וְשִׁתִּי: וַיַּעַשׂ הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁתֵּה גְדוֹל לְכָל שְׂרָי וְעַבְדָּיו אֵת מִשְׁתֵּה אֶסְתֵּר וְהִנְחָה לְמַדְיֹנוֹת עֲשֶׂה וַיִּתֵּן מִשְׂאֵת כֶּיֶד הַמֶּלֶךְ: וּבִהֻבָּבָת בְּתוּלוֹת שְׁנֵית

young women were gathered at the capital city of Shushan, in the custody of Heigai, that Esther was brought to the royal palace, in the custody of Heigai, the harem overseer. He viewed the young woman favorably, and she gained his benevolence. He eagerly delivered her cosmetics and her clothing allowance to her also the seven special maidservants assigned to her from the royal household staff. He favored her and her maidservants with preferential treatment at the harem residence. Esther did not reveal [the identity of] her people or her heritage, since Mordechai had instructed her not to reveal it. Each and every day, Mordechai would pace before the courtyard of the harem residence, to apprise himself of Esther's welfare, and of what would be done with her. When the time arrived for each of the young women to be admitted to King Achashverosh, at the end of her participation in the course for women which lasted twelve months—for they were anointed, during their cosmetic treatment, with the following: six months with balm of myrrh, and six months with aromatic ointments and other womanly cosmetics. This is how the young woman would be admitted to the king: whatever she requested would be provided to accompany her from the harem residence to the royal palace. She would arrive in the evening and return in the morning, to a second harem residence, in the custody of Sha'ashgaz, the king's eunuch, overseer of the concubines. She would no longer be admitted to the king unless the king desired her, when she would be summoned by name. When the time arrived for Esther, the daughter of Avichayil, the uncle of Mordechai, whom he had adopted as a daughter, to be admitted to the king, she requested nothing save what was suggested by Heigai, the king's eunuch, the harem overseer. Esther was regarded with favor by everyone who beheld her. Esther was brought to King Achashverosh, into his royal palace, in the tenth month—that is, the month of Teves—during the seventh year of his reign. The king loved Esther more than all the women, she gained his favor and his benevolence more than all the maidens, so he placed the royal crown upon her head, and coronated her in place of Vashti. The king tendered a magnificent feast for all of his ministers and servants—the feast of Esther. He waived the colonial taxes, and lavished gifts with majestic largesse. When the maidens were gathered a second time, Mordechai

וּמֵרָדֵכִי יֵשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ: אִין אֶסְתֵּר מִגִּדַת מוֹלַדְתָּהּ וְאֵת עַמָּהּ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוְּהָ עֲלֶיהָ מֵרָדֵכִי וְאֵת מֵאִמֵּר מֵרָדֵכִי אֶסְתֵּר עָשָׂה כַּאֲשֶׁר הִיָּתָה בְּאִמְנָה אֵתוֹ:

בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם וּמֵרָדֵכִי יֵשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ קִצְפָּה בִּגְתָן וְתָרַשׁ שְׁנֵי סְרִיִּסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁמֵרֵי הַסֵּף וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ לְשַׁלַּח יָד בַּמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרֶשׁ: וַיִּזְדַּע הַדָּבָר לְמֵרָדֵכִי וַיִּגְדַּל לְאֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה וְתֹאמַר אֶסְתֵּר לְמֶלֶךְ בְּשֵׁם מֵרָדֵכִי: וַיִּבְקֶשׁ הַדָּבָר וַיִּמְצָא וַיִּתְּלוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם עַל עֵץ וַיִּכְתֹּב בְּסֵפֶר דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ:

sat at the gateway to the king. Esther would not reveal [the identity of] her heritage or her people, just as Mordechai had directed her. Esther followed Mordechai's bidding, just as she did when she was reared by him.

In those days, when Mordechai sat at the gateway to the king, Bigsan and Seresh became enraged—they were two of the king's stewards, of the guardians of the entrance [to his dwelling]—and sought to assault King Achashverosh. The matter was apprehended by Mordechai, who reported it to Queen Esther. Esther related it to the king in Mordechai's name. The matter was investigated and verified, and both were hung from a gallows. This was inscribed in the book of archives in the presence of the king.

CHAPTER 3

"Haman then said to King Achashverosh, 'There exists a particular people, far-flung, widespread among the peoples in all the colonies of your realm. Their customs differ from those of all peoples, and they do not abide by his majesty's bylaws; his majesty has nothing to gain by tolerating them.'" (Esther 3:8)

Haman, in his desire to wipe out the Jewish people, tells King Achashverosh "There is one nation scattered around your kingdom, and their laws are different from the laws of the kingdom. They do not listen to the laws of the king. It is not worth it for the king to keep these people in his kingdom, wipe them out, erase them from your land!"

In this verse Haman hints at two weaknesses of the Jewish people that would allow him to defeat them. If they possess these weaknesses, then they will not be as protected by God.

The first of these two weaknesses is based on what our Rabbis teach us is hinted in the words, "Yesh no", which means "there is" one nation. When these words are combined together, they are similar to the word "yashan" which means to sleep. This alludes to the fact that the Jews were sleeping with regard to the Torah and its commandments. They were not performing the mitzvot properly, they needed to wake up, and fulfill the commandments better.

The second weakness is that they were not unified. God our Father, our King, only wants to see his children getting along. If we are united as a nation, we succeed. In fact our Rabbis teach us that if we are united as a nation, even if we are doing something wrong, Our father, Hashem, will protect us. If, however, we are fractured as a people, we fall. As a famous Jewish singer, Avraham Fried sang, "TOGETHER, we will go far, it's not 'I' but who 'WE' are." We don't need to look or think alike, but we must remember that we are ONE nation, with One Father in Heaven, Hashem. (There is a song for that, too!)

אחר הדברים האלה גדל המלך אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ אֶת הַמֶּן בֶּן הַמַּדְתָּא הָאֲגִי וַיִּנְשְׂאֵהוּ וַיִּשֶׂם אֶת כִּסְאוֹ מֵעַל כָּל הַשָּׂרִים אֲשֶׁר אֵתוֹ: וְכָל עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ כָּרְעִים וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוִים לְהַמֶּן כִּי בֶן צִוָּה לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ וּמֶרְדֵּכַי לֹא יִכְרַע וְלֹא יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה: וַיֹּאמְרוּ עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְמֶרְדֵּכַי מְדוּעַ אַתָּה עוֹבֵר אֶת מִצְוַת הַמֶּלֶךְ: וַיְהִי (בְּאַמְרָם) [בְּאַמְרָם] אֵלָיו יוֹם וַיּוֹם וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּגִּידוּ לְהַמֶּן לְרֹאוֹת הַיַּעֲמָדוֹ דְּבָרֵי מֶרְדֵּכַי כִּי הִגִּיד לָהֶם אֲשֶׁר הוּא יְהוּדִי: וַיֵּרָא הַמֶּן כִּי אִין מֶרְדֵּכַי כָּרַע וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לוֹ וַיִּמְלֵא הַמֶּן חֲמָה: וַיִּבַּז בְּעֵינָיו לְשַׁלַּח יָד בְּמֶרְדֵּכַי לְבַדּוֹ כִּי הִגִּידוּ לוֹ אֶת עִם מֶרְדֵּכַי וַיִּבְקֶשׁ הַמֶּן לְהַשְׁמִיד אֶת כָּל הַיְהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל מְלָכוֹת אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ עִם מֶרְדֵּכַי: בְּחֹדֶשׁ הָרֵאשׁוֹן הוּא חֹדֶשׁ נִסָּן בְּשָׁנַת שְׁתַּיִם עֶשְׂרֵה לְמֶלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ הַפִּיל הוּא הַגּוֹרֵל לִפְנֵי הַמֶּן מִיּוֹם לְיוֹם וּמִחֹדֶשׁ לְחֹדֶשׁ שָׁנִים עֶשֶׂר הוּא חֹדֶשׁ אָדָר:

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּן לְמֶלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ יִשְׁנוּ עִם אֶחָד מִפְּזָר וּמִפְּרָד בֵּין הָעַמִּים בְּכָל מְדִינוֹת מְלָכוֹתְךָ וְדַתְיָהֶם שְׁנוֹת מִכָּל עַם וְאֵת דַּתִּי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵינִם עוֹשִׂים וְלִמְלֶכְךָ אִין שׁוֹה לְהַנִּיחָם: אִם עַל הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב יִכְתֹּב לְאַבְדֵם וְעִשְׂרֵת אֲלָפִים כֶּכֶר כֶּסֶף אֲשָׁקוּל עַל דֵּי עֲשֵׂי הַמְּלָאכָה לְהַבְיֵא אֶל גְּנָזֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ: וַיִּסַּר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת טַבַּעְתּוֹ

After these events, King Achashverosh conferred eminence on Haman, the son of Hamdasa, the Agagite, and exalted him, placing his seat of office above all of his fellow ministers. And all of the king's servants who were at the gateway to the king kneeled and prostrated themselves before Haman, for the king had so commanded concerning him—but Mordechai would neither kneel nor prostrate himself. Said the king's servants who were at the gateway of the king to Mordechai, "Why are you flouting the king's command?" It happened that, when they spoke to him daily, and he paid them no heed, they informed Haman, to see whether Mordechai's avowal would be sustained—for he told them that he was a Yehudi. Haman then observed that Mordechai neither kneeled nor prostrated himself before him, and Haman was totally incensed. But it was demeaning, in his view, to strike at Mordechai alone, for he was informed of [the identity of] Mordechai's people. Haman sought to destroy all the Yehudim throughout Achashverosh's realm—Mordechai's people. In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, during King Achashverosh's twelfth year, a "pur", meaning "lot", was cast in the presence of Haman, for a specific day, and, specifically, the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar.

Haman then said to King Achashverosh: "There exists a particular people, far-flung, widespread among the peoples in all the colonies of your realm. Their customs differ



The nerve Mordechai has to not kneel before the King's viceroy! Something needs to be done about him and that infernal nation of Jews!



► CHAPTER 3

מֵעַל יָדוֹ וַיִּתְּנָהּ לְהֶמֶן בֶּן הַמֶּדְתָּא הָאֲגָגִי צִרַר הַיְהוּדִים: וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהֶמֶן הַבְּסָף נָתַן לְךָ וְהָעַם לַעֲשׂוֹת בּוֹ כְּטוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ: וַיִּקְרְאוּ סִפְרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בַּחֲדָשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן בְּשִׁלּוּשָׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם בּוֹ וַיִּכְתֹּב בְּכָל אֶשֶׁר צִוָּה הֶמֶן אֶל אַחַשְׁדָּרְפָּנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֶל הַפְּחוֹת אֶשֶׁר עַל מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה וְאֶל שָׂרֵי עָם וְעַם מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה כִּכְתָּבָה וְעַם וְעַם כְּלָשׁוֹנוֹ בְּשֵׁם הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ נִכְתָּב וְנִחְתָּם בְּטַבַּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ: וְנִשְׁלַח סִפְרִים בְּיַד הָרָצִים אֶל כָּל מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַשְׁמִיד לְהַרְגֹּ וּלְאַבֵּד אֶת כָּל הַיְהוּדִים מִנְּעַר וְעַד זָקֵן טָף וְנָשִׁים בְּיוֹם אֶחָד בְּשִׁלּוּשָׁה עָשָׂר לַחֲדָשׁ שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר הוּא חֲדָשׁ אָדָר וּשְׁלָלִם לְבוֹז: פִּתְשֵׁן הַכְּתָב לְהַנְתִּן דָּת בְּכָל מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה גְלוּי לְכָל הָעַמִּים לְהִיּוֹת עֲתָדִים לְיוֹם הַזֶּה: הָרָצִים יֵצְאוּ דְחוּפִים בְּדַבַּר הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַדָּת נִתְּנָה בְּשׁוֹשֵׁן הַבֵּירָה וְהַמֶּלֶךְ וְהֶמֶן יֵשְׁבוּ לִשְׁתוֹת וְהָעִיר שׁוֹשֵׁן נְבוּכָה:

from those of all peoples, and they do not abide by his majesty's bylaws; his majesty has nothing to gain by tolerating them. If his majesty deems it proper, let it be inscribed that they are to be exterminated. And I shall weigh out ten thousand silver kikars under the auspices of the executive staff, to be deposited in the royal coffers." The king removed his ring from his hand, and presented it to Haman the son of Hamdasa the Agagite, oppressor of the Yehudim. And the king said to Haman, "Keep the silver and do as you wish with the[se] people." The royal scribes were then summoned, during the first month, on the thirteenth day of the month, and transcripts were made of all of Haman's directives, to the imperial envoys, to the governors of each of the colonies, and to the ministers of each people, each and every colony in its own script, each and every people in its own language; it was written in King Achashverosh's name and sealed with the royal ring. So that scrolls would be dispatched, carried by couriers, to all of the king's colonies; to devastate, slaughter, and annihilate all the Yehudim, young and old, children, women, in a single day—on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar—with their booty to be despoiled. The terms of the writ would become legally binding in each and every colony—displayed conspicuously before all the peoples, so that they would be poised on that day. The couriers were dispatched by urgent royal command, and the decree was delivered in the capital city of Shushan. The king and Haman then sat down for drinks, while the city of Shushan was in confusion.



CHAPTER 4

"For, if you keep silent at this time, release and liberation will materialize for the Yehudim (Jews) from some other source, and you and your father's lineage will perish." (Esther 4:14)

Consider an alternative timeline, one in which Esther does not shrewdly end Haman's evil scheme to destroy the Jewish People. Many anti-semites since Haman have attempted to devise a solution to the 'Jewish Problem,' but in this counter-history, perhaps the 'problem' would have already been resolved. Could this have been the culmination of Abraham and Sarah's genealogy? Without Esther, would the Purim saga have concluded with utter destruction?

This chapter illustrates a conversation through intermediaries between Mordechai and Esther, and depicts an optimism for a celebratory ending with or without our Purim Heroine. Mordechai is confident that the Jewish People would survive, and the only outstanding question is whether Esther would be the source of our collective destiny. In other words, Haman's plan would have been wrecked by God who has intervened to save us consistently throughout history since freeing our ancestors from Egypt. Our continued existence as a nation is a divine miracle, one that requires heroic human partners to make the tough decisions to save the day.

Each of us exists at preordained moments in a timeline of history to impact the world in our own individual ways, but the question is whether we heed the call when it is made. Had Esther succumbed to her legitimate apprehension of the danger that accompanied a heroic decision, another character would be celebrated on the holiday of Purim. In making the difficult decision, Esther changed the timeline for herself and her family, but our national timeline remained the same.

Chapter four begins with feelings of fear and despair and ends with a first step toward implementing safety and security. The story is not over, but the heroine has declared her intentions to save the day.

וּמְרֻדְכַי יָדַע אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשָׂה וַיִּקְרַע מְרֻדְכַי אֶת בְּגָדָיו וַיִּלְבַּשׁ שָׂק וַאֲפֹר וַיֵּצֵא בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר וַיִּזְעַק זַעֲקָה גְדֹלָה וַיִּמְרָה: וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי אֵין לְבֹאוֹ אֶל שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּלִבוּשׁ שָׂק: וּבְכָל מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר הַמֶּלֶךְ וְדָתוֹ מִגִּיעַ אֲבָל גְּדוֹל לַיהוּדִים וְצוּם וּבְכִי וּמִסְפַּד שָׂק וַאֲפֹר יֵצֵעַ לְרַבִּים: (וַתְּבוֹאִינָה) [וַתְּבוֹאֲנָה] נְעוּרוֹת אֶסְתֵּר וְסֻרְיִסְיָהּ וַיִּגִּידוּ לָהּ וַתַּחֲלֹחַל הַמַּלְכָּה מְאֹד וַתִּשְׁלַח בְּנָדִים לְהַלְבִּישׁ אֶת מְרֻדְכַי וּלְהַסִּיר שָׂקוֹ מֵעַלָיו וְלֹא קָבַל: וַתִּקְרָא אֶסְתֵּר לְהִתְּן מִסֻּרְיִסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר הָעַמִּיד לִפְנֵיהּ וַתִּצְוָהּ עַל מְרֻדְכַי לְדַעַת מַה זֶה וְעַל מַה זֶה: וַיֵּצֵא הֵתָּן אֶל מְרֻדְכַי אֶל רְחוֹב הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ: וַיִּגַּד לוֹ מְרֻדְכַי אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר קָרָהּ וְאֵת פְּרִשְׁת הַכֶּסֶף אֲשֶׁר אָמַר הֵמָּן לְשָׂקוֹל עַל גִּזְזֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ [בְּיְהוּדִיִּים] [בְּיְהוּדִים] לְאַבְדָּם: וְאֵת פְּתִשְׁנָן כְּתַב הַדָּת אֲשֶׁר נָתַן בְּשׁוּשַׁן לְהַשְׁמִידֵם נָתַן לוֹ לְהִרְאוֹת אֶת אֶסְתֵּר וּלְהַגִּיד לָהּ וּלְצַוּוֹת עֲלֶיהָ לְבֹאוֹ אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהִתְחַנֵּן לוֹ וּלְבַקֵּשׁ מִלְּפָנָיו עַל עַמָּה: וַיָּבֹאוּ הֵתָּן וַיִּגַּד לְאַסְתֵּר אֶת דְּבָרֵי מְרֻדְכַי: וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר לְהִתְּן וַתִּצְוָהּ אֶל מְרֻדְכַי: כָּל עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְעַם מְדִינוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ יִדְעִים אֲשֶׁר כָּל אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר יָבֹאוּ אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל הַחֲצַר הַפְּנִימִית אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִקְרָא אַחַת דָּתוֹ לְהַמִּית לְבַד מֵאֲשֶׁר יוֹשִׁיט לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת שַׂרְבִּיט הַזֶּהב וְחַיָּה וְאֵנִי לֹא נִקְרָאתִי לְבֹאוֹ אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ זֶה שְׁלוֹשִׁים יוֹם: וַיִּגִּידוּ לְמְרֻדְכַי אֶת דְּבָרֵי אֶסְתֵּר: וַיֹּאמֶר מְרֻדְכַי לְהַשִּׁיב אֶל אֶסְתֵּר אֶל תְּדַמֶּי בְּנִכְפָּשׁ לְהַמְלִיט בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ

Mordechai was apprised of everything that had transpired. Mordechai rent his garments, and garbed himself in sackcloth and ashes. He proceeded into the city, and sounded a great, bitter wail. He came to the front of the king's gate, for one could not enter the gateway to the king clad in sackcloth. And in each and every colony, wherever the king's directives and bylaws reached—there was immense grief among the Yehudim, fasting, weeping and lamenting. Sackcloth and ashes cloaked multitudes. Esther's maidservants and stewards came and told her about it, and the queen was extremely shaken. She dispatched garments to clothe Mordechai and remove his sackcloth, but he refused them. She then called for Hasach, one of the king's officials, whom he had placed at her disposal, and instructed him concerning Mordechai, to ascertain what was happening, and why. Hasach withdrew, and went to Mordechai, to the city thoroughfare, which was at the front of the gateway to the king. Mordechai informed him of all that he had experienced, and of the silver which Haman had explicitly promised to weigh into the royal coffers so that



You must go to the King and stop Haman's scheme!

It is too dangerous! The King will kill me for sure!

You became Queen specifically for this moment! You must seize the opportunity!



► CHAPTER 4

מְכַל הַיְהוּדִים: כִּי אִם הַחֲרֵשׁ תַּחֲרִישִׁי בְּעַת הַזֹּאת רוּחַ וְהַצְלָה יַעֲמֹד לַיהוּדִים מִמְּקוֹם אַחֵר וְאֵת וּבֵית אֲבִיךָ תֵּאבְדוּ וּמִי יוֹדֵעַ אִם לְעַת כְּזֹאת הַגַּעַת לְמַלְכוּת: וְתֹאמַר אֶסְתֵּר לְהַשִּׁיב אֶל מְרֹדֶכַי: לָךְ כְּנוֹס אֵת כָּל הַיְהוּדִים הַנִּמְצְאִים בְּשׁוֹשַׁן וְצוּמוּ עָלַי וְאֵל תֵּאכְלוּ וְאֵל תִּשְׁתּוּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים לַיְלָה וַיּוֹם גַּם אֲנִי וְנַעֲרָתִי אֲצוּם כִּן וּבִכֵּן אָבוֹא אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר לֹא כֹדֵת וְכֹאֲשֶׁר אֲבִדְתִּי אֲבִדְתִּי: וַיַּעֲבֹר מְרֹדֶכַי וַיַּעַשׂ כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר צִוְתָה עָלָיו אֶסְתֵּר:

the Yehudim would be annihilated. A copy of the text of the legally binding writ which had been delivered in Shushan, mandating that they be destroyed, he gave to him, to show Esther, and to inform her; and to order her to gain entrance to the king, to plead with him, and to beg him to spare her people. Hasach came back, and conveyed, to Esther, Mordechai's remarks. Esther spoke with Hasach, and instructed him to [tell] Mordechai: "All of his majesty's servants, as well as the peoples of his majesty's colonies, know that any man or woman who comes as close to his majesty as the innermost courtyard without an invitation, suffers a single fate; execution—save for someone toward whom his majesty extends the golden sceptre, to permit him to live. And I have not been granted an invitation to visit his majesty these thirty days." They conveyed Esther's remarks to Mordechai. Mordechai declared, in reply to Esther: "You had better not fantasize that in the royal palace you will escape the fate of all the other Jews. For, if you keep silent at this time, release and liberation will materialize for the Yehudim from some other source, and you and your father's lineage will perish. Who knows whether, at this time next year, you will retain your royal position." Esther declared, in reply to Mordechai: "Go, gather all the Yehudim found in Shushan, and fast for my sake. Take neither food nor drink for three days night and day. I and my maidservants will also fast this way. Having done this, I will come to the king even though it is unlawful and as I am bereft, so must I be further bereft." Mordechai passed through [the city], and implemented all of Esther's instructions to him.



CHAPTER 5

"Still, all this is meaningless to me whenever I see Mordechai the Yehudi (Jew) sitting at the gateway to the king." (Esther 5:13)

To be an advisor to a king means that you are someone with great insight. Haman was one of King Achashverosh's advisors, but there was clearly one piece of advice Haman never heard, "Don't sweat the small stuff." Clearly a man of power and influence but (lucky for us) Haman lost it all because of the "small stuff." Well, one small thing to be exact.

Haman was on top of the world. His ascent to power and influence is evident throughout the Megillah. He rises to such a prestigious place in the kingdom that the king gives Haman the official signet ring empowering him to do anything he pleases (3:10). The ultimate level of success was seemingly bestowed upon him when Queen Esther holds an exclusive feast for herself, the king and Haman (5:14). It seems clear as day, the three of them are the greatest in all the land. But even that was not enough.

Following this gathering, Haman is on his way home to gloat and flaunt his status in the kingdom and then lo and behold he sees Mordechai. Mordechai is Haman's weakness. With all the good that he has going on, one would assume he can look past his disdain for Mordechai, but that is not the case. In actuality, his disgust for Mordechai becomes Haman's undoing. When he gets with all he has going for him, Mordechai's defiance to his edict of bowing down to him, gets his blood boiling. This leads Haman to come up with the idea to hang Mordechai. And we also know the ending to this one.

Haman might have missed the importance of not sweating the small stuff but we can all definitely learn from his mistake and appreciate all of the good that we are blessed with.

וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וַתִּלְבַּשׁ אֶסְתֵּר מַלְכוּת וַתַּעֲמֹד בַּחֲצַר בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ הַפְּנִימִית נֹכַח בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּלֶךְ יוֹשֵׁב עַל כִּסֵּא מַלְכוּתוֹ בְּבֵית הַמַּלְכוּת נֹכַח פֶּתַח הַבַּיִת: וַיְהִי כִּרְאוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה עֹמֶדֶת בַּחֲצַר נִשְׁאַה חוֹן בְּעֵינָיו וַיִּשָּׁט הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאַסְתֵּר אֶת שְׂרָבִיט הַזָּהָב אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדוֹ וַתִּקְרַב אֶסְתֵּר וַתִּגַּע בְּרֹאשׁ הַשְּׂרָבִיט: וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ הַמֶּלֶךְ מַה לָּךְ אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה וּמָה בִקְשָׁתְךָ עַד חֲצִי הַמַּלְכוּת וַיִּנְתֶּן לָךְ: וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר אִם עַל הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב יָבוֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּן הַיּוֹם אֶל הַמִּשְׁתֶּה אֲשֶׁר עֲשִׂיתִי לוֹ: וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ מִהֲרוּ אֶת הַמֶּן לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת דְּבַר אֶסְתֵּר וַיָּבֵא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּן אֶל הַמִּשְׁתֶּה אֲשֶׁר עֲשִׂתָה אֶסְתֵּר: וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאַסְתֵּר בְּמִשְׁתֶּה הַזֶּה מָה שְׂאַלְתְּךָ וַיִּנְתֶּן לָךְ וּמָה בִקְשָׁתְךָ עַד חֲצִי הַמַּלְכוּת וַתַּעֲשֶׂ: וַתַּעַן אֶסְתֵּר וַתֹּאמֶר שְׂאַלְתִּי וּבִקְשָׁתִי: אִם מִצָּאֲתִי חוֹן בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאִם עַל הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב לִתֵּת אֶת שְׂאַלְתִּי וְלַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת בִּקְשָׁתִי יָבוֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּן אֶל הַמִּשְׁתֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֶעֱשֶׂה לָהֶם וּמִחֵר אֶעֱשֶׂה כְּדַבַּר הַמֶּלֶךְ: וַיֵּצֵא הַמֶּן בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא שִׂמְח וְטוֹב לֵב וְכִרְאוֹת הַמֶּן אֶת מֶרְדֳּכָי בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ וְלֹא קָם וְלֹא זָע מִמֶּנּוּ וַיִּמְלֵא הַמֶּן עַל מֶרְדֳּכָי חֲמָה: וַיִּתְאַפֵּק הַמֶּן וַיָּבוֹא אֶל בֵּיתוֹ וַיִּשְׁלַח וַיָּבֵא אֶת אֹהֲבָיו וְאֶת זָרֵשׁ אֲשֶׁר־לָהֶם הַמֶּן אֶת כְּבוֹד עֲשָׂרוֹ וְרַב בְּנָיו וְאֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר גָּדְלוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֶת אֲשֶׁר נִשְׂאוֹ עַל הַשְּׂרָיִם וְעַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ: וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּן אִף לֹא הֵב יָאֵה אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה

It was on the third day. Esther cloaked herself in majesty, and stood in the innermost palace courtyard, facing the palace. The king sat on his imperial throne, in the royal chamber, facing the entrance to the palace. Now, when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the courtyard, she gained his favorable regard, and the king extended, towards Esther, the golden sceptre in his hand. Esther came closer, and touched the point of the sceptre. The king said to her: "What do you need, Queen Esther, what do you wish? Up until half the empire, and it shall be granted to you!" Esther said, "If his majesty deems it proper, let his majesty and Haman attend, today, a feast which I have prepared for him." The king said, "Urge Haman to quickly fulfill Esther's instructions." So the king and Haman arrived at the feast which Esther had prepared. The king said to Esther at the winefest, "Whatever you request shall be granted to you! Whatever you wish, up until half the empire, shall be fulfilled!" Esther replied, saying, "My request, and my wish: If I have gained His Majesty's favorable regard, and if His Majesty deems it proper fo fulfill my request and gratify my wish; let His Majesty and Haman attend the feast which I shall tender for them—and tomorrow I shall comply with His Majesty's command." Haman



My dear wife, what can I do for you?

(Gulp) If it pleases the King, I would be honored if his Majesty and Haman graced my party with their presence.



► CHAPTER 5

עם הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל הַמְּשֻׁתָּה אֲשֶׁר עָשְׂתָה כִּי אִם אוֹתִי וְגַם לְמַחֵר אֲנִי קְרוּא לָהּ עִם הַמֶּלֶךְ: וְכָל זֶה אֵינְנו שׂוֹה לִי בְּכָל יְעַת אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי רֹאֶה אֶת מְרֻדְכַי הַיְּהוּדִי יוֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ: וּתְאֹמֶר לוֹ זָרַשׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ וְכָל אֲהָבָיו יַעֲשׂוּ עִץ גְּבוּהַ חֲמִשִּׁים אַמָּה וּבִבְקָר אָמֹר לְמֶלֶךְ וַיִּתְּלוּ אֶת מְרֻדְכַי עָלָיו וּבֹא עִם הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל הַמְּשֻׁתָּה שְׂמַח וַיִּיטֵב הַדָּבָר לְפָנָיו הַמֶּן וַיַּעַשׂ הָעֵץ:

ventured forth, that day, joyful and content; but when Haman perceived Mordechai at the gateway to the king, neglecting to rise or bestir himself for him, Haman was totally incensed at Mordechai. Haman restrained himself, arrived at his home, and gathered his friends and his wife Zeresh. Haman boasted, to them, of the glories of his affluence and of his profusion of sons; of all the eminence the king had given him, and that he had exalted him above the ministers and the royal servants. "And," Haman declared, "Even now, Queen Esther let no man come with the king to the feast that she had prepared, but myself; moreover, tomorrow also I have been invited by her to join the king. Still, all this is meaningless to me whenever I see Mordechai the Yehudi sitting at the gateway to the king." His wife Zeresh told him—and so too all his friends—"Let them build a gallows fifty amohs high. In the morning, suggest to the king that they hang Mordechai from it and join the king at the feast joyfully." The scheme pleased Haman, and he built the gallows.



CHAPTER 6

*"That night, the king's sleep was disturbed, so he called for the bringing of the book of archives, of historical events, to be recited before the king."
(Esther 6:1)*

There is an interesting custom that when the reader gets to the first verse of Chapter 6, he should raise his voice slightly, and read this verse in a louder tone. "And on that night, the king's sleep was disrupted," must be read loudly. Why? It is explained that this verse is the turning point of the Purim Megillah. What is so significant about this verse? Why do we care that King Achashverosh could not sleep?

There is a deep mystical tradition about the real identity of the king in the megillah. On a literal level, the king is obviously always referring to King Achashverosh, the Persian ruler. But on a deeper level, the king is also alluding to the King of all Kings, God. The Megillah is multi-layered with different interpretations. The very same sentence which is referring to a king of flesh and blood, can also be talking about the exalted King who created the world. Go back and read the megillah with this in mind. You'll notice some very interesting insights.

Based on this tradition, the Talmud (Megillah 15a) explains that the verse is alluding to the fact that on that very night, God Himself was awakened from a slumber. But does God sleep? Of course God does not sleep, but sometimes, from our perspective we perceive that God is asleep. We experience moments of darkness where we don't see God's hand in our lives. "And on that night the King's sleep was disrupted." The Megillah reminds us that God is never really asleep. God is always there for us.

בלילה ההוא, נדדה שנת המלך ויאמר להביא את ספר הזכרונות דברי הימים ויהיו נקראים לפני המלך: וימצא כתוב אשר הגיד מרדכי על בגנתא ותַרַש שני סריסי המלך משמרי הסף אשר בקשו לשלח יד במלך אחשורוש: ויאמר המלך מה נעשה יקר וגדולה למרדכי על זה ויאמרו נערי המלך משרתיו לא נעשה עמו דבר: ויאמר המלך מי בחצר והמן בא לחצר בית המלך החיצונה לאמר למלך לתלות את מרדכי על העץ אשר הכין לו: ויאמרו נערי המלך אליו הנה המן עמד בחצר ויאמר המלך יבוא: ויבוא המן ויאמר לו המלך מה לעשות באיש אשר המלך חפץ ביקרו ויאמר המן בלבו למי יחפץ המלך לעשות יקר יותר ממני: ויאמר המן אל המלך איש אשר המלך חפץ ביקרו: וביאו לבוש מלכות אשר לבש בו המלך וסוס אשר רכב עליו המלך ואשר נתן כתר מלכות בראשו: ונתון הלבוש והסוס על יד איש משרי המלך הפרתמים והלבשו את האיש אשר המלך חפץ ביקרו והרכבבו על הסוס ברחוב העיר וקראו לפניו ככה יעשה לאיש אשר המלך חפץ ביקרו: ויאמר המלך להמן מהר קח את הלבוש ואת הסוס באשר דברת ונעשה כן למרדכי היהודי הישב בשער המלך אל תפל דבר מכל אשר דברת: ויִקַח המן את הלבוש ואת הסוס

That night, the king's sleep was disturbed, so he called for the bringing of the book of archives, of historical events, to be recited before the king. It was discovered, in the record, that Mordechai had reported that Bigsan and Seresh, two of the king's stewards, of the guardians of the entrance, had sought to assault King Achashverosh. The king said, "What honor or eminence has been bestowed on Mordechai for this?" The king's youthful valets replied, "Not a thing has been done for him." "Who is in the courtyard?" said the king. Now Haman had just reached the outer courtyard of the palace, to suggest to the king that Mordechai be hung from the gallows he had prepared for him. The king's youths said to him, "Haman is here, standing in the courtyard." The king said, "Let him in." Haman entered. The king said to him, "What should be done for a man whom the king wishes to honor. Now Haman reflected, 'Whom would the king desire to glorify more than me?' Haman said to the king, "A man whose glory the king desires! Let them bring the imperial robe, worn by His Majesty, and the horse mounted by His Majesty; the imperial crown to be placed on his head. Let the robe and the horse be handed to a distinguished minister, a nobleman. Then let them garb the man whose glory the king desires, mount him on the horse in the city thoroughfare, and proclaim before him, 'This is what is done with a man whose glory the king desires!'" The king said to Haman,



► CHAPTER 6

וַיִּלְבַּשׁ אֶת מְרֻדְכַי וַיִּרְכַּבֵהוּ בְּרוּחוֹ הָעִיר וַיִּקְרָא לְפָנָיו כְּכֹה יַעֲשֶׂה לְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר
הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בִּיקְרוֹ: וַיֵּשֶׁב מְרֻדְכַי אֶל שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהָמֹן נִדְחַף אֶל בֵּיתוֹ אֲבֵל וְחַפְזֵי
רֹאשׁ: וַיִּסְפֹּר הָמֹן לְזֶרֶשׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ וּלְכָל אֲהֲבָיו אֵת כָּל אֲשֶׁר קָרָהוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ חֲכָמָיו
וְזֶרֶשׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ אִם מִזָּרַע הַיְהוּדִים מְרֻדְכַי אֲשֶׁר הַחֲלוּת לְנַפְל לְפָנָיו לֹא תוּכַל לוֹ
כִּי נָפֹל תַּפּוּל לְפָנָיו: עוֹדֵם מְדַבְּרִים עִמּוֹ וְסָרִיסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ הִגִּיעוּ וַיִּבְהִלוּ לְהַבִּיא
אֶת הָמֹן אֶל הַמִּשְׁתָּה אֲשֶׁר עָשְׂתָה אֶסְתֵּר:

"Quickly, take the cloak and the horse just as you said, and do so to Mordechai the Yehudi, who sits at the gateway to the king. Do not omit anything you mentioned!" Haman took the robe and the horse and garbed Mordechai. Then he led him on horseback through the city thoroughfare, and proclaimed before him, "This is what is done with a man whose glory the king desires." Mordechai then returned to the gateway to the king, while Haman was rushed home, griefstricken, his head covered [in shame.] Haman related to his wife Zeresh, and all his friends all that had befallen him. His counsellors and his wife Zeresh told him, "As Mordechai is of Yehudite stock, since you have begun to fall before him, you cannot overcome him, but will surely fall before him." While they were still conversing with him, the king's stewards arrived, rushing to bring Haman to the feast which Esther had prepared.



CHAPTER 7

"Then Charvonah declared, [he was] one of the king's personal stewards, 'Moreover, there is the gallows which Haman built for Mordechai, who spoke up in favor of the king, standing in Haman's house—fifty amohs high.' The king commanded, 'Hang him from it!'" (Esther 7:9)

The sages of the Talmud teach that when something negative happens to a person they should say *"Gam zu letova—this, too, is for the good."* It is not only the things that we perceive as good that are so, but even those that seem bad are in reality *"gam"* (also) for the good.

The theme of the Purim story is *"venahafoch hu"* - which loosely translates as "flipped over." All the things in the Purim story that seemed horrible were subsequently recognized as good. The *"venahafoch hu"* moment of the Megillah is this verse.

This verse appears right after Esther reveals to Achashverosh that she is Jewish and that Haman is out to destroy her nation. Charvona, one of Achashverosh's servants, uses this opportunity to point out the gallows that Haman had prepared for Mordechai. Achashverosh orders Haman to be hanged on them. This is the moment when everything flips. The gallows that Haman had erected in the middle of the city to hang Mordechai end up being the cause of his own downfall. The very object of our fear becomes the vehicle of our salvation. *Venahafoch hu*. The first word Charvona says (*"gam"*) reminds us that everything is for the good. *Gam zu letovah*.

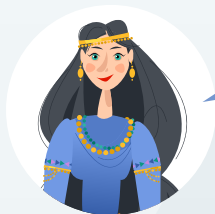
After reading the Megillah there is a custom to sing Shoshanas Yaakov, a poetic summary of the Purim miracle. It ends with: *"V'gam Charvona zachor latov - And also Charvona is remembered for good."* The name Charvona can also mean destruction (as in the word *churban*). He is the one who revealed that even when everything seems to be falling apart, that also - *gam*, is really good.

ויבא המלך והמון לשָׁתוֹת עִם אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה: וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאַסְתֵּר גַּם בַּיּוֹם הַשֵּׁנִי בַּמִּשְׁתָּה הֵייוּ מֵה שְׂאֵלְתֶךָ אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה וְתַנְתֵּן לָךְ וַיִּמָּה בַקְּשֶׁתְךָ עַד חֲצֵי הַמַּלְכוּת וְתַעֲשֶׂ: וְתַעַן אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה וַתֹּאמֶר אִם מִצָּאֲתִי חוֹן בְּעֵינֶיךָ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאִם עַל הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב תַּתֵּן לִי נִפְשִׁי בְשֵׂאֵלְתִי וְעַמִּי בְּבִקְשֶׁתִּי: כִּי נִמְכְּרֵנוּ אֲנִי וְעַמִּי לְהַשְׁמִיד לְהָרוֹג וּלְאַבֵּד וְאֵלּוּ לְעַבְדִּים וְלִשְׁפָחוֹת נִמְכְּרֵנוּ הַחֲרֻשְׁתִּי כִּי אִין הֲצַר שׁוֹה בְּנֹזֵק הַמֶּלֶךְ:

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ וַיֹּאמֶר לְאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה מִי הוּא זֶה וְאִי זֶה הוּא אֲשֶׁר מָלְאוּ לְבוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת כֵּן: וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר אִישׁ צָר וְאוֹיֵב הֵמֶן הָרַע הַזֶּה וְהֵמֶן נִבְעַת מִלִּפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמַּלְכָּה: וְהַמֶּלֶךְ קָם בַּחֲמָתוֹ מִמִּשְׁתָּה הֵייוּ אֶל גַּנַּת הַבַּיִת וְהֵמֶן עָמַד לְבַקֵּשׁ עַל נַפְשׁוֹ מֵאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה כִּי רָאָה כִּי כָלְתָה אֵלָיו הָרַעָה מֵאֵת הַמֶּלֶךְ: וְהַמֶּלֶךְ שָׁב מִגַּנַּת הַבַּיִת אֶל בֵּית מִשְׁתָּה הֵייוּ וְהֵמֶן נִפַּל עַל הַמִּטָּה אֲשֶׁר אֶסְתֵּר עָלֶיהָ וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ הֲגַם לְכַבּוֹשׁ אֶת הַמַּלְכָּה עַמִּי בְּבֵית הַדָּבָר יָצָא מִפִּי

The king and Haman came to drink with Queen Esther. The king said to Esther, at the second day's winefest as well, "Whatever your request, Queen Esther, shall be granted you! Whatever you wish, even until half the empire, it shall be fulfilled!" Queen Esther replied, saying, "If I have gained your majesty's favor and if his majesty deems it proper, let my life be granted me by my request, and my people by my wish. For we were sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, slaughtered, and annihilated. Now, had we been sold as slaves and maidservants, I would have remained silent, but the oppressor has no regard for losses incurred by his majesty.

King Achashverosh spoke. He said to Queen Esther, "Who is this? Who is the one that had the audacity to act this way?" Esther exclaimed, "An oppressive man, an enemy—this evil Haman!"—and Haman was terrified before the king and the queen. The king rose, in a fit of rage, from the winefest toward the orchard garden, while Haman got up to plead with Queen Esther for his life, for he realized that it would end up badly for him from the



Your Majesty, Haman is a vile man set upon destroying me and my people!



Wait-what?!

THIS IS AN OUTRAGE!! HOW DARE HE!! HANG HIM!!



► CHAPTER 7

הַמֶּלֶךְ וּפְנֵי הַמֶּן חָפוּ: וַיֹּאמֶר חַרְבוֹנָה אֶחָד מִן הַסְּרִיסִים לְפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ גַּם הִנֵּה
הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה הַמֶּן לְמֹרְדֵכַי אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר טוֹב עַל הַמֶּלֶךְ עִמָּד בְּבַיִת הַמֶּן גְּבוּהָ
חֲמֵשִׁים אַמָּה וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ תִּלְהוּ עָלָיו: וַיִּתְּלוּ אֶת הַמֶּן עַל הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר הֵכִין
לְמֹרְדֵכַי וְחַמַּת הַמֶּלֶךְ שָׁכְבָה:

king. When the king returned from the orchard garden to the winefest room, Haman had fallen on the couch upon which Esther reclined. The king exclaimed, "Even to overpower the queen with me in the palace?" The words left the king's mouth, and Haman's face was enveloped in humiliation. Then Charvonah declared, [he was] one of the king's personal stewards, "Moreover, there is the gallows which Haman built for Mordechai, who spoke up in favor of the king, standing in Haman's house—fifty amohs high." The king commanded, "Hang him from it." They hung Haman from the gallows which he had prepared for Mordechai, and the king's anger dissipated.



CHAPTER 8

*"For the Yehudim (Jews), there was radiance, joy, delight, and glory."
(Esther 8:16)*

In the eighth chapter of the Megillah, it seems like we rounded the corner and the threat of annihilation was behind us. However, there is still a decent amount of Megillah to go. What is there left to learn? What more does the story of Purim have to tell us? The answer is two-fold and this can be based off of a verse in Psalms 34:15 where it says, "distance oneself from evil and do good". It is not just enough to overcome the bad but one needs to attach themselves to good. The overcoming the bad was already underway, the evil Haman was dealt with. Although Haman was gone, the attack of the Jews was still in place. The beginning of this chapter continues with the "distance from evil" as the king grants permission to the Jewish people to fight back on the dreaded date of the 13th of Adar.

But the end of the chapter deals with the other aspect of the above mentioned verse, "and do good." The verse above describes the elation the Jews felt once freed from the threat of destruction. The Talmud says that each of the terms in the verse relates to a different mitzvah. "Light" connects to learning Torah, "happiness" corresponds to celebrating the holidays, "joy" is synonymous with brit milah and "honor" is symbolized by tefillin. The way to fully overcome the threat hanging over our heads on Purim (and in any challenge we face) is not just to overcome and defeat the obstacle ahead of us, but to take steps in the positive direction. That is how our chapter concludes.

How beautiful is it that we use this same verse in havdalah when we bid farewell to Shabbat and get ready to take on a new week! We go into the week with this reminder to connect to the positive and do good as well as overcoming the bad.

ביום ההוא נתן המלך אחשוורוש לאסתר המלכה את בית המן צָרַר (היהודיים) [היהודים] ומרדכי בא לפני המלך כי הגידה אסתר מה הוא לה: ויסר המלך את טבעתו אשר העביר מהמן ויתנה למרדכי ותשם אסתר את מרדכי על בית המן:

ותוסף אסתר ותדבר לפני המלך ותפל לפני רגליו ותבך ותתחנן לו להעביר את רעת המן האגגי ואת מחשבתו אשר חשב על היהודים: ויושט המלך לאסתר את שרבת הזהב ותקם אסתר ותעמד לפני המלך: ותאמר אם על המלך טוב ואם מצאתי חן לפניו וכשר הדבר לפני המלך וטובה אני בעיניו יכתב להשיב את הספרים מחשבת המן בן המדתא האגגי אשר כתב לאבד את היהודים אשר בכל מדינות המלך: כי איככה אוכל וראיתי ברעה אשר ימצא את עמי ואיככה אוכל וראיתי באבדן מולדתי:

ויאמר המלך אחשוורוש לאסתר המלכה ולמרדכי היהודי הנה בית המן נתתי לאסתר ואתו תלו על העץ על אשר שלח ידו (בִּיהוּדִים) [בִּיהוּדִים]: ואתם כתבו על היהודים כטוב בעיניכם בשם המלך וחתמו בטבעת המלך כי כתב

That day, King Achashverosh awarded Queen Esther the estate of Haman, the oppressor of the Yehudim. And Mordechai appeared before the king, for Esther had told him how he was related to her. The king removed his ring, which he had confiscated from Haman, and presented it to Mordechai. And Esther authorized Mordechai to take custody of Haman's estate.

Esther spoke again before the king. She threw herself at his feet and wept, and pleaded with him to divert the evil decree of Haman the Agagite; and his scheme which he had devised against the Yehudim. The king extended the golden sceptre towards Esther. Esther rose, and stood before the king. She said, "If his majesty deems it proper, and if I have gained favor before him, and the matter seems fitting before his majesty, and I am pleasing in his eyes; then let a writ be issued rescinding the documents conceived by Haman, the son of Hamdasa, the Agagite, that he wrote ordering the annihilation of the Yehudim who reside in all the providence of the king. For how can I possibly look on while catastrophe befalls my people? And how can I possibly look on while my heritage is annihilated?"

King Achashverosh said to Queen Esther and to Mordechai the Yehudi, "Here, I have given Haman's estate to Esther, and he was hung from the gallows for attacking the Yehudim. Thus, you may issue a writ concerning the Yehudim as you please, in the name of the king



► CHAPTER 8

אֲשֶׁר נִכְתָּב בְּשֵׁם הַמֶּלֶךְ וְנִחְתָּוּם בְּטַבַּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ אִין לְהַשִּׁיב: וַיִּקְרְאוּ סִפְרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בַּעַת הַהִיא בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁלִישִׁי הוּא חֹדֶשׁ סִינׁן בְּשְׁלוֹשָׁה וְעֶשְׂרִים בּו וַיִּכְתֹּב כָּכֵל אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה מְרַדְכָּי אֶל הַיְהוּדִים וְאֶל הָאַחַשְׁתַּרְפָּנִים וְהַפְּחוֹת וְשָׂרֵי הַמְּדִינֹת אֲשֶׁר מֵהַדּוּ וְעַד כּוֹשׁ שֶׁבַע וְעֶשְׂרִים וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה כִּכְתָּבָה וְעַם וְעַם כְּלָשְׁנוּ וְאֶל הַיְהוּדִים כִּכְתָּבָם וְכָלשׁוֹנָם: וַיִּכְתֹּב בְּשֵׁם הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ וַיַּחְתֵּם בְּטַבַּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיִּשְׁלַח סִפְרִים בְּיַד הָרָצִים בְּסוּסִים רַכְבֵּי הָרֶכֶשׁ הָאַחַשְׁתַּרְפָּנִים בְּנֵי הָרַמְכִּים: אֲשֶׁר נָתַן הַמֶּלֶךְ לַיְהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל עִיר וְעִיר לְהִקְהֵל וּלְעַמֵּד עַל נַפְשָׁם לְהַשְׁמִיד וּלְהַרְגׁוֹ וּלְאַבֵּד אֶת כָּל חֵיל עַם וּמְדִינָה הַצָּרִים אֹתָם טַף וְנָשִׁים וַיִּשְׁלַח לְבָבוֹ: בַּיּוֹם אֶחָד בְּכָל מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ בְּשְׁלוֹשָׁה עֶשֶׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר הוּא חֹדֶשׁ אָדָר: פִּתְשָׁן הַכְּתָב לְהַנְתִּן דָּת בְּכָל מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה גְלוּי לְכָל הָעַמִּים וְלַהִיּוֹת (הַיְהוּדִים) [הַיְהוּדִים] [עַתּוּדִים] [עַתּוּדִים] לַיּוֹם הַזֶּה לְהִנָּקֵם מֵאִיבֵיהֶם: הָרָצִים רַכְבֵּי הָרֶכֶשׁ הָאַחַשְׁתַּרְפָּנִים יָצְאוּ מִבְּהֵלִים וְדוֹחוּפִים בְּדַבַּר הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַדָּת נִתְּנָה בְּשׁוֹשׁן הַבִּירָה:

וּמְרַדְכָּי יָצָא מִלִּפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּלְבוּשׁ מַלְכוּת תְּכֵלֶת וְחוּר וְעֶטְרַת זָהָב גְּדוּלָּה וְתַכְרִיף בּוּץ וְאַרְגָּמָן וְהַעִיר שׁוֹשׁן צִהְלָה וְשִׁמְחָה: לַיְהוּדִים הִיְתָה אוֹרָה וְשִׁמְחָה וְשׁוֹשׁן וַיִּקְרָ: וּבְכָל מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה וּבְכָל עִיר וְעִיר מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר הַמֶּלֶךְ וְדָתוֹ מִגִּיעַ שִׁמְחָה וְשׁוֹשׁן לַיְהוּדִים מִשְׁתָּה יוֹם טוֹב וְרַבִּים מֵעַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ מִתִּיבֵהֶם כִּי נָכַל פָּחַד הַיְהוּדִים עֲלֵיהֶם:

and you may seal it with the king's ring; for a writ issued in the name of the king and sealed with the king's ring, is not rescindable. The royal scribes were summoned at that time, during the third month, which is the month of Sivan, on the twenty third of the month, and transcripts were made of all of Mordechai's directives, to the Yehudim, to the envoys, to the governors, and to the ministers of the colonies which extended from Hodu until Kush, one hundred and twenty-seven colonies; each and every colony in its own script, each and every people in its own language. Also, to the Yehudim, in their script and their language. He wrote in the name of King Achashverosh, sealed it with the king's ring, and dispatched scrolls carried by couriers on horseback, riders of the royal breed, fleet dromedaries bred from ramachim. Namely that the king authorized the Yehudim in each and every city to assemble and stand in defense of their lives; to destroy, slaughter, and annihilate the military forces of any people or colony oppressing them, their children and women; with their booty to be taken. On a single day, in all the colonies of King Achashverosh—on the thirteenth of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar. The terms of the writ would become legally binding in each and every colony, displayed conspicuously before all the peoples, so that the Yehudim would be poised, on that day, to exact vengeance on their enemies. The couriers, riders of the royal breed, the fleet dromedaries, rushed away by urgent royal command, and the decree was delivered in the capital city of Shushan.

Mordechai emerged from the king's presence attired in majestic garb of bluish techeiles wool and pure white, with a great golden crown, and a cloak of linen and purple, argaman wool. And the city of Shushan was blissfully joyful. For the Yehudim (Jews), there was radiance, joy, delight, and glory. In each and every colony, each and every city, every place where with the king's directive and bylaw reached, there was joy and delight for the Jews, festivity and days of celebration, with many among the people of the land converting to Judaism, as the awesomeness of the Yehudim had descended over them.



CHAPTER 9

"The Yehudim resolved... for themselves, their progeny, and anyone associated with them, never to be changed, that they would observe these two days, as written, and at the proper time each year." (Esther 9:27)

It would be very bizarre to name a war after the choice weapon of the enemy. Nobody would consider naming the United States Independence War of 1776 the "Brown Bess War" after the musket used by many British soldiers. Likewise, nobody would consider naming the Israeli Independence War of 1948 the "Matilda War" after the tank used by the Egyptians on the Southern front. The names of these wars focus on the positive outcome achieved in the war – the independence – and certainly not on the enemy and their means of destruction. And yet, the Megillah tells us that the entire holiday of Purim – derived from the word lottery - is named after the lots which Haman cast to determine which day to genocide the Jews. Since Haman used a lottery to select the day of the battle, we call the entire holiday Purim. Isn't this bizarre?

The first verse in Chapter Five uses the phrase *"venahafoch hu"* meaning "it was completely reversed" to describe the Jewish victory over their enemies. The Megillah does not simply say the Jews were victorious; rather, it highlights the fact that their victory was a complete reversal of what was plotted against them. Their enemies wanted to kill them. In the end, just the opposite, the Jews killed their enemies. Haman wanted to hang Mordechai. In the end, just the opposite, Mordechai helped hang Haman. The Jews were in a state of panic, fear, and mourning. In the end, just the opposite, the Jews had happiness, celebration, and festivities. This is *"venahafoch hu"* – "it was completely reversed."

This idea is extremely encouraging in life. We often have moments of panic, fear, or mourning. We have to believe in the power of reversal, knowing that these moments can lead to happiness, celebration, and festivities. It is not enough to only believe, in the moments of darkness, that there is light at the end of the tunnel. We must appreciate that the darkness itself can actually lead to light.

It is for this reason the entire holiday is named after Haman's lots. By naming the holiday after Haman's "weapon" we are reminded of the power of reversal. The weapons of our enemies have become our holidays. We must understand that the very thing which threatens us and challenges us, is actually the source of celebration and light.

ובשנים עשר חדש הוא-חדש אדר בשלושה עשר יום בו אשר הגיע דבר המלך ודתו להעשות ביום אשר שברו איבי היהודים לשלוט בהם ונהפוך הוא אשר ישלטו היהודים המה בשנאייהם: נקהלו היהודים בעריהם בכל מדינות המלך אחשורוש לשלח יד במבקשי רעתם ואיש לא עמד לפנייהם כי נפל פחדם על כל העמים: וכל שרי המדינות והאחשדרפנים והפחות ועשי המלאכה אשר למלך מנשאים את היהודים כי נפל פחד מרדכי עליהם: כי גדול מרדכי בבית המלך ושמעו הולך בכל המדינות כי האיש מרדכי הולך וגדול: ויכו היהודים בכל איביהם מכת חרב והרג ואבדו ויעשו בשנאייהם כרצונם: ובשושן הבירה הרגו היהודים ואבד חמש מאות איש:

ואת	פרשנדתא	ואת	ארידתא:
ואת	דלפון	ואת	פרמשתא
ואת	אספתא:	ואת	אריסי
ואת	פורתא	ואת	ארדי
ואת	אדליא	ואת	ויזתא:

עשרת בני המן בן המדתא צר היהודים הרגו ובבזה לא שלחו את ידם: ביום ההוא בא מספר ההרוגים בשושן הבירה לפני המלך: ויאמר המלך לאסתר המלכה בשושן הבירה הרגו היהודים ואבד חמש מאות איש ואת עשרת

During the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, on the thirteenth day of the month, when the king's directive and bylaw were to be put in effect; on the very day when the enemies of the Yehudim anticipated that they would subdue them—it was totally reversed, for they—the Yehudim—subdued their enemies. The Yehudim assembled in their colonies throughout all of King Achashverosh's colonies to assault those who sought their harm, and no man resisted them, for their awesomeness had descended over all the peoples. All of the colonial ministers, envoys, and governors, and the imperial executive staff, exalted the Yehudim, as Mordechai's awesomeness had descended over them. For Mordechai was powerful at the royal palace, and his prestige extended throughout the colonies; for the distinguished Mordechai's greatness flourished. The Yehudim struck all their enemies with rapier blows, slaughter, and annihilation, doing as they pleased with their enemies. In the capital city of Shushan, the Yehudim killed and annihilated **five hundred men**:

And Parshandasa, and Dalfon, and Aspasa. And Porasa, and Adalia, and Aridasa. And Parmashta, and Arisai, and Aridai, and Vaizasa, The ten sons of Haman, son of Hamdasa, oppressor of the Yehudim, they killed. But they did not lay their hands on the spoils. On that day, the total of those killed in the capital city of Shushan came to the king's attention.



Henceforth, every 14th of Adar will be a day of song, celebration, and friendship until the end of time!

▶ CHAPTER 9

בְּנֵי הַמֶּן בְּשָׂאָר מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ מָה עָשׂוּ וּמָה שְׂאֲלַתְךָ וַיִּנְתֶּן לָךְ וּמָה בִקְשָׁתְךָ עוֹד וַתַּעַשׂ: וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר אִם עַל הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב יִנְתֶּן גַּם מִחַר לַיהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּשׁוֹשׁן לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּדַת הַיּוֹם וְאֵת עֲשֶׂרֶת בְּנֵי הַמֶּן יִתְלוּ עַל הָעֵץ: וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַעֲשׂוֹת כִּן וַתִּנְתֶּן דָּת בְּשׁוֹשׁן וְאֵת עֲשֶׂרֶת בְּנֵי הַמֶּן תְּלוּ: וַיִּקְהְלוּ (הַיְהוּדִים) [הַיְהוּדִים] אֲשֶׁר בְּשׁוֹשׁן גַּם בְּיוֹם אַרְבַּעַת עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ אָדָר וַיְהִירוּ בְשׁוֹשׁן שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת אִישׁ וּבִבְזָה לֹא שָׁלְחוּ אֶת יָדָם: וּשְׂאָר הַיְהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּמְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ נִקְהְלוּ וְעָמְדוּ עַל נַפְשָׁם וְנוֹחַ מֵאִיבֵיהֶם וְהָרַג בְּשִׁנְאֵיהֶם חֲמִשָּׁה וּשְׁבַעִים אֶלֶף וּבִבְזָה לֹא שָׁלְחוּ אֶת יָדָם: בְּיוֹם שְׁלֹשָׁה עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ אָדָר וְנוֹחַ בְּאַרְבַּעַת עָשָׂר בּו וַעֲשֶׂה אֹתוֹ יוֹם מְשֻׁתָּה וְשִׁמְחָה: (וְהַיְהוּדִים) [וְהַיְהוּדִים] אֲשֶׁר בְּשׁוֹשׁן נִקְהְלוּ בְּשִׁלוֹשָׁה עָשָׂר בּו וּבְאַרְבַּעַת עָשָׂר בּו וְנוֹחַ בְּחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר בּו וַעֲשֶׂה אֹתוֹ יוֹם מְשֻׁתָּה וְשִׁמְחָה: עַל כֵּן הַיְהוּדִים (הַפְּרָזִים) [הַפְּרָזִים] הַיִּשְׁבִּים בְּעָרֵי הַפְּרָזוֹת עָשִׂים אֶת יוֹם אַרְבַּעַת עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ אָדָר שִׁמְחָה וּמְשֻׁתָּה וְיוֹם טוֹב וּמְשַׁלַּח מְנוֹת אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ: וַיִּכְתֹּב מְרַדְּכִי אֶת הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַיִּשְׁלַח סְפָרִים אֶל כָּל הַיְהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֻׁרוֹשׁ הַקְּרוּבִים וְהַרְחוֹקִים: לְקַיֵּם עֲלֵיהֶם לְהִיּוֹת

The king said to Queen Esther, "In the capital city of Shushan, the Yehudim killed and annihilated five hundred men, and Haman's ten sons, so in the remaining territories of the king, [imagine] what they have done. Now, whatever you request shall be granted you, whatever else you wish shall be fulfilled." Esther replied, "If his majesty deems it proper, then let tomorrow, too, be granted to the Yehudim who are in Shushan, to act in accordance with today's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hung from a gallows." The king gave word for this to be done. The decree was proclaimed in Shushan, and Haman's ten sons were hung. The Yehudim who were in Shushan assembled also on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar, and killed, in Shushan, three hundred men, but they did not lay their hand on the spoils. Now the remaining Yehudim who were in the king's colonies assembled and stood in defense of their lives, bringing deliverance from their enemies killing seventy-five thousand of their antagonists. But they did not lay their hands on the spoils. [The victory was] on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar, while the deliverance was realized on the fourteenth of the month, making it a day of feasting and rejoicing. Whereas the Yehudim who were in Shushan assembled on the thirteenth and on the fourteenth of the month, and realized deliverance on the fifteenth of the month, making it a day of feasting and rejoicing. For this reason, "unwalled" Yehudim—those who reside in unwalled cities—observe the fourteenth day of the month of Adar [as a day of] feasting, rejoicing, and a day of celebration, sending gifts of food to one another. Mordechai wrote of these matters, and dispatched scrolls to all the Yehudim in all of King Achashverosh's colonies, those nearby and those distant. Mandating that they resolve to permanently observe the fourteenth day of the month of Adar, and the fifteenth day of the month, each and every year. Corresponding with the days when the Yehudim realized deliverance from their antagonists, and the month which had been transformed for them, from one of anguish to rejoicing, from grief to days of celebration; to observe them as days of feasting and rejoicing, sending gifts of food to one another, and gifts to the poor. The Yehudim accepted, as binding, the observances that they had begun, and those that Mordechai had mandated in his letter to them. For Haman, the son of Hamdasa, the Agagite, oppressor of all the Yehudim, thought that he would annihilate the Yehudim. He cast a pur, meaning "lot," to terrorize, then annihilate them. But when she came before the king, he directed,

עשים את יום ארבעה עשר לחדש אדר ואת יום חמשה עשר בו בכל שנה ושנה: כימים אשר נחו בהם היהודים מאיביהם והחדש אשר נהפך להם מיגון לשמחה ומאכל ליום טוב לעשות אותם ימי משתה ושמחה ומשלח מנות איש לרעהו ומתנות לאבינים: וקבל היהודים את אשר החלו לעשות ואת אשר כתב מרדכי אליהם: כי המן בן המדתא האגגי צרר כל היהודים חשב על היהודים לאבדם והפל פור הוא הגורל להמם ולאבדם: ובבאה לפני המלך אמר עם הספר ישוב מחשבתו הרעה אשר חשב על היהודים על ראשו ותלו אתו ואת בניו על העץ: על כן קראו לימים האלה פורים על שם הפור על כן על כל דברי האגרת הזאת ומה ראו על ככה ומה הגיע אליהם: קימו (וקבלו) [וקבלו] היהודים עליהם ועל זרעם ועל כל הנולדים עליהם ולא יעבור להיות עשים את שני הימים האלה ככתבם וכזמנם בכל שנה ושנה: והימים האלה נזכרים ונעשים בכל דור ודור משפחה ומשפחה מדינה ומדינה ועיר ועיר וימי הפורים האלה לא יעברו מתוך היהודים וזכרם לא יסוף מזרעם:

ותכתב אסתר המלכה בת אביחיל ומרדכי היהודי את כל תקף לקים את אגרת הפרים הזאת השנית: וישלח ספרים אל כל היהודים אל שבע ועשרים ומאה מדינה מלכות אחשורוש דברי שלום ואמת: לקים את ימי הפרים האלה בזמניהם כאשר קים עליהם מרדכי היהודי ואסתר המלכה וכאשר קימו על נפשם ועל זרעם דברי הצומות וזעקתם: ומאמר אסתר קים דברי הפרים האלה ונכתב בספר:

in writing, that the evil scheme which he intended for the Yehudim rebound against his own head, and they hung him and his sons from a gallows. For this reason, these days are entitled purim, because of the lottery. [They are celebrated] for this reason—because of all that is narrated in this letter. [This letter records] why they saw fit to act in such a way, and what happened to them as a result. The Yehudim resolved—accepting as binding—for themselves, their progeny, and anyone associated with them, never to be changed, that they would observe these two days, as written, and at the proper time each year. These days shall be recalled and observed in every generation, by every family, in every colony and every city; and these Purim days shall never pass from among the Yehudim, nor their memory depart from their descendants.

Queen Esther, daughter of Avichail, wrote together with Mordechai the Yehudi, with all the power [of their position] confirming this Purim letter a second time. Scrolls were dispatched to all the Yehudim, to the one hundred and twenty-seven colonies of Achashveros's kingdom; words of peace and truth. To maintain these Purim days at the proper time, as was resolved and confirmed by Mordechai the Yehudi and Queen Esther, and as they had resolved for themselves and their descendants; [commemorating] the incidents of the fasts and their cries. On the basis of Esther's request, these Purim matters were perpetuated, and inscribed in a scroll.

CHAPTER 10

"King Achashverosh levied a tax on the land dwellers and the ocean islanders." (Esther 10:1)

After reading the story of the Megillah with bated breath, this verse about issuing taxes always seems very mundane and out of place. Think about it: An evil villain seeks to destroy a timeless people, a courageous heroine, willing to risk her life for the sake of her nation... there's fear, trepidation, prayer...and taxes?!

In order to shed light on this strange statement, let's take a look at another:

"Now it came to pass in the days of Achashverosh—he was Achashverosh..."

Our sages explain this odd repetition with the following words from the Talmud:

"That he (Achashverosh) remained wicked from the beginning to the end."

Here, the Talmud shares with us something so fundamental about Achashverosh: he is stagnant, complacent, and lacks the desire to affect change within himself.

According to Jewish tradition, one of the greatest hallmarks of what it means to be human, can be found in our ability to effect change, to transform and evolve ourselves into greater and more lofty beings. Adam, the very first human to have been created, was named so for this very reason. Having been formed from the ground, he was malleable, fertile, prepared for the endless possibilities of what he might produce. Whereas our legacy lies in our ability to change and grow, Achashverosh lay in his steadfast wickedness and in his stubbornness to move beyond that which he always was.

And so, the Megillah simply ends just as it began: with a king ruling over his people.

One might have assumed that over the course of seven years, years, which were replete with countless opportunities for recognition of God and His miracles, that Achashverosh would have moved forward or progressed in some way. And yet, Achashverosh returns to tax collection, having never tapped into the unlimited gift that is the human potential.

This Purim, as we celebrate the miracle of our people, let us remember, perhaps, the greatest miracle of all: the human ability to choose and to evolve, to strive for heights and to never stop growing.

וַיִּשֶׂם הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרֶשׁ מַס עַל הָאָרֶץ וְאֵי הַיָּם: וְכָל מַעֲשֵׂה תַקְפוֹ וּגְבוּרָתוֹ וּפְרָשֶׁת גְּדֻלַּת מְרַדְּכַי אֲשֶׁר גָּדְלוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ הָלְוָא הֵם כְּתוּבִים עַל סֵפֶר דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים לְמַלְכֵי מֵדִי וּפָרְס: כִּי מְרַדְּכַי הִיְהוּדִי מִשֵּׁנָה לְמֶלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרֶשׁ וְגָדוֹל לַיְהוּדִים וְרִצּוּי לְרַב אַחֲיוֹ דָרַשׁ טוֹב לַעֲמוֹ וְדָבַר שְׁלוֹם לְכָל זָרְעוֹ:

King Achashverosh levied a tax on the land dwellers and the ocean islanders. All of his mighty, powerful deeds, and the record of Mordechai's eminence as granted him by the king; all of these are inscribed in the book of archives of the royalty of Media and Persia. **For Mordechai the Yehudi was second to King Achasverosh, great among the Yehudim, esteemed by most of his brethren; he sought the welfare of his people, and was the spokesman for the peace of his descendants.**



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