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**Purim Insights -** פורים

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# Introduction

The holiday is celebrated by hearing the Megilla at night and again in the morning. During the day only, we fulfill four mitzvot:[[1]](#footnote-1)

1) Matanot L'evyonim, giving gifts or money to at least two poor people.

2) Mishloach Manot, the "sending of portions," giving at least two ready-to-eat foods to a minimum of one person. One should send via a messenger.

3) Mishte Seudat Purim - Seudah, a festive meal. During the meal we are commanded to drink wine until we don't know the difference between "Blessed is Mordechai" and "Cursed is Haman." (It is best fulfilled by drinking a little and taking a nap -- one doesn't know the difference between them while sleeping!) One should NOT drink to excess. The mitzvah is about connecting to the Almighty -- and sloppy drunks are lousy at spirituality. Drinking can be dangerous. The mitzvah is only at the meal with wine and should be well-controlled and minimized.

4) Mikrah Megilla (Reading the Megilla)

Before Purim has set in, it is customary to give half of a standard coin to commemorate the half shekel our ancestors were accustomed to give for the buying of the public offerings. It is given in the evening, before the Megilla is read and the money is distributed to the poor.

The Torah reading for Purim morning is Exodus 17:8–16.

*Purim cannot fall on Shabbat*. When the fifteenth of Adar falls on Shabbat, *Shushan Purim* is celebrated over a three-day period in the "walled" cities [Jerusalem and Shushan]. Those who are obligated to celebrate *Shushan Purim* on the fifteenth, divide the obligations over the period between the fourteenth and sixteenth. The mitzvot of reading the Megilla and giving gifts to the poor are fulfilled on the fourteenth,[[2]](#footnote-2) as in the other cities. On Shabbat, the fifteenth, a second Torah scroll is taken from the Sanctuary and the portion from the Parsha of Beshalach (annual Torah cycle) that tells of the war with Amalek is read. The Al ha-Nissim prayer is added to the Amidah and the Grace after Meals. On Sunday, the sixteenth, the festive meal is held and gifts of food are sent to friends.

The Baal Shem Tov teaches that the name, the Hebrew name of an object, is the vehicle through which the G-dly life force inhabits the object. When Adam named all of the animals, he gave them their name based on the nature of the animal. The name of every object’s essence is expressed by the Hebrew name of the object. In this paper I would like to investigate why we call the feast that falls on Adar 14, *Purim*. Further, I would like to look more deeply at this festival.

The names of all of the Biblical, and Rabbinic, holidays express either some positive aspect of the holiday or at least a neutral dimension of the holiday:

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| **Pesach** / **Hag HaMatzah**  *Passover* / *Feast of Unleavened Bread* | The day when HaShem “Passed over” our houses and commanded us to eat unleavened bread because we left so fast that our bread did not have time to rise. |
| **Hag Shavuot**  *Feast of Weeks* | The date is determined by counting forty-nine days and the seven weeks from Pesach. |
| **Rosh HaShana**  *Head of the Year* | The beginning of the year. The Talmud says that how we act on this day determines what will happen to us for the rest of the year. |
| **Yom HaKippurim**  *The Day of the Atonements* | The name describes a day of cleansing for HaShem’s people. |
| **Hag HaSuccoth**  *The Feast of Tabernacles* | The name describes the mitzva of living in a succah, a temporary dwelling. |
| **Chanukah**  *The Feast of Dedication* | The feast of the “dedication” of the altar. |
| **Purim**  *The Feast of Lots* | The name does not make any sense!!! “Lots”?? “Lots” is the method which the villain used to determine the day to destroy all of HaShem’s people. And this destruction *never* took place. |

Because we can see that the names of the other festivals describe the essence of the festival, we can assume that Purim / Lots must describe the essence of this festival. Let’s examine the story of Esther and look at the issues.

# The Issues

The first half of the first chapter seems to be superfluous. It starts off by telling us, briefly, that king Achashverosh gave a six-month feast for the nobles. It does not tell us what happened at this feast. Then it describes a feast that lasted seven days and was given for everyone in Susa:

***Esther 1:1-8*** *This is what happened during the time of Achashverosh, the Achashverosh who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush: At that time King Achashverosh reigned from his royal throne in the citadel of Susa, And in the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for all his nobles and officials. The military leaders of Persia and Media, the princes, and the nobles of the provinces were present. For a full 180 days he displayed the vast wealth of his kingdom and the splendor and glory of his majesty. When these days were over, the king gave a banquet, lasting seven days, in the enclosed garden of the king’s palace, for all the people from the least to the greatest, who were in the citadel of Susa. The garden had hangings of white and blue linen, fastened with cords of white linen and purple material to silver rings on marble pillars. There were couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl and other costly stones. Wine was served in goblets of gold, each one different from the other, and the royal wine was abundant, in keeping with the king’s liberality. By the king’s command each guest was allowed to drink in his own way, for the king instructed all the wine stewards to serve each man what he wished.*

Achashverosh holds an elaborate six-month feast for all his officers and subjects in the capital city of Shushan. What was the king celebrating?

Jeremiah the prophet had reported, in HaShem’s name, that following the destruction of the first Temple, the Jews would be in exile for seventy (70) years.[[3]](#footnote-3) According to Achashverosh’s calculations, the seventy years had been completed, meaning that HaShem Himself had been permanently defeated. It turns out that Achashverosh, and Belshazzar before him, had miscalculated the seventy years. He thought that it began with the exile of the first Jews. In reality, Jeremiah’s prophecy was figured from the time of the destruction of the Temple, some two years later. In fact, the exile did end, as prophesied, after seventy years!

At the feast, Achashverosh denigrated HaShem, and the Jews, by wearing the special clothes of the High Priest and by displaying the Temple vessels (see 1:14). The entire purpose of this feast was to denigrate the holy objects and, in effect, celebrating the end of the Jewish people.

So, who went to this party where Vashti ends up dead? Were there any Jews there? Somehow this first half of chapter one does not seem necessary, yet it plays a crucial role in understanding the rest of the scroll of Esther. Since HaShem is in control even while He is concealed in this story, we can assume that the decree to destroy the Jews, which was advanced by Haman, was something that HaShem allowed. The question is: What did the Jews do to deserve this awful decree? The Talmud sheds some light on this:

***Megilla 12a*** *R. Simon b. Yohai was asked by his disciples, Why were the enemies of Israel[[4]](#footnote-4) in that generation deserving of extermination? He said to them: Do you answer. They said: Because they partook of the feast of that wicked one.[[5]](#footnote-5) [He said to them]: If so, those in Susa should have been killed, not those in other parts?[[6]](#footnote-6) They then said, Give your answer. He said to them: It was because they bowed down to the image.[[7]](#footnote-7) They said to him, Did HaShem then show them favoritism?[[8]](#footnote-8) He replied: They only pretended to worship,[[9]](#footnote-9) and He also only pretended to exterminate them; and so it is written, For he afflicted not from his heart.[[10]](#footnote-10) In the court of the garden of the king’s palace.[[11]](#footnote-11) Rab and Samuel gave different interpretations of this — One said that those who had the entree[[12]](#footnote-12) of the court were [entertained] in the court, and those who had the entree of the garden in the garden, and those who had the entree of the palace in the palace. The other said: He first put them in the court, and it did not hold them — Then he took them into the garden and it did not hold them; and finally he had to take them into the palace, and he found room for them. In a Baraitha it was taught: He took them into the court and opened two doors for them, one into the garden and one into the palace.*

So, the Jews, of Shushan, derived pleasure from the wicked king’s party, which they probably had to go to, and the other Jews, in captivity, derived pleasure from the fact that the Shushan Jews had pleasure. So why is this worthy of Haman’s decree? Why did they have pleasure? Because even as exiles, they were elevated to the point of getting an invitation to the king’s party! This king was king over the whole world and he had invited the Jews to his party. No wonder the Jews derived pleasure from the king’s party! **The Jews, then, were defining their existence according to the laws of nature, according to logic**. It is important to recognize this in order to understand the rest of the story. HaShem is going to deal with the Jews measure for measure according to their sins. Since they followed natural law, HaShem is going to let them be buffeted by natural law. Natural law indicates that Jews do not deserve to exist, therefore Haman’s decree merely repaid the Jews measure for measure.

Haman, the Agagite, is a descendant of Amalek.[[13]](#footnote-13) Amalek’s theology is that there is no G-d Who works both naturally and supernaturally. Amalek has a philosophy that everything “just happens”. Amalekites see only the natural law. They do not acknowledge the hand of HaShem. This explains why an Amalekite appears on the scene to bring punishment to the Jews who were acting like Amalekites.

At this time in history, HaShem’s people were never more secure, according to the laws of nature. Mordechai was a high government minister, Esther was about to become queen, and the children of Israel had been elevated in status to the point that they were now being invited to the king’s palace for a party. HaShem had prepared the cure before He allowed the disease to afflict His people.

When HaShem gives measure for measure, then people always get their ‘just desserts’. Consider Vashti:

***Esther 1:10-22*** *On the seventh day, when King Achashverosh was in high spirits from wine, he commanded the seven eunuchs who served him--Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar and Carcas-- To bring before him Queen Vashti, wearing her royal crown, in order to display her beauty to the people and nobles, for she was lovely to look at. But when the attendants delivered the king’s command, Queen Vashti refused to come. Then the king became furious and burned with anger. Since it was customary for the king to consult experts in matters of law and justice, he spoke with the wise men who understood the times And were closest to the king--Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena and Memucan, the seven nobles of Persia and Media who had special access to the king and were highest in the kingdom. “According to law, what must be done to Queen Vashti?” he asked. “She has not obeyed the command of King Achashverosh that the eunuchs have taken to her.” Then Memucan replied in the presence of the king and the nobles, “Queen Vashti has done wrong, not only against the king but also against all the nobles and the peoples of all the provinces of King Achashverosh. For the queen’s conduct will become known to all the women, and so they will despise their husbands and say, ‘King Achashverosh commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, but she would not come.’ This very day the Persian and Median women of the nobility who have heard about the queen’s conduct will respond to all the king’s nobles in the same way. There will be no end of disrespect and discord. “Therefore, if it pleases the king, let him issue a royal decree and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media, which cannot be repealed, that Vashti is never again to enter the presence of King Achashverosh. Also let the king give her royal position to someone else who is better than she. Then when the king’s edict is proclaimed throughout all his vast realm, all the women will respect their husbands, from the least to the greatest.” The king and his nobles were pleased with this advice, so the king did as Memucan proposed. He sent dispatches to all parts of the kingdom, to each province in its own script and to each people in its own language, proclaiming in each people’s tongue that every man should be ruler over his own household.*

At first glance it appears as though the lecherous king has made a wicked request of an innocent woman. If we consider ‘who’ and ‘what’ Vashti was, we might think a little differently.

Vashti was the granddaughter of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. Just as Nebuchadnezzar was very wicked, so was his daughter. Vashti was just like her father. Vashti was called to appear before the king, naked on Shabbat, as punishment for her tradition of forcing enslaved Jewish girls to work for her on Shabbat stripped of their clothing. HaShem always deals midda kneged midda, measure for measure.

The next part of our story concerns a beauty contest. We can assume that most of the empire’s eligible women wanted to be queen. If you are an observant Jew, the last thing that you wanted was to be made the queen of a pagan idol worshipper. Being Achashverosh queen was the last thing that Esther wanted. Yet, that is exactly what HaShem allowed because it is the nature of lecherous kings to want the most beautiful of women:

***Esther 2:1-17*** *Later when the anger of King Achashverosh had subsided, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what he had decreed about her. Then the king’s personal attendants proposed, “Let a search be made for beautiful young virgins for the king. Let the king appoint commissioners in every province of his realm to bring all these beautiful girls into the harem at the citadel of Susa. Let them be placed under the care of Hegai, the king’s eunuch, who is in charge of the women; and let beauty treatments be given to them. Then let the girl who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti.” This advice appealed to the king, and he followed it. Now there was in the citadel of Susa a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, named Mordecai son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, Who had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, among those taken captive with Jehoiachin king of Judah. Mordecai had a cousin named Hadassah, whom he had brought up because she had neither father nor mother. This girl, who was also known as Esther, was lovely in form and features, and Mordecai had taken her as his own daughter when her father and mother died. When the king’s order and edict had been proclaimed, many girls were brought to the citadel of Susa and put under the care of Hegai. Esther also was taken to the king’s palace and entrusted to Hegai, who had charge of the harem. The girl pleased him and won his favor. Immediately he provided her with her beauty treatments and special food. He assigned to her seven maids selected from the king’s palace and moved her and her maids into the best place in the harem. Esther had not revealed her nationality and family background, because Mordecai had forbidden her to do so. Every day he walked back and forth near the courtyard of the harem to find out how Esther was and what was happening to her. Before a girl’s turn came to go in to King Achashverosh, she had to complete twelve months of beauty treatments prescribed for the women, six months with oil of myrrh and six with perfumes and cosmetics. And this is how she would go to the king: Anything she wanted was given her to take with her from the harem to return to another part of the harem to the care of Shaashgaz, the king’s eunuch who was in charge of the concubines. She would not return to the king unless he was pleased with her and summoned her by name. When the turn came for Esther (the girl Mordecai had adopted, the daughter of his uncle Abihail) to go to the king, she asked for nothing other than what Hegai, the king’s eunuch who was in charge of the harem, suggested. And Esther won the favor of everyone who saw her. She was taken to King Achashverosh in the royal residence in the tenth month, the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. Now the king was attracted to Esther more than to any of the other women, and she won his favor and approval more than any of the other virgins. So he set a royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.*

Natural law had taken its course. What Esther least wanted, that is what she got. Mordechai, Esther’s cousin and husband, was a descendant of King Saul (a son of Kish)[[14]](#footnote-14) and that makes Esther also of royal blood. Natural law dictates that those of royal blood should be king and queen. The Talmud explains:

***Megilla 12b*** *There was a certain Jew in Shushan the castle, etc. a Benjamite.[[15]](#footnote-15) What is the point of this verse? If it is to give the pedigree of Mordecai, it should trace it right back to Benjamin![[16]](#footnote-16) [Why then were only these specified?] — A Tanna taught: All of them are designations [of Mordecai]. ‘The son of Jair’ means, the son who enlightened [he’ir] the eyes of Israel by his prayer. ‘The son of Shimei means, the son to whose prayer HaShem hearkened [shama’]. ‘The son of Kish’ indicates that he knocked [hikkish] at the gates of mercy and they were opened to him. He is called ‘a Jew’ [yehudi] which implies that he came from [the tribe of] Judah, and he is called ‘a Benjamite’, which implies that he came from Benjamin. [How is this]? — R. Nahman said: He was a man of distinguished character.[[17]](#footnote-17) Rabbah b. Bar Hanah said in the name of R. Joshua b. Levi: His father was from Benjamin and his mother from Judah. The Rabbis, however, said: The tribes competed with one another [for him]. The tribe of Judah said: I am responsible for the birth of Mordecai, because David did not kill Shimei the son of Gera, and the tribe of Benjamin said: He is actually descended from me. Raba said: The community of Israel explained [the two designations] in the opposite[[18]](#footnote-18) sense: ‘See what a Judean did to me and how a Benjamite repaid me!’ What a Judean did to me viz., that David did not kill Shimei from whom was descended Mordecai who provoked Haman. ‘And how a Benjamite repaid me’, viz., that Saul did not slay Agag from whom was descended Haman who oppressed Israel. R. Johanan said: He did indeed come from Benjamin. Why then was he called ‘a Jew’? Because he repudiated idolatry. For anyone who repudiates idolatry is called ‘a Jew’, as it is written, There are certain Jews[[19]](#footnote-19) etc.*

Mordechai had raised Esther. What sort of education could Mordechai provide for Esther? Let’s look at the Talmud:

***Megilla 13b*** *In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king’s gate, Bigthan and Teresh were wroth.[[20]](#footnote-20) R. Hiyya b. Abba said in the name of R. Johanan: The Holy One, blessed be He, [once] caused a master to be wroth with his servants in order to fulfill the desire of a righteous man, namely Joseph, as it says, And there was with us there a young man, a Hebrew, etc.;[[21]](#footnote-21) and servants with their master in order to perform a miracle for a righteous man, namely, Mordecai, as it is written, ‘And the thing was known to Mordecai etc. ‘ R. Johanan said: Bigthan and Teresh were two Tarseans[[22]](#footnote-22) and conversed in the Tarsean language. They said: From the day this woman came we have been able to get no sleep.[[23]](#footnote-23) Come, let us put poison in the dish so that he will die. They did not know that Mordecai was one of those who had seats in the Chamber of Hewn Stone,[[24]](#footnote-24) and that he understood seventy languages.[[25]](#footnote-25) Said the other to him, But are not my post and your post different?[[26]](#footnote-26) He replied: I will keep guard at my post and at yours. So it is written, And when inquisition was made, he was found,[[27]](#footnote-27) that is to say, they were not [both] found at their posts.*

Since Mordechai was a member of Sanhedrin, and since we know that one of the requirements of this group was the ability to speak seventy languages, we can, therefore, know that Mordechai spoke seventy languages. If you are going to be queen over the entire world, it makes sense that a knowledge of languages would be very useful. Esther, therefore, was obviously one of the most qualified ladies, in Achashverosh kingdom, to be queen, according to natural law. To Mordechai, it did not make any sense. How could a lady be chosen who was specifically trying not to be chosen? How could a married woman be chosen in a beauty contest that was open only to virgins? Achashverosh didn’t know, or care, about Esther’s unique qualifications. He just wanted a beauty queen. HaShem’s hand is concealed as he starts to turn things upside down. Mordechai senses that HaShem is at work, so he tells Esther to keep quiet about her nationality:

***Esther 2:17-20*** *Now the king was attracted to Esther more than to any of the other women, and she won his favor and approval more than any of the other virgins. So he set a royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. And the king gave a great banquet, Esther’s banquet, for all his nobles and officials. He proclaimed a holiday throughout the provinces and distributed gifts with royal liberality. When the virgins were assembled a second time, Mordecai was sitting at the king’s gate. But Esther had kept secret her family background and nationality just as Mordecai had told her to do, for she continued to follow Mordecai’s instructions as she had done when he was bringing her up*

Esther is now in the place HaShem wanted her to be. Mordechai is almost set up. He is a minister in the palace, but we need one more piece to ensure that Mordechai is set up:

***Esther 2:21-23*** *During the time Mordecai was sitting at the king’s gate, Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s officers who guarded the doorway, became angry and conspired to assassinate King Achashverosh. But Mordecai found out about the plot and told Queen Esther, who in turn reported it to the king, giving credit to Mordecai. And when the report was investigated and found to be true, the two officials were hanged on a gallows. All this was recorded in the book of the annals in the presence of the king.*

This event is rather odd. Would you plot against the king in the earshot of one of his ministers? Obviously no! So, what’s going on here? The answer relates to Mordechai’s ability to speak seventy languages. The guards did not expect Mordechai to understand since he was not one of their countrymen. Mordechai is wearing his kipah[[28]](#footnote-28) (yarmulke) and his tzitzit[[29]](#footnote-29) were hanging out. His white beard and obvious Jewish attire were not what the guards were wearing. Mordechai was different.

Mordechai is now set up. He has his position and he has the king’s good graces. But, something odd happened. He has given the king information which saved his life, yet Mordechai did not get rewarded. If you are king and depend on ‘tips’ from your subjects, you are in a very bad way if you don’t give a reward for information. Obviously no one will risk giving the king information if there is no reward. Therefore, no reward, no information.

Our story seems very illogical so far. Esther is chosen for queen, when she tries not to be chosen. She is married and the contest was only for virgins. Mordechai saves the kings life, but he receives no reward. This is all very illogical.

It is now time to turn our attention to Haman. Who is Haman?

***Esther 3:1-2*** *After these events, King Achashverosh honored Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, elevating him and giving him a seat of honor higher than that of all the other nobles. All the royal officials at the king’s gate knelt down and paid honor to Haman, for the king had commanded this concerning him. But Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor.*

Haman is a descendant of Agag the Amalekite! The Talmud, which we read earlier, has described Haman as a descendent of Agag who was conceived because of king Saul’s misplaced mercy. The Amalekites were dedicated to the destruction of the Children of Israel:

***Shemot (Exodus) 17:8*** *The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim.*

Because of this attack, HaShem dictated that the Amalekites should all be destroyed.

***Shemot (Exodus) 17:14-16*** *Then HaShem said to Moses, “Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it, because I will completely blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.” Moses built an altar and called it HaShem is my Banner. He said, “For hands were lifted up to the throne of HaShem. HaShem will be at war against the Amalekites from generation to generation.”*

King Saul failed to obey HaShem’s command to kill EVERY Amalekite. He spared the king of the Amalekites:

***I Shmuel (Samuel) 15:8-9*** *He took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and all his people he totally destroyed with the sword. But Saul and the army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs-- everything that was good. These they were unwilling to destroy completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed.*

Haman has a most despicable heritage. The task that king Saul was charged with: the destruction of Agag, will be accomplished by Saul’s descendent, Mordechai; upon Agag’s descendent, Haman.

Haman had a problem:

***Esther 3:2-11*** *All the royal officials at the king’s gate knelt down and paid honor to Haman, for the king had commanded this concerning him. But Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor. Then the royal officials at the king’s gate asked Mordecai, “Why do you disobey the king’s command?” Day after day they spoke to him but he refused to comply. Therefore they told Haman about it to see whether Mordecai’s behavior would be tolerated, for he had told them he was a Jew. When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor, he was enraged. Yet having learned who Mordecai’s people were, he scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai. Instead Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai’s people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Achashverosh. In the twelfth year of King Achashverosh, in the first month, the month of Nisan, they cast the <pur> (that is, the lot) in the presence of Haman to select a day and month. And the lot fell on the twelfth month, the month of Adar. Then Haman said to King Achashverosh, “There is a certain people dispersed and scattered among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom whose customs are different from those of all other people and who do not obey the king’s laws; it is not in the king’s best interest to tolerate them. If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them, and I will put ten thousand talents of silver into the royal treasury for the men who carry out this business.” So the king took his signet ring from his finger and gave it to Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. “Keep the money,” the king said to Haman, “and do with the people as you please.”*

Haman wanted worship from Mordechai, but Mordechai would not worship Haman. Haman is enraged. He goes to Achashverosh and he ‘logically’ explains the problem. The Jews are all spread out and they have customs that are different. These are the characteristics of HaShem’s people. They wear different clothes. They wear different hair styles. They pray differently. They are dispersed throughout the entire world, yet they still look and act alike. This is still true of HaShem’s people today.

Achashverosh agrees with logic and does not listen to the money. Logic says that the Jews do not deserve to be alive. Because the Jews had relied on logic at Achashverosh party, HaShem will allow logic to have its way with the Children of Israel.

Achashverosh show his true character and allows the destruction of HaShem’s people. Notice that Achashverosh acts illogically towards HaShem’s people. He should have had Haman draft the law and give it to the king for review before he uses his signet ring. But, that is not what happens. Achashverosh is so hateful towards HaShem’s people that he just gives Haman the signet ring. This enables Haman to draft whatever he wants, and the king does not care. Achashverosh is not a nice guy.

So, what is the significance of the day that the order goes out?

***Esther 3:12-15*** *Then on the thirteenth day of the first month the royal secretaries were summoned. They wrote out in the script of each province and in the language of each people all Haman’s orders to the king’s satraps, the governors of the various provinces and the nobles of the various peoples. These were written in the name of King Achashverosh himself and sealed with his own ring. Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king’s provinces with the order to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews--young and old, women and little children--on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods. A copy of the text of the edict was to be issued as law in every province and made known to the people of every nationality so they would be ready for that day. Spurred on by the king’s command, the couriers went out, and the edict was issued in the citadel of Susa. The king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Susa was bewildered.*

It is two days before Passover! Passover is supposed to be the feast of our physical freedom. Instead it has been turned into a time of mourning.

At this point the lights should be going on in Mordechai’s head. He should immediately realize why Esther became queen. He should have immediately requested that she appeal to the king to spare their lives. Mordechai does not do the logical thing. He realizes that HaShem is allowing this for a reason. He analyzes and understands that it is a result of their logical attitude towards Achashverosh’s party. So he does not do the logical thing. Mordecai does a very strange thing.

***Esther 4:1-4*** *When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly. But he went only as far as the king’s gate, because no one clothed in sackcloth was allowed to enter it. In every province to which the edict and order of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing. Many lay in sackcloth and ashes. When Esther’s maids and eunuchs came and told her about Mordecai, she was in great distress. She sent clothes for him to put on instead of his sackcloth, but he would not accept them.*

Mordechai begins to act as though he trusts in HaShem, not in logic or natural law. Notice that Mordechai is not the only one to adopt this attitude. All of the Children of Israel adopt this attitude. HaShem’s people have begun the process of returning to HaShem. No one has gone to appeal to the queen. No one has acted logically. Esther does not even know what is going on. After he mourned, one would expect Mordechai to go in to the queen. Instead he rips his royal garment and wears sackcloth to ensure that he cann*ot* go in to the queen!

The Midrash records that Mordecai went and taught 22,000 children the laws of the Mincha (meal) offering. This is odd. He didn’t go out and give to charity or do other mitzvot. Instead he taught those who were least able to help HaShem’s people, and he taught them a part of Torah that would not help them out of their predicament. In fact, he taught them something that they could not do, because the Temple was destroyed. This was very illogical, but it demonstrated that He was going to depend on HaShem to handle the situation. He recognized the problem.

***Midrash Rabbah - Esther IX:4*** *4. Having made the gallows, he went to Mordecai, whom he found in the house of study with the schoolchildren sitting before him with sackcloth on their loins, studying the Torah and crying and weeping. He counted them and found twenty-two thousand children. He put chains of iron on them and set guards over them, saying, ‘ Tomorrow I will kill these children first, and then I will hang Mordecai.’ Their mothers brought them bread and water and said to them: ‘Children, eat and drink before you die to-morrow, and do not die of starvation.’ Straightway they put their hands on their books and swore by the life of Mordecai their teacher saying, ‘We will neither eat nor drink, but will die while still fasting.’ They all wept piteously until the sound of their crying ascended to heaven and the Holy One, blessed be He, heard the sound of their weeping at about the second hour of the night. At that moment the compassion of the Holy One, blessed be He, was stirred, and He arose from the Throne of Judgment and sat on the Throne of Mercy and said: ‘What is this loud noise that I hear as the bleating of kids and lambs?’ Moses our teacher thereupon stood before the Holy One, blessed be He, and said: ‘ Sovereign of the Universe, they are neither kids nor lambs, but the little ones of Thy people who have been keeping a fast now for three days and for three nights, and tomorrow the enemy means to slaughter them like kids and lambs.’ At that moment the Holy One, blessed be He, took the letters containing their doom which were signed with a seal of clay and tore them and brought fright upon Ahasuerus in that night, as it says, ON THAT NIGHT. etc. (VI, 1).*

Mordechai had taught the children that they needed to attach themselves to HaShem. In teaching the children, he had taught their parents. They had all learned the lesson of the meal offering. They had all learned that they needed to draw closer to HaShem. Mordechai taught the meal offering in order to teach Torah. He taught a part of Torah that the children could not possibly fulfill in order to demonstrate that Torah study alone will draw us closer to HaShem. This is the importance of Torah study.

About this time, Esther is beside herself trying to figure out what is wrong with Mordechai. He does not want to cooperate with her. So, she sends out a very special person as her messenger:

***Esther 4:5-9*** *Then Esther summoned Hathach, one of the king’s eunuchs assigned to attend her, and ordered him to find out what was troubling Mordecai and why. So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king’s gate. Mordecai told him everything that had happened to him, including the exact amount of money Haman had promised to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews. He also gave him a copy of the text of the edict for their annihilation, which had been published in Susa, to show to Esther and explain it to her, and he told him to urge her to go into the king’s presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people. Hathach went back and reported to Esther what Mordecai had said.*

Our Sages teach that Hathach is Daniel. The prophet Daniel who has prophesied regarding the end of days, one of HaShem’s mightiest servants. He was still serving in the palace, in exile. Mordechai tells Hathach the problem and he gives instructions to Esther.

Now Esther responds with logic to tell Mordechai why she can’t obey his instructions:

***Esther 4:10-11*** *Then she instructed him to say to Mordecai, “All the king’s officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that he be put to death. The only exception to this is for the king to extend the gold scepter to him and spare his life. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king.”*

Esther does not yet understand the problem, but she is no dummy. She realizes, quickly, when Mordechai explains it to her:

***Esther 4:12-17*** *When Esther’s words were reported to Mordecai, He sent back this answer: “Do not think that because you are in the king’s house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?” Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: “Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.” So Mordecai went away and carried out all of Esther’s instructions.*

Now Esther gets it! She starts to act illogically. Instead of making herself beautiful before going in to the king, she makes herself ugly by fasting for three days. This is very illogical, but Esther now understands what Mordechai understood. She must quit trusting logic and natural law. She must begin to trust wholeheartedly in HaShem. Mordechai was now confident that she understood because he went out to carry out her wishes, where he had ignored them before.

It is important to understand how illogical it is for Mordechai, Esther, and the other Jews to fast for three days. one of the three days will be Passover! Passover is a feast! You are not allowed to fast on Passover. You are commanded by HaShem to eat!

The decree then went out on Nisan 13. So Esther and the Jews of Shushan fasted on Nisan 13, 14, and 15. The evening of the 14th was HaShem’s Passover feast:

***Vayikra (Leviticus) 23:5*** *HaShem’s Passover begins at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month.*

The Midrash states that Mordechai protested the fast on Passover. Esther replied that if there are no Israelites, there will be no Passover! Mordechai, obviously, agreed. **The deliverance of the Israelites has begun! No wonder it takes place on Passover!** Once the Children of Israel begin returning to HaShem, He promises that He will deliver them. Isn’t HaShem’s timing perfect?

***Midrash Rabbah - Esther VIII:7*** *7.THEN ESTHER BADE THEM RETURN ANSWER UNTO MORDECAI (ib. 15). She said to him: GO, GATHER TOGETHER ALL THE JEWS THAT ARE PRESENT IN SHUSHAN, AND FAST YE FOR ME, AND NEITHER EAT NOR DRINK THREE DAYS (ib, 16): these were the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth of Nisan. He sent back word to her: But these include the first day of Passover? She replied: Elder of Israel, why is there a Passover?[[30]](#footnote-30) Mordecai thereupon acceded to her request, as it says, SO MORDECAI WENT HIS WAY, AND DID ACCORDING TO ALL AT ESTHER HAD COMMANDED HIM (ib. 17). In Babylon they say that this[[31]](#footnote-31) means that he spent the festival of Passover in fasting on account of that calamity. Mordecai prayed to the Lord and said: ‘ It is fully known before the throne of Thy glory, O Lord of all worlds, that it was not from pride of heart or vain gloriousness that I acted in not bowing down to Haman, but through fear of Thee I did thus, not to bow down to him, for I was in fear of Thee lest I should assign Thy honour to flesh and blood, and I was not willing to bow down to any beside Thee. For who am I that I should not bow down to Haman for the salvation of Thy people Israel? For that I would even kiss his shoe-latchet. Now therefore, our G-d, deliver us, we pray Thee, from his hand and let him fall into the pit which he has dug and let him be caught in the snare which he has hidden for the feet of Thy saints, and let this sinner know that Thou hast not forgotten the promise*

Three days later, Esther does another illogical thing:

***Esther 5:1-5*** *On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king’s hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall, facing the entrance. When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand. So Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter. Then the king asked, “What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you.” “If it pleases the king,” replied Esther, “let the king, together with Haman, come today to a banquet I have prepared for him.” “Bring Haman at once,” the king said, “so that we may do what Esther asks.” So the king and Haman went to the banquet Esther had prepared.*

Esther puts her life on the line to go ask the king to deliver her people. When her life is spared, her wildest hopes are also answered: the king is disposed to give her ANYTHING she wants, up to half of his kingdom. Does she make her appeal for her people? NO! Instead she invites the king, and Haman to a wine party. This is very illogical. What is going on here?

Queen Esther enters Achashverosh’s palace just as the High Priest gingerly and reverently steps into the Holy of Holies to atone for the Jewish people. Whereas the High Priest wears simple, modest clothing upon his reverent penetration into the Holy of Holies, the queen wears lavish, seductive attire in her attempt to appease the gluttonous king. The High Priest enters twice, first to produce the thick cloud of the incense to cover the Ark, and thereafter to actually perform the service of sprinkling the blood to obtain atonement. Correspondingly, Esther first enters the royal chamber to invite the king to her feast, the purpose of which is to confuse and blur the king’s perception. Thereafter, after Haman is hung, she enters once again to plead with the king to annul the threatening decree.

When they have all feasted, the king is again favorably disposed towards Esther:

***Esther 5:6-8*** *As they were drinking wine, the king again asked Esther, “Now what is your petition? It will be given you. And what is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted.” Esther replied, “My petition and my request is this: If the king regards me with favor and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for them. Then I will answer the king’s question.”*

So, does Esther make an appeal for her people? NO! She again does an illogical thing: she invites the king and Haman to another party. What is going on here? Since we have this question, HaShem proceeds to answer it for us:

***Esther 5:9-14*** *Haman went out that day happy and in high spirits. But when he saw Mordecai at the king’s gate and observed that he neither rose nor showed fear in his presence, he was filled with rage against Mordecai. Nevertheless, Haman restrained himself and went home. Calling together his friends and Zeresh, his wife, Haman boasted to them about his vast wealth, his many sons, and all the ways the king had honored him and how he had elevated him above the other nobles and officials. “And that’s not all,” Haman added. “I’m the only person Queen Esther invited to accompany the king to the banquet she gave. And she has invited me along with the king tomorrow. But all this gives me no satisfaction as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the king’s gate.” His wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, “Have a gallows built, seventy-five feet high, and ask the king in the morning to have Mordecai hanged on it. Then go with the king to the dinner and be happy.” This suggestion delighted Haman, and he had the gallows built.*

So, now we know why Haman was invited, he was invited to make him so confident that he decides to show his heart and attempt to destroy Mordechai. We also see his wife’s heart and his sons’ hearts. They are all alike in their hatred of the Jews. They have the heart of hatred, of the Amalekites.

Now we need to figure out why Esther is waiting to ask her question. Let’s see the set up that HaShem has put together to give us some clues:

***Esther 6:1-14*** *That night the king could not sleep; so he ordered the book of the chronicles, the record of his reign, to be brought in and read to him. It was found recorded there that Mordecai had exposed Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s officers who guarded the doorway, who had conspired to assassinate King Achashverosh. “What honor and recognition has Mordecai received for this?” the king asked. “Nothing has been done for him,” his attendants answered. The king said, “Who is in the court?” Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the palace to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows he had erected for him. His attendants answered, “Haman is standing in the court.” “Bring him in,” the king ordered. When Haman entered, the king asked him, “What should be done for the man the king delights to honor?” Now Haman thought to himself, “Who is there that the king would rather honor than me?” So he answered the king, “For the man the king delights to honor, Have them bring a royal robe the king has worn and a horse the king has ridden, one with a royal crest placed on its head. Then let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the king’s most noble princes. Let them robe the man the king delights to honor, and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, ‘This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!’“ “Go at once,” the king commanded Haman. “Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king’s gate. Do not neglect anything you have recommended.” So Haman got the robe and the horse. He robed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city streets, proclaiming before him, “This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!” Afterward Mordecai returned to the king’s gate. But Haman rushed home, with his head covered in grief, And told Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him. His advisers and his wife Zeresh said to him, “Since Mordecai, before whom your downfall has started, is of Jewish origin, you cannot stand against him--you will surely come to ruin!” While they were still talking with him, the king’s eunuchs arrived and hurried Haman away to the banquet Esther had prepared.*

In perhaps the most famous scene of the entire Megilla, Mordechai is paraded on horseback through the streets of Shushan, wearing the royal robes, with Haman leading the way.

After this incident, Haman returns home “with his head covered” (6:12). The Midrash explains the meaning of this phrase: When the parade route passed by Haman’s house, his daughter saw them coming and had a great idea: She would take a chamber pot up to the second floor window, and pour its contents on Mordechai’s head! The only problem is that the girl assumed it was her wonderful father being honored on horseback, with that lowly Jew Mordechai pulling him along. So when the parade passed by, she timed it perfectly and, splash! The one pulling the horse got it right on the head.

The Midrash says that when the girl saw that she’d dumped toilet waste all over her father, she was so despondent that she jumped out of the window to her death. And Haman returned home “with his head covered.”

To make matters worse, Haman found little encouragement at home: His wife Zeresh tells him: “If this is how things are going, you’re going to lose your fight against the Jewish People!”[[32]](#footnote-32)

# The King can’t sleep

What causes a king to lose sleep? Surely not money worries or hunger. Yet, here is a sleepless king. Something is bothering him, but what? We can tell by what he does: he has his servant read the book of chronicles to him. This would seem to indicate that he is looking for a reason to explain why certain types of things are not happening. From his answer it appears that he is no longer getting tips from his subjects. The subjects are not likely to risk going to the king with a tip if he does not reward them. When the king discovers that he has never rewarded Mordechai, he finally understands why he hasn’t been receiving any tips lately. The word has gotten out that he in ungrateful and that he never rewarded Mordechai for saving his life. The king immediately sets about to correct this problem. This is the set up that will lead us to Esther’s strange behavior. After Esther observes Haman’s debasement and Mordechai’s elevation, she immediately pops the question. It appears that she was looking to see if HaShem was predisposed towards helping her and her people. After this little parade she has her answer.

HaShem has seen that his people have recognized their sin in failing to look to Him for the reason for their existence. The People of Israel have recognized their sin at the beginning of Esther, the party sin. They have repented and begun to look to HaShem for their the reason for their existence.

Now, let’s see how HaShem will destroy the Amalekite, Haman:

***Esther 7:1-10*** *So the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther, And as they were drinking wine on that second day, the king again asked, “Queen Esther, what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted.” Then Queen Esther answered, “If I have found favor with you, O king, and if it pleases your majesty, grant me my life--this is my petition. And spare my people--this is my request. For I and my people have been sold for destruction and slaughter and annihilation. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the king.” King Achashverosh asked Queen Esther, “Who is he? Where is the man who has dared to do such a thing?” Esther said, “The adversary and enemy is this vile Haman.” Then Haman was terrified before the king and queen. The king got up in a rage, left his wine and went out into the palace garden. But Haman, realizing that the king had already decided his fate, stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life. Just as the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet hall, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was reclining. The king exclaimed, “Will he even molest the queen while she is with me in the house?” As soon as the word left the king’s mouth, they covered Haman’s face. Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs attending the king, said, “A gallows seventy-five feet high stands by Haman’s house. He had it made for Mordecai, who spoke up to help the king.” The king said, “Hang him on it!” So they hanged Haman on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king’s fury subsided.*

Haman constructed the gallows using the beam from Noah’s ark that was fifty amot long. This transcendent ark was used to preserve the Jewish people twice.

At the second wine feast, she recounts the story of Passover from the first person, including herself as part of the Exodus from Egypt, as we are commanded to do. Esther’s words are allusions to the story of Passover: “The Jews were sold to be destroyed, slain, and exterminated”[[33]](#footnote-33). Esther now reveals that she is Jewish and that genocide is planned against her people.

Outraged, the king demands to know who would dare threaten the Queen and her relatives[[34]](#footnote-34). Esther points to none other than Haman!

Haman is aghast and while pleading with Esther, accidentally falls on “the couch upon which Esther was”[[35]](#footnote-35). This is an allusion to the custom to lean during the seder rather than sit.

Measure for measure, HaShem has given to Haman as Haman had given to Mordechai. Haman had sought to debase Mordechai, and had been debased himself. He had sought to hang Mordechai, and had been hung on his own gallows.

Haman had sought to destroy his enemies, the Jews; and HaShem turned that about and used the Jews to destroy their enemies.

Esther was not content to see the vile Haman dead. She immediately put her life at risk again:

***Esther 8:1-8*** *That same day King Achashverosh gave Queen Esther the estate of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came into the presence of the king, for Esther had told how he was related to her. The king took off his signet ring, which he had reclaimed from Haman, and presented it to Mordecai. And Esther appointed him over Haman’s estate. Esther again pleaded with the king, falling at his feet and weeping. She begged him to put an end to the evil plan of Haman the Agagite, which he had devised against the Jews. Then the king extended the gold scepter to Esther and she arose and stood before him. “If it pleases the king,” she said, “and if he regards me with favor and thinks it the right thing to do, and if he is pleased with me, let an order be written overruling the dispatches that Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, devised and wrote to destroy the Jews in all the king’s provinces. For how can I bear to see disaster fall on my people? How can I bear to see the destruction of my family?” King Achashverosh replied to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, “Because Haman attacked the Jews, I have given his estate to Esther, and they have hanged him on the gallows. Now write another decree in the king’s name in behalf of the Jews as seems best to you, and seal it with the king’s signet ring--for no document written in the king’s name and sealed with his ring can be revoked.”*

HaShem has decided to hear Esther’s plea. The king, again, extends his scepter, and again invites her to make a request. This time he cannot do what she wants, but he does what he can. He invites Esther and Mordechai to come up with a solution. The solution is illogical.

***Esther 8:9-17*** *At once the royal secretaries were summoned--on the twenty-third day of the third month, the month of Sivan. They wrote out all Mordecai’s orders to the Jews, and to the satraps, governors and nobles of the 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush. These orders were written in the script of each province and the language of each people and also to the Jews in their own script and language. Mordecai wrote in the name of King Achashverosh , sealed the dispatches with the king’s signet ring, and sent them by mounted couriers, who rode fast horses especially bred for the king. The king’s edict granted the Jews in every city the right to assemble and protect themselves; to destroy, kill and annihilate any armed force of any nationality or province that might attack them and their women and children; and to plunder the property of their enemies. The day appointed for the Jews to do this in all the provinces of King Achashverosh was the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar. A copy of the text of the edict was to be issued as law in every province and made known to the people of every nationality so that the Jews would be ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies. The couriers, riding the royal horses, raced out, spurred on by the king’s command. And the edict was also issued in the citadel of Susa. Mordecai left the king’s presence wearing royal garments of blue and white, a large crown of gold and a purple robe of fine linen. And the city of Susa held a joyous celebration. For the Jews it was a time of happiness and joy, gladness and honor. In every province and in every city, wherever the edict of the king went, there was joy and gladness among the Jews, with feasting and celebrating. And many people of other nationalities became Jews because fear of the Jews had seized them.*

Mordechai had written a new decree that enabled the Jews to defend themselves and to slay their enemies. This is illogical. How could a small group of people from the southern kingdom of Judah, possibly fight the whole world? What chance did they have?

As if this is not illogical enough, Mordechai and the Children of Israel go out with JOY and begin celebrating! They haven’t even started to fight, and they are already celebrating! What is going on here? The Children of Israel had already figured out that if they rely on HaShem, He will not disappoint them. They knew they had the victory because they knew that the battle belonged to HaShem. The Children of Israel had learned their lesson well.

And that which was illogical, happened:

***Esther 9:1 - 10:3*** *On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, the edict commanded by the king was to be carried out. On this day the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, but now the tables were turned and the Jews got the upper hand over those who hated them. The Jews assembled in their cities in all the provinces of King Achashverosh to attack those seeking their destruction. No one could stand against them, because the people of all the other nationalities were afraid of them. And all the nobles of the provinces, the satraps, the governors and the king’s administrators helped the Jews, because fear of Mordecai had seized them. Mordecai was prominent in the palace; his reputation spread throughout the provinces, and he became more and more powerful. The Jews struck down all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying them, and they did what they pleased to those who hated them. In the citadel of Susa, the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men. They also killed Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai and Vaizatha, The ten sons of Haman son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews. But they did not lay their hands on the plunder. The number of those slain in the citadel of Susa was reported to the king that same day. The king said to Queen Esther, “The Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men and the ten sons of Haman in the citadel of Susa. What have they done in the rest of the king’s provinces? Now what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? It will also be granted.” “If it pleases the king,” Esther answered, “give the Jews in Susa permission to carry out this day’s edict* ***tomorrow*** *also, and let Haman’s ten sons be hanged on gallows.” So the king commanded that this be done. An edict was issued in Susa, and they hanged the ten sons of Haman. The Jews in Susa came together on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar, and they put to death in Susa three hundred men, but they did not lay their hands on the plunder. Meanwhile, the remainder of the Jews who were in the king’s provinces also assembled to protect themselves and get relief from their enemies. They killed seventy-five thousand of them but did not lay their hands on the plunder. This happened on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar, and on the fourteenth they rested and made it a day of feasting and joy. The Jews in Susa, however, had assembled on the thirteenth and fourteenth, and then on the fifteenth they rested and made it a day of feasting and joy. That is why rural Jews--those living in villages-- observe the fourteenth of the month of Adar as a day of joy and feasting, a day for giving presents to each other. Mordecai recorded these events, and he sent letters to all the Jews throughout the provinces of King Achashverosh, near and far, To have them celebrate annually the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar As the time when the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month when their sorrow was turned into joy and their mourning into a day of celebration. He wrote them to observe the days as days of feasting and joy and giving presents of food to one another and gifts to the poor. So the Jews agreed to continue the celebration they had begun, doing what Mordecai had written to them. For Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them and had cast the <pur> (that is, the lot) for their ruin and destruction. But when the plot came to the king’s attention, he issued written orders that the evil scheme Haman had devised against the Jews should come back onto his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. (Therefore these days were called Purim, from the word <pur>.) Because of everything written in this letter and because of what they had seen and what had happened to them, The Jews took it upon themselves to establish the custom that they and their descendants and all who join them should without fail observe these two days every year, in the way prescribed and at the time appointed. These days should be remembered and observed in every generation by every family, and in every province and in every city. And these days of Purim should never cease to be celebrated by the Jews, nor should the memory of them die out among their descendants. So Queen Esther, daughter of Abihail, along with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter concerning Purim. And Mordecai sent letters to all the Jews in the 127 provinces of the kingdom of Achashverosh --words of goodwill and assurance-- To establish these days of Purim at their designated times, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had decreed for them, and as they had established for themselves and their descendants in regard to their times of fasting and lamentation. Esther’s decree confirmed these regulations about Purim, and it was written down in the records. King Achashverosh imposed tribute throughout the empire, to its distant shores. And all his acts of power and might, together with a full account of the greatness of Mordecai to which the king had raised him, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Media and Persia? Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Achashverosh , preeminent among the Jews, and held in high esteem by his many fellow Jews, because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews.*

# Haman’s Ten Sons

In the above passage, an intriguing dialog takes place between Esther and Achashverosh. First Esther tells us that the ten sons of Haman, by name, have been killed on the first day of battle. On the second day of battle, in Shushan, she asks that the ten sons of Haman be hung on the gallows. If the ten sons are already dead, why bother to hang them? In verse 9:13, the sages made a comment on the word tomorrow:

*“There is a tomorrow* (machar) *that is now, and a tomorrow which is later.”[[36]](#footnote-36)*

In other words, Esther was asking for Haman’s sons to be hung now, and also to be hung later in history. Her request was obviously not something that Achashverosh could grant. Only HaShem could keep such a promise.

According to the Sages, every time *King Achashverosh* is mentioned by name, in the book of Esther, it refers to Achashverosh. Every time the text merely says, *the King*, it refers to *HaShem*.

So, in the above scripture, we can see that Esther is addressing her request, that Haman’s sons be hanged, to *HaShem*. In Esther 9:14, The King, HaShem, grants Esther her request:

*“And the King commanded it be done.”*

Since HaShem always fulfills His word, we should expect this prophecy to be fulfilled. 2300 years after Esther, we again encounter the sons of Amalek. The New York Times has the following headline:

GOERING ENDS LIFE BY POISON, 10 OTHERS HANGED IN NUREMBERG PRISON FOR NAZI WAR CRIMES; DOOMED MEN ON GALLOWS PRAY FOR GERMANY

When Haman was leading Mordechai through Shushan on the King’s horse, Haman’s daughter emptied the chamber pot on the one who was leading the horse. She thought that Mordechai was leading the horse, while Haman was being honored. When she discovered her error, she committed suicide by throwing herself from the balcony, even as Goering committed suicide before he was to be hung.

Nachmanides asserted that any change, from the normal, in a word or letter of the Tanakh,[[37]](#footnote-37) indicates some hidden meaning. If you examine the list of Haman’s ten sons in Megillat Esther, you will notice that three letters are written differently:

1. The letter **ת** “Tav” in Parshandatah is small,

2. The letter **ש** “Shin” in Parmashtah is small,

3. The letter **ז** “Zayin” in Vayztah is small, and

4. The letter **ו** “Vav” in Vayzatah is large.

The Tav **ת**, the shin **ש**, and the zayin **ז** are written smaller. The vav is larger than the others. The three letters together form **ז**” **שת**, the number 707.

The vav **ו** is a six, as in the sixth millennium or 5707, which is 1946 c.e. This is the year that the ten Nazis were hung.

One of the condemned men, Julius Streicher, shouted *“Purimfest 1946”* as the trap door was sprung.[[38]](#footnote-38) Streicher obviously grasped some of the significance of this event.

The hanging took place on October 16, 1947, which was Tishre 21, 5707, it was Hoshana Rabba, which is the day when HaShem’s verdicts are sealed:

***Zohar Vayikra - 31b*** *“...On the 7th day of the Succoth (Tabernacles) festival, the judgment of the nations of the world is finalized. Sentences are issued from the residence of the King. Judgments are aroused and executed on that day.”*

Wherever you find someone with a fanatical, implacable and illogical enmity to the Jewish People, you have found Amalek. His very existence is founded on his antipathy and hatred for the offspring of Jacob, the agents of that bondage, called conscience. Amalek is called the first of the nations. He was the first of the nations to attack Israel. Everything that is first contains the blueprint of all that is to follow. The seed comes first. Contained in the seed is the tree. Amalek is the bitter seed of Jew hatred.

Rabbi Weissmandl, a great Hungarian scholar and holocaust survivor, made a number of findings concerning Megillat Esther using skip distances of 12,111 letters, the exact number of letters in Megillat Esther. If one starts with the first regular *mem* מ (as opposed to the "final mem ם" ) in **Bereshit 4:14**, where the name Esther (vocalized differently) appears for the only time in the Torah, and count at intervals of 12,111 letters, one finds spelled out the phrase "Megillat Esther." Coincidence? I think not.

# Hints To Something Deeper

In the last sect we learned that according to our Sages, every time *King Achashverosh* is mentioned by name, in the book of Esther, it refers to Achashverosh. Every time the text merely says, *the King*, it refers to *HaShem*.

Additionally, every time the text refers to *Queen Esther* by name, in the book of Esther, it refers to Esther. Every time the text merely say *the Queen*, it refers to both klal Israel[[39]](#footnote-39) and to Mashiach. This is a fantastic understanding! Consider the following pesukim (be aware that this idea applies to the entire scroll of Esther, not just these portions):

***Esther 4:44*** *… Then was the queen* (klal Israel & Mashiach) *exceedingly grieved; and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him: but he received it not.*

***Esther 7:6*** *And Esther said, The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman. Then Haman was afraid before the king* (HaShem) *and the queen* (klal Israel & Mashiach).

***Esther 7:8-10*** *Then the king* (HaShem) *returned out of the palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther was. Then said the king, Will he force the queen* (klal Israel & Mashiach) *also before me in the house? As the word went out of the king’s* (HaShem’s) *mouth, they covered Haman’s face. And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king* (HaShem)*, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king* (HaShem) *said, Hang him thereon. So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king’s* (HaShem’s) *wrath pacified.*

***Esther 8:3-6*** *And Esther spake yet again before the king* (HaShem)*, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews. 4 Then the king* (HaShem) *held out the golden sceptre toward Esther. So Esther arose, and stood before the king* (HaShem)*, 5 And said, If it please the king* (HaShem)*, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which are in all the king’s provinces: 6 For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?*

***Esther 8:8-9*** *Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king’s* (HaShem’s) *name, and seal it with the king’s ring: for the writing which is written in the king’s* (HaShem’s) *name, and sealed with the king’s* (HaShem’s) *ring, may no man reverse. 9 Then were the king’s* (HaShem’s) *scribes called at that time in the third month, that is, the month Sivan, on the three and twentieth day thereof; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded unto the Jews, and to the lieutenants, and the deputies and rulers of the provinces which are from India unto Ethiopia, an hundred twenty and seven provinces, unto every province according to the writing thereof, and unto every people after their language, and to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language.*

***Esther 8:11- 9:1*** *Wherein the king* (HaShem) *granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, both little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey, 12 Upon one day in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, namely, upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar. 13 The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, and that the Jews should be ready against that day to avenge themselves on their enemies. 14 So the posts that rode upon mules and camels went out, being hastened and pressed on by the king’s* (HaShem’s) *commandment. And the decree was given at Shushan the palace. 15 And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king* (HaShem) *in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad. 16 The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour. 17 And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king’s* (HaShem’s) *commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them. 1 Now in the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king’s* (HaShem’s) *commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, (though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them;) 2 The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as sought their hurt: and no man could withstand them; for the fear of them fell upon all people. 3 And all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and officers of the king* (HaShem)*, helped the Jews; because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them. 4 For Mordecai was great in the king’s* (HaShem’s) *house, and his fame went out throughout all the provinces: for this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater. 5 Thus the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter, and destruction, and did what they would unto those that hated them.*

Now we can begin to understand the deeper meaning for why we wear costumes on Purim. A mask covers the identity and hence the existence of the other person. It is only when we lift the mask that we can see who is behind it. Our costumes are symbolic of HaShem's costume (nature) which is the world itself. In fact the Hebrew word for world which is "olam" comes from the word "elem" meaning hidden. We say in our prayers "Melech HaOlam", king of universe, it can also be read "Melech HaElem" king of hiddenness. Words such as luck, coincidence, and nature hide the presence of HaShem and it is our job to see through the mask and reveal HaShem’s presence in the world.

Finally, our Sages teach that on Purim we are not to withhold from anyone when it is within our power to give. This means that when a poor man begs, we are not to withhold from him even if in our judgment he is undeserving. We must give and give liberally to all who ask! The flip side of this command is that HaShem will be thus favorably disposed to our requests on Purim. He will not withhold from those who ask, just as He commanded us. HaShem keeps His mitzvot. This can be seen as a hint in the following pasuk:

***Esther 8:8-9*** *Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king’s name, and seal it with the king’s ring: for the writing which is written in the king’s name, and sealed with the king’s ring, may no man revers*

\* \* \*

Shemii cursed King David. David could have executed on the spot because of this. Now David indicated that his men should leave Shemii alone.

Because the king may not forgive his own honor. Everyone else could forgive his honor, but not a king.

King David saw prophetically that Shemii’s descendent would be Mordechai (in the book of Esther). Still, how could he forgive his honor?

Because the Jews whole-heartedly accepted the Oral Torah on Purim as a result of the life of Mordechai. This was to King David’s honor.

## Unusual Words

We have a custom that four verses, in Megillat Esther, are first read aloud by the congregation and then repeated by the reader. The four verses are:

***Esther 2:5*** *Now there was a Jew in the city of Shushan whose name was Mordecai son of Jair son of Shimei son of Kish, a Benjaminite.*

***Esther 8:15*** *Then Mordecai went out from the presence of the King, wearing royal robes of blue and white, with a great golden crown and a mantle of fine linen and purple, while the city of Shushan shouted and rejoiced.*

***Esther, 8:16*** *For the Jews there was light and gladness, joy and honor.*

***Esther 10:3*** *For Mordecai the Jew was next in rank to King Ahasuerus, and he was powerful among the Jews and popular with his many kindred, for he sought the good of his people and interceded for the welfare of all his descendants.*

These four verses can be viewed as a compressed version of the central narrative of the story of Purim. The first introduces the hero, Mordecai. The second and third verses describe Mordecai’s personal victory over Haman and the parallel triumph of the Jewish people over their enemies. The fourth and final verse, which describes Mordecai’s importance in the royal court, reaffirms the possibility of a safe and meaningful Jewish existence in galut.

There is an interesting idea in the first of these four pesukim which is worth exploring.

***Esther 2:5*** *There was a certain Jew in Shushan the castle, whose name was Mordecai the son of Jair the son of Shimei the son of Kish, a Benjamite* - אִישׁ יְהוּדִי, הָיָה בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה; וּשְׁמוֹ מָרְדֳּכַי - Ish YEHUDI haya be‑SHUSHAN Ha‑BIRA ‑ u‑shmo MORDECHEI.

Even though this pasuk is read aloud by the entire congregation, most people do not appreciate its 'sting'. However, an ear tuned to the prophecies of Zecharya and familiar with Tanach immediately catches its irony:

ISH YEHUDI - implies more than simply someone who is Jewish;

HA'BIRA - implies more than just 'the capital city'; and

MORDECHAI - is NOT a Jewish name!

The phrase *ish yehudi* is mentioned only ONE other time in the entire Tanach, in Zecharya 8:23. There it describes a devout Jew leading a group of non‑Jewish followers seeking HaShem in the holy city of Jerusalem.

The word *ha-bira* in Divrei Hayamim[[40]](#footnote-40) is used by King David to describe specifically the Bet HaMikdash (the Temple). Prior to the time period of Megillat Esther, the Hebrew word *bira* finds no other mention in Tanach.

The name Mordechai is probably the most provocative word in the entire Megilla for it stems from the name of the Babylonian deity, Marduk.[[41]](#footnote-41) Prior to the Babylonian exile, no one would have dared give his son such a 'goyishe' name.

[This does not imply that Mordechai was assimilated, rather his name reflects the assimilation of his generation.]

# V’Nahapoch Hu – Then it was Reversed

V’Nahapoch hu is not a victory over evil. It means that the enemy’s’ efforts ultimately lead them towards becoming the source of the salvation for the Jews.

13th of Adar was to be the day of destruction and it became the day of salvation. Esther, in writing a new decree, insisted that it take place on the very same day as the decreed destruction.

Vashti’s demotion and death led to Haman’s elevation. Vashti’s death, in turn, led to Esther’s elevation, which led to Haman’s demotion and death.

The messengers were sent in haste to deliver the decree of destruction and the very same messengers were sent in haste to deliver the decree to allow the Jews to defend themselves.

Mordechai is debased and goes out in ashes to mourn the decree of destruction, then he is suddenly clothed with the garments of the king and elevated.

Zeresh first encourages Haman to destroy the Jews, then she tells Haman that afflicting the Jews will lead to his own demise.

The gallows were built by Haman to hang Mordechai, but in the end, Haman and his sons were hung on the gallows.

The first wine feast leaves Haman elevated, the second wine feast completely debases Haman.

**Haman’s plans were not defeated, instead his plans served the opposite purpose to what he desired.**

Haman’s purpose was evil, but the end result was beneficial.

Upon scrutinizing the events depicted in Megillas Esther, we find a central theme throughout. There is an epic struggle between the simchah of shameless depravity espoused by Haman and Achashveirosh, the agents of the "other domain", versus the simchah associated with Torah and mitzvot, espoused by Mordechai and Esther. Both sides struggle to exert their influence over the Jewish populace. The Megillah opens with a description of the extravagant, excessive simchah, characterized by immorality and drunkenness, hosted by King Achashveirosh, in the third year of his reign, he made a feast for all his officials and his servants, the army of Persia and Media, the nobles and officials of the provinces being present. He displayed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honor of his splendorous majesty for many days, one hundred and eighty days.

As the story unfolds, we see how Haman HaAggagi, the oppressor and nemesis of the Jews, attempts to suppress the Jews’ simchah by lobbying Achashveirosh to issue a decree ordering the extermination of all the Jews. When his efforts succeed, we are informed that the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Shushan was bewildered. On the one hand, the forces of tumah sit down to celebrate and get drunk. On the other hand, distress and gloom prevail in the realm of kedushah: This pattern is replicated throughout the provinces ruled and in every province, any place the king’s command and his decree extended, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting and weeping and lament; sackcloth and ashes were spread out for the masses.

However, after Mordechai successfully brings salvation to Yisrael, the picture turns around completely. The atmosphere surrounding Haman and his cohorts becomes one of grief and sorrow, as it is written, as soon as the king’s utterance emerged, Haman’s face became covered with shame. In stark contrast, simchah prevailed in the domain of kedushah, as it is written (8, 16): then the city of Shushan was cheerful and glad; the Jews had light and gladness and joy and honor. This simchah is also expressed by means of Chazal’s institution to drink wine on Purim, as it is written *to observe them as days of feasting and gladness*.

# Purim vs. Shushan Purim

According to the Rambam

There is another interesting aspect of Purim that we have not yet approached. This concerns Purim vs. Shushan Purim. Why do Jews in cities that did NOT have walls in the day of Yehoshua, celebrate Purim on Adar 14 whilst the Jews who live in cities that had walls in the days of Yehoshua, they celebrate Purim on the 15th of Adar. Why do we have this dichotomy?

To understand why two Jews celebrate two different days when they live only a couple of miles apart, we need to understand the difference between the Jews of the kingdom of Babylon versus the Jews who lived in Shushan.

The Jews who lived in the far reaches of the kingdom were not tempted by the splendor of the capital city of Shushan. Therefore they could continue to do tzedaka (charity) and could continue to relate to their fellow man in the ways that HaShem had commanded.

The Jews in Shushan, on the other hand, could see the gold, silver, and precious stones of the capital. They could lust after these materials and be tempted by them. In so doing, they would *compete* against their fellow man. After all, every man wanted the best life for his family, not necessarily the family next door. This competition, inevitably, led to a lack of unity characterized by the motto: “Every man for himself”.

This lack of unity was uniquely a problem in Shushan.

However, at the urging of Mordechai, every Jew did teshuva, repentance (better *returning*). The Jews outside of Shushan repented for the sin that was common to all Jews of Babylon, whilst the Jews of Shushan also did teshuva for their lack of unity, for their competition against each other that had brought disunity.

The Talmud records a famous competition that existed between the sun and the moon:

***Chullin 60b R.*** *Simeon b. Pazzi pointed out a contradiction [between verses]. One verse says: And God made the two great lights,2 and immediately the verse continues: The greater light . . . and the lesser light. The moon said unto the Holy One, blessed be He, ‘Sovereign of the Universe! Is it possible for two kings to wear one crown’? He answered: ‘Go then and make thyself smaller’.*

HaShem eliminated the competition between the sun and the moon by reducing the moon. This brought unity to them. Now the moon is totally dependent on the sun for its light. This was the correction for this disunity that the moon had brought.

Once there was teshuva on the part of the Jewish people outside of Shushan, then they could celebrate on the 14th of Adar. However, the special teshuva done by the residents of Shushan gave them the merit to take an extra day to destroy their enemies and to celebrate Purim on a more unified day, the 15th. Why is the 15th more unified you ask? Because on the 15th the moon is full and complete. It is neither waxing nor waning. It is in complete unity with the sun and is full and complete. This perfectly mirrored the state of the Jews in Shushan.

Okay, so now we understand why the Jews of Shushan should celebrate on the 15th, but why all of the cities that had walls in the day of Yehoshua? Why do they get to celebrate on the 15th?

The answer relates back to the theme of unity. A walled city, by definition, creates unity within that city. When the gates are closed, all of the residents are in it together. If there is a siege, they are all together. If there is a famine, they are all in the same pickle. In other words, they have unity. Since unity is goal of The Holy One, then those who exhibit this trait are the ones who merit to celebrate on the 15th when the sun and moon are united and whole. In the days of Yehoshua, all of the people were unified under Yehoshua. However, those in walled cities had a special unity which was above and beyond what the other Jews had.

This then is the understanding of the difference between Purim and Shushan Purim.

## A Purim Insight[[42]](#footnote-42)

Why do we celebrate Purim and Shushan Purim?

To answer this question we need to review the first two encounters that the Bne Israel had with Amalek.

In the first encounter we find Amalek attacking the Bne Israel without provocation:

***Shemot (Exodus) 17:8*** *Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim.*

In the second encounter we find the Bne Israel attacking Amalek at the command of HaShem:

***1 Shmuel (Samuel) 15:2*** *Thus saith HaShem of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. 3 Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.*

From these two encounters we can establish a pattern:

1. Amalek attacks the Bne Israel in an unprovoked manner.
2. The Bne Israel attack Amalek for what he did to the Bne Israel.

Now, if we examine the attack of Haman the Agagite, in Megillat Esther, we find the same pattern:

1. On Adar 13, Amalek attacked the Bne Israel in an unprovoked manner.
2. On Adar 14, the Bne Israel attacked Amalek for what he did on Adar 13.

Purim is celebrated on Adar 14 because we dispatched our enemies, the Amalekites,[[43]](#footnote-43) on Adar 13.

Shushan Purim is celebrated on Adar 15 because we completed our attack on our enemies, on Adar 14, after they attacked us.

Now we can understand why we have a celebration for Purim *and* for Shushan Purim. Each of these festivals commemorates one aspect of our previous encounters with Amalek. Purim commemorates Amalek’s unprovoked attack on the Bne Israel. Shushan Purim commemorates the attack of the Amalekites, by the Bne Israel, because of their unprovoked attack.

# Timeline of events

**Nisan 1**

Cyrus was crowned “King of Babylonia and King of all lands”.

Plot of Bigthan and Teresh to assassinate Xerxes discovered by Mordecai. *Apocrypha; Book of Esther*.

**Nisan 8**

The feast of King Achashverosh, which lasted for 180 days, came to an end. ***Esther 1:4***; *Manot haLevi*

**Nisan 13**

Haman buys the order for the destruction of the Jews. ***Esther 3:7-12***

Esther has Mordecai and the Jews fast for three days before seeing the king. ***Esther 4:16***

**Nisan 14**

Mordecai and the Jews fast for the second day. ***Esther 4:16***

Esther invites the king to feast. ***Esther 5:1-4,*** *Seder Olam 29*

**Nisan 15**

Vashti is executed by King Xerxes. ***Esther 1:21****; Derash le-Purim*

Mordecai is honored by Haman and king Achashverosh. ***Esther 5:1 - 6:10***

Mordecai and the Jews fast for the third and last day. ***Esther 4:16***

Esther, Haman, and the king feast. King kills Haman. ***Esther 5:5-5***

Haman was hanged. ***Esther 7:10****, Seder Olam 29*

Mordecai becomes chief minister in place of Haman. ***Esther 8:2***

**Nisan 16**

Haman’s plans came to naught. ***Esther 3:12, 4:16, 5:1, 7:2-9***

**Tevet 1**

Esther is taken to Achashverosh’s’ residence. ***Esther 2:16***

**Adar 13**

The pur chose this day for the destruction of the enemies of the Jews. ***Esther 3:13***

**Adar 14**

**Purim.** The feast of Lots. ***Esther 9:14-21***

Three hundred men of Susa are killed. ***Esther 9:15***

**Adar 15**

Shushan Purim ***Esther 9:14-21***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Jewish Calendar** | **Event** | **Roman Calendar** |
| 2488 | Jews enter the Promised Land. | 1272 bce |
| 2884 | King David reigns. | 876 bce |
| 2924 | King Solomon reigns. | 836 bce |
| 2964 | Kingdom splits into two.' | 796 bce |
| 3166 | Part of the Ten Tribes exiled by Tiglat Pileser of Assyria. | 594 bce |
| 3195 | Tribes of Reuven, Gad and Menashe, who lived in Trans-Jordan, exiled by Shalmanetzer of Assyria.. | 565 bce |
| 3205 | Assyrians exile the remainder of the 10 Tribes | 556 bce |
| 3319 | Nevukhadnezzar becomes King of Babylon | 442 bce |
| 3321 | Jeremiah predicts destruction of the Temple. | 440 bce |
| 3327 | Nevukhadnezzar appoints Yekhonya King of Judah. Nevukhadnezzar exiles Yekhonya and the upper-class of Judah. | 434 bce |
| 3338 | First Temple destroyed. | 423 bce |
| 3364 | Nevukhadnezzar dies. His son Evil Merodakh reigns for 23 years. | 397 bce |
| 3387 | Evil Merodakh dies. His son Belshazar reigns for two years. | 374 bce |
| 3391 | Cyrus, King of Media, permits Jews to return to the Holy Land. | 370 bce |
| 3392 | Achashverosh begins his reign. | 369 bce |
| 3399 | Achashverosh’s orgy. Vashti killed. Esther becomes queen. | 362 bce |
| 3404 | Haman’s decree promulgated. Haman hanged and his decree revoked. | 357 bce |
| 3407 | Book of Esther canonized. Achashverosh dies. | 355 bce |
| 3408 | Darius II grants Permission for the Temple to be rebuilt. It is  70 years after its destruction. | 353 bce |
| 3412 | Completion of the second Temple. | 349 bce |

**\* \* \***

**Chanukah** is the celebration over those who have tried, and failed, to culturally assimilate us (the Greeks and Western Culture). They did not try to kill us, they tried to separate us from HaShem and from Torah. For a spiritual attack, we attacked physically. Chazal teach that “everything is in the hand of Heaven except the fear of Heaven.”[[44]](#footnote-44) When we must demonstrate our fear of Heaven, we are on our own and we must “physically” demonstrate our fear of Heaven.

**Purim** is the celebration over those who have tried and failed to physically destroy us (the Persians and Western Culture). For a physical attack, we reacted spiritually. Here our lives are physically in danger for no other reason than just pure hate. There is no attack to prevent us from fulfilling the mitzvot. There was no spiritual attack, only a physical attack. For this we realize that HaShem is coming against us. When HaShem is coming against us, all we can to is repent. Any physical response will be entirely in vain because we would be fighting HaShem.

# The Message of the Oral Law[[45]](#footnote-45)

When Avraham was confronted by Avimelech regarding Sarah, Avraham defended himself:

**Bereshit (Genesis) 20:9** Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said unto him, What hast thou done unto us? and what have I offended thee, that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done. 10 And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing? 11 And Abraham said, Because I thought, **Surely the fear of God is not in this place**; and they will slay me for my wife’s sake. 12 And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife.

What is this ‘fear of God’?

If there is no fear of God, then the laws of that place can be abrogated and changed on a whim. The laws can be applied one way to your friends and another way to your enemies. Your laws are worthless.

The Sages say that the Almighty suspended Mount Sinai above the Israelites like an inverted cask and said, “If you accept the Torah, fine; if not, here will be your grave.” Why did God have to coerce the Children of Israel into receiving the Torah?

The Gemara relates (Shabbat 88a): "'They stood at the bottom of the mountain'.[[46]](#footnote-46) R' Avdimi bar Chamma bar Chassa said: This teaches us that the Almighty suspended the mountain above them like an inverted cask and said, 'If you accept the Torah, fine; if not, here will be your grave.'

"R' Acha bar Yaakov said: This [explanation of yours] makes for a good case against the Torah."

"Rabba said: Nonetheless, they reaffirmed their acceptance of it in the days of Ahashverosh, as it is written,[[47]](#footnote-47) 'The Jews observed it and accepted it upon themselves' - i.e., they observed that which they had already accepted."

On the words "a good case" Rashi comments, "Were they called to appear before the court to explain why they did not fulfill that which they had taken upon themselves, they could answer that they received it under duress."

Commentators[[48]](#footnote-48) raise the question, why did God have to coerce the Children of Israel into receiving the Torah? After all, they had already expressed their willingness to accept the Torah when they went so far as to exclaim, "We will uphold it and we will hear it!" - a statement more befitting the ministering angels than man. Indeed, owing to this willingness, they merited two crowns - one representing "we will uphold it" and another representing "we will hear it."

It is likewise difficult to understand why the Israelites should have been subject to divine punishment (viz., the Destruction of the Holy Temple) prior to the time of Achashverosh if they had never received Torah of their own volition.

Authorities have offered scores of answers to these questions. The earliest among them is from Midrash Tanchuma:[[49]](#footnote-49)

"HaShem made a covenant with the nation of Israel regarding the Oral Torah alone, as it is written, 'For "al pi" (according to) these words have I made a covenant with you',[[50]](#footnote-50) and the Sages remark that God did not write in the Torah '"lemaan" (for the sake of) these words,' or '"baavur" (for) these words,' or '"biglal (because of) these words,' but rather '"al pi" (according to; lit., "on the mouth of") these words' which is none other than the Oral Torah which is difficult to learn and involves great hardship, and it is likened to darkness.

"It is thus written, 'The nation which walked in darkness saw a great light'[[51]](#footnote-51) - these are the scholars of Oral Torah who saw a great light. For the Almighty illuminates their eyes in matters of prohibition and dispensation, pure and impure...and the nation of Israel did not agree to receive the Torah until the Almighty suspended the mountain above them like an inverted cask, as it says, 'They stood at the bottom of the mountain',[[52]](#footnote-52) and R' Dimi bar Hamah said: The Almighty said to the nation of Israel, 'If you accept the Torah, fine; if not, here will be your grave.'

"And if you should contest, saying, it was concerning the Written Torah that the Almighty suspended the mountain above them like an inverted cask, [think again,] for at the moment that He asked them if they are willing to receive the Torah, all of them answered, saying, 'We will uphold it and we will hear it!' for it involves no toil or hardship, and it is not so extensive.

"Rather, it was regarding the Oral Torah [that He he threatened them], for it involves many fine details of both major and minor commandments and it is as powerful as death...for only he who loves the Almighty with all of his heart and all of his soul and all of his might is willing to study it, as it is written, 'Love God your Lord with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might'.[[53]](#footnote-53)

What was the ‘light’ that was given to the Jews?

**Esther 8:16** The Jews had **light**, and gladness, and joy, and honour.

The light was HaShem’s laws, written and oral. HaShem is righteous and His application of Torah law is consistent and eternal. Man’s laws are arbitrary, capricious, and dependent on the integrity of a country’s leaders.

So, what lesson did HaShem teach the Bne Israel in the Megilla of Esther?

HaShem wanted us to understand that Man’s laws are just ‘legal’ and arbitrary and can be abrogated or changed at any time. This is NOT justice! Further, HaShem wanted us to understand that His laws are eternal, and the only way we could have a written law that was eternal, was to have an oral law – given at Sinai, that would explain the oral law as it applied to changing times.

Achashverosh had a law that did not allow his citizens to commit genocide. His citizens were not allowed to kill their neighbors. Never the less, when he was given 10,000 talents, he abrogated his laws in favor of a bribe. Haman bribed Achashverosh into purposely killing the people he did not like.

HaShem’s laws and His justice system does NOT allow bribes to play any part. His laws cannot be abrogated on the whim of a despot. This was the essential lesson of the Megilla. If we accept man’s laws as ‘good enough’ such that we do not need HaShem, then we are fools and are committing ourselves to an INJUSTICE system. It is ONLY in the acceptance of HaShem’s written and oral law that we can find true justice. It is only our love for HaShem and His laws that we can have justice.

We MUST NOT believe in the laws of nations! These laws are not enduring and have value only when the leaders and citizens have integrity.

As an aside: We can see the bribery and the abrogation of the laws of man in the in justice being meted out to former president Donald Trump.

Humanitarian aid to Gaza?

Carpet bombing of Dresden?

Two atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki?

Napalm bombing of Vietnam?

Fentanyl crisis?

Germany’s gas chambers?

# Mystical Allusions to Creation

We know that at the beginning of a thing, all of the energy of creation comes together to form that thing. From there on, everything is just maintenance. This means that if we can go back to where a word is first used in the Torah, we can see its beginning. We can see the essence of the word by examining the context of its conception or genesis.

Since Torah is literally the blueprint for the world, the place where a word is first found in the Torah is where that thing is created. This helps us to understand what HaShem is trying to accomplish in His world.

What allusions, in Esther, are found in the Talmud?

***Chullin 139b*** *Where is Haman indicated in the Torah? — In the verse: Is it [hamin] from the tree?[[54]](#footnote-54) Where is Esther indicated in the Torah? — [In the verse,] And I will surely hide [asthir] my face.[[55]](#footnote-55) Where is Mordecai indicated in the Torah? — In the verse: Flowing myrrh,[[56]](#footnote-56) which the Targum renders as mira dakia.[[57]](#footnote-57)*

The Talmud[[58]](#footnote-58) offers as the origin of the name *Haman* the verse in Bereshit that refers to Adam’s sin: *Hamin HaEtz hazeh* (“from this tree”?).

***Bereshit (Genesis) 3:11*** *And he said, Who told thee that thou [wast] naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree* (Hamin HaEtz hazeh)*, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?*

4:7, 5:5, 5:9-12, 5:14, 6:5-7, …

Haman is found in the **QUESTION**, in Bereshit!

Our sages seem to be identifying Haman with the man who ate the forbidden fruit. And when you think about it, in a deep way, that makes perfect sense. Adam, he had everything. The master allowed him to have free reign in the garden, to eat from any of the delicious trees he liked. Save for one. Save for the master's own tree, this mysterious, divine tree, known as the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. When Adam reaches for that one forbidden tree, he is reaching for the one thing that separates servant from master. He is making a power grab.

And so Haman, like Adam before him, spurned everything he did have to focus on the one thing he didn't. Remember that scene in which Haman tells Zeresh: I have everything, I have power, I have riches, I have children – but none of it means anything to me every time I see Mordechai the Jew standing there in the palace.

Mordechai, the Sages are saying, he's the one thing Haman can't have. Mordechai has made himself, in effect, the last stand here, the forbidden fruit. The one thing still reserved for the master, that makes servant different from master.

Which makes it all the more chilling, wouldn't you say, that Zeresh would turn to Haman and tell him: Why don't you have the one thing you can't have? Why don't you make a gallows and hang him on them? But the words she uses for gallows, it is “Etz” – which literally means tree.

Take Mordechai, and hang him on a tree.

What is she really doing when she proposes that? What is it that hangs from a tree … if not fruit?

Mordechai truly is the one thing left that separates master from servant, that separates the King from Haman. *He is the forbidden fruit*. He made himself that when he decided that he would not bow.[[59]](#footnote-59)

Why do our Sages equate Haman to the eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?

There are a few things that jump out:

1. Only *one* tree is forbidden to Adam,[[60]](#footnote-60) while *only* Mordechai refused to bow down to Haman.[[61]](#footnote-61) In both cases they had everything they desired *except for one thing*.
2. Zeresh, Haman’s wife shows Haman how to get what he wants,[[62]](#footnote-62) while Chava, Adam’s wife gives the forbidden fruit to Adam[[63]](#footnote-63) so that he has what he wants. In both cases, the wife enables her husband to do the wrong thing.
3. When Adam eats from the tree he will eventually die, while Haman’s attempt to kill Mordechai will eventually result in his own death.
4. Adam dies because of *the tree*,[[64]](#footnote-64) while Haman dies on *his tree* (the gallows is called a tree in Hebrew).[[65]](#footnote-65)

Now that we know that Haman is connected with the **question** regarding the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil. The mystics call the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil, “the tree of doubt”. The Hebrew word for doubt (*sufek*) and the word *Amalek* share the same gematria, 240.[[66]](#footnote-66)

From the time that Adam ate from that tree, he had doubts, and HaShem manifested Himself with doubts. After all, why did HaShem have to “ask” where Adam was? It is a cardinal rule of our faith that HaShem knows everything there is no doubt.

So, Haman was *conceived* in the garden when Adam ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil. Haman *is* the gap between ourselves and HaShem. Haman, an Amalekite descendant of king Agag (Gog), is the epitome of the role of the Amalekites. The Amalekites represent the gap between us and HaShem.

Let’s take a look at the Amalekites and how they fulfill their role in separating us from HaShem. When we came out of Egypt after we had accepted the Torah and were ready to enter the promised land and bring in the final restoration of our relationship with HaShem, then the Amalekites threw themselves at us in battle. A battle they KNEW they had no chance of winning. They had seen the miracles that HaShem had done for His people, and he knew he could not defeat us. Never the less, it is his job to put a gap between HaShem and us.

The first attack by Amalek occurred just prior to the Jewish people’s arrival at Har Sinai, in a place called Rephidim. But, as we know from tradition, many of the names given to the camps during the forty years in the desert had more to do with what occurred there *spiritually*, than *physically*.

Rebbi Chanina said, “I asked Rebbi Eliezer in the big Beit Midrash ... ‘What does Rephidim mean?’ He answered me, ‘That was its name.’ ... Rebbi Yehoshua said, [It means] they became weak (*reefu*) in Torah”.[[67]](#footnote-67)

And that is why Amalek attacked them.[[68]](#footnote-68)

The incident when Moshe struck the rock also contains a hint to Amalek. This episode is a duplication of the one at the time the Shabbat manna first fell, then, it comes as no surprise to find an allusion to Haman here as well:

***Bamidbar (Numbers) 20:9*** *Moshe took his staff from before God as commanded. Moshe and Aharon gathered the community before the rock and said to them, “From this (ha-min; heh, mem, nun) rock (ha-selah) should water come out!”*

Not only is *Haman* found in this verse, but the word *ha-selah* (the rock) is equal in *gematria* to the word *HaEtz*:

*HaEtz* (heh, ayin, tzaddik) = ha-selah (heh, samech, lamed, ayin)

5+70+90 = 5+60+30+70

= 165

*HaEtz* is the next word after the *first* allusion to Haman, after Adam ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil:

***Bereshit 3:11*** *ha-min HaEtz?*

No wonder Amalek attacks the Jewish people, again, after this episode:

*The Canaanite, the king of Arad ... fought against Israel[[69]](#footnote-69) ...* ... This is Amalek[[70]](#footnote-70) ...

Hence, this episode at *Mei Merivah* (“Waters of Dispute” as they are called) was not simply a fight about water; it was another battle in the long war against nature, doubt, and Amalek. The drying up of Miriam’s well had created another opportunity to teach the Jewish people what is supposed to distinguish them from the nations of the world: their potential to rise above nature, especially through the usage of *speech*.

The next potential for a complete redemption was in Mordechai’s and Esther’s time, which, as the Talmud says, was really the completion of what began at Har Sinai over a millennium before. Once again, Amalek showed up, not preventing redemption, but lessening its impact and its ability to eradicate evil from Creation.

There is a Midrash that indicates that with the exception of Qorach, Haman was the wealthiest man in the Tanach. He was wealthy because he stole the wealth of the Judean kings and the wealth of the Temple.

The Triennial Torah portion, in the first cycle, includes the next few passages as allusions to Purim, as it is read on the last regular Shabbat before Purim.

***Debarim (Deuteronomy) 32:20*** *And He said, “I will hide My face from them. I will see what their end will be, for they are a generation of changes; they are not [recognizable] as My children whom I have reared.*

In verse 48 in the Targum Jonathan we see the specific date of Moshe’s death as the 7th of Adar. By this date, we know that the Fast of Esther and Purim are just around the corner.

***Targum Pseudo Yonataon to Devarim (Deuteronomy) 32:48*** *And HaShem spoke with Mosheh* ***on the seventh of the month Adar,*** *on the same day, saying,*

***Devarim (Deuteronomy) 32:9*** *Because the Lord’s portion is His people Jacob,* ***the lot*** *(the word for ‘lots’ is Purim)**of His inheritance.*

Esther also has connections back to the Gan Eden:

1. Just as God had a “pageant” so that Adam could choose *a mate* from all of the animals,[[71]](#footnote-71) so also did Achashverosh have a “pageant” to select a mate.[[72]](#footnote-72)
2. Achashverosh chose his mate by calling her by name,[[73]](#footnote-73) in the same way, Adam chose his mate by calling her by name.[[74]](#footnote-74)
3. Just as God chose Chava to be Adam’s wife,[[75]](#footnote-75) so also did God choose Esther to be the wife of Achashverosh.
4. Just as the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil was forbidden to Adam and, and by extension to Chava,[[76]](#footnote-76) so also was Esther forbidden to tell people about her heritage.[[77]](#footnote-77)
5. God commanded “upon Adam”[[78]](#footnote-78) regarding the tree, so also did Mordechai commanded “upon Esther”[[79]](#footnote-79) regarding her heritage.
6. Mordechai, who had commanded Esther, *walked* every days,[[80]](#footnote-80) so also did God, who commanded Chava, *walked* in the garden every day.[[81]](#footnote-81)

**Ahashverosh = the unrectified side of Adam.**

**Mordecai = the positive side of Adam.[[82]](#footnote-82)**

Adam and Chava ate the fruit with the purest of intentions. Only to push aside the fact that HaShem told them not to. Likewise Mordechai told the Jews not to partake in the seuda of Achashveirosh. The Jews believed that NOT going to the seuda would be a chilul HaShem; they were worried that not going would we an insult to the king, and would strain relations.

According to the Midrash, the Jews attendance and eating at the feast of King Ahashverosh was the spiritual reason they lost their merit and became vulnerable to the wily designs of Haman. Their eating at the feast corresponds to Adam and Chava eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, which resulted in their expulsion from the Garden of Eden.[[83]](#footnote-83)

**Esther = the positive side of Chava.**

Forbidden fruit = wine

Chava sinned with wine and brought death to the world.

Esther reversed the sin by making a wine feast.

Haman brought death and Esther brought life.

Esther invited Haman to the wine feast in order that Haman should bring death on himself.

The megilla of Esther contains 12,196 letters. Using that count to count the letters of the Torah, we find the following hint: Count 12,196 letters starting at the first alef, 12,196 to a Samech, 12,196 letters to a tav, and finally, 12,196 letters to a resh. These letters spell out the word Esther.

**Vashti = unrectified side of Chava.**

Once Adam and Chava had eaten from the Tree of Knowledge, the Torah informs us that they immediately realized they were naked. Before this incident, the Torah recounts that they were naked but were not ashamed. With their innocence lost, clothing became a necessity symbolizing their shame at becoming spiritually exposed due to the sin they had committed. The episode in which King Acheshverosh ordered Vashti to come to the feast naked, followed by her refusal, which led subsequently to her death, alludes to Adam and Eve’s process of realizing they were naked as a result of their unrectified eating.

The decree of death led to new clothes for Adam and Chava. The decree of death led to clothes of sackcloth for Mordechai and royal clothes for Esther. Esther tried to send Mordechai new clothes.

After King Ahashverosh had Vashti killed on the advice of Haman and his other advisers, they also advised him to send a decree to be published throughout the kingdom proclaiming that all wives should give honor to their husbands. Obviously, this decree was a result of King Ahashverosh feeling publicly embarrassed by his wife refusing to obey him. This declaration parallels one of the “curses” of Chava when she is told by God that, “your desire will be to your husband and he will rule over you”.[[84]](#footnote-84) It is crucial to note that this “curse”, which was the result of Chava’s own actions, is not being advocated by the Torah, but is rather a description of the existential fall experienced by Chava, the archetype of all women in history.

**Haman[[85]](#footnote-85) = Serpent (Nachash HaKadmoni[[86]](#footnote-86))**

Haman wanted to bring death to klal Israel; just as the serpent wanted to bring death to all of mankind.

Haman, the embodiment of the "nachash hakadmoni," replicated the deed of the nachash by instigating the downfall of the Jews by means of the licentious form of simchah, characterized by wantonness and immorality. Haman persuaded Achashveirosh to invite the Jews in Shushan to a seven-day party, in order to cause them to sin. This is described by the Midrash (Esther Rabbah 7, 13): *The wicked Haman assaulted Yisrael with a tremendous ruse . . . Haman said to Achashveirosh, "The G-d of these people hates immorality. Place prostitutes before them and make them a feast. Decree that they must attend, eat, drink, and do as they please"—as it states: "To do according to each man’s pleasure." Upon seeing this, Mordechai took a stand and made a pronouncement. He told them not to go and eat at Achashveirosh’s meal . . . They did not heed Mordechai’s words; they all went to the festival hall . . . They ate, drank, became inebriated and behaved immorally. Immediately, the Satan stood up and badmouthed them to HKB"H . . . Immediately, HKB"H said to the Satan: "Bring Me a scroll and I will inscribe on it annihilation."*

An angel pushed Chava into the tree of the knowledge of good and evil – So also did an angel push Haman onto Esther, according to the Zohar.

Venahapoc hu – the reversal of the sin and of end result.

After these events described above, Haman ascended to a very powerful position in the kingdom. As a result, the Book of Esther describes how Haman’s jealousy and anger is then aroused by Mordecai refusing to bow down to him. Haman becomes so incensed at this perceived disrespect that he plots *not only* Mordecai’s demise, but that of the entire Jewish people. The sub-text beneath the surface of the relationship between Haman and Mordechai is that, according to the Sages, Haman had previously been a servant of Mordechai before his meteoric rise to power and influence.

Now that he was in a privileged position and Mordecai was supposed to be subservient to him, his previous jealousy flared to the point of plotting genocide. This psychological complex corresponds to the Midrash’s description of how the serpent in the Garden of Eden was jealous of Adam, as he wanted Eve for himself. The snake’s jealousy was therefore at the root of his plan to manipulate Eve into eating from the Tree of Knowledge.

With this in mind, we can understand what Rabbi Yonatan Eibschitz writes in Yearos Dvash (2, 9). He explains that Haman and his advisors planned to erect a tree standing fifty-amos high in order to evoke the memory of the "cheit Eitz HaDa’as." By doing so, they were certain that they would succeed in hanging Mordechai on said tree. So, this is how he interprets the Gemara’s question cited above: "from where did he seek the power to hang Mordechai on the tree? by evoking the taint of the cheit Eitz HaDa’at”. In fact, we might add that our task on Purim is to extract the simchah from the other domain and return it to the domain of kedushah, to rejoice the simchah of mitzva their scheme relied on the knowledge that Mordechai was a gilgul of Adam Harishon, the guilty party in the "cheit eitz hada’at”.

So, it now behooves us to delve into the story depicted by the Megillah in order to gain a better understanding of the epic battle waged by Haman HaAggagi, the embodiment of the "nachash hakadmoni", and all of his followers descending from Amalek, against Israel. As explained, he planned to evoke the guilt associated with the "cheit Eitz HaDa’at”. How indeed did Mordechai the tzaddik, the gilgul of Adam HaRishon, succeed in defeating Haman and actually turning the tables on him? For, as we know, Haman and his sons were ultimately hung on the tree that they prepared for Mordechai.

## Wine – Fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge

**Berachot 40a** It was taught in a Baraita: Concerning the type of tree from which Adam HaRishon ate, Rabbi Meir says: It was a **grapevine**; for there is nothing that brings wailing upon a person as wine does, as it is stated: "And he (Noach) drank from the wine and he became drunk".

Similarly, the Midrash teaches us[[87]](#footnote-87), on Genesis 3:6, *She took from its fruit and she ate*. Rabbi Eivo said: *She squeezed grapes and gave it to him*.

## Sun & Moon vs. Adam & Chava

The Rabbis compare the “fall” that occurred in the Garden of Eden and the subsequent “demotion” of women’s status, evident in a multitude of societies around the world for the duration of pre-Messianic history, to the Midrashic allegory of the moon and the sun. On the fourth day of creation, when the sun and moon were created, the moon complained to God that two kings, meaning the two “great lights” created on that day, could not wear the same crown. God’s response was to tell the moon to make itself smaller.[[88]](#footnote-88) In Judaism, the moon is always associated with the feminine. Based on this correspondence and the aforementioned allegory, Jewish mystics teach that one of the final rectifications that must occur before the Messianic era is Tikkun Chava, the rectification of Chava and the overall status of women, represented by the moon. It seems clear that the almost unprecedented promotion of the social status of women in our day fulfills in part the overall process and requirements of Tikkun Chava.

King Ahashverosh, again on the advice of his advisors, sought out a new wife after he had Vashti killed. Esther then enters the story as one of the contestants to become the king’s new wife. When she is actually chosen by the king, Mordecai commands her not to reveal her Jewish identity. This entire situation, wherein Esther is forced into a relationship she did not freely choose, making it necessary for her to hide her true identity, mirrors the dynamic wherein Eve’s status is diminished in relation to her husband; representing, as discussed above, the subjugated status of women throughout so much of human history.

At this point in the story, with Haman’s wicked plot unfolding rapidly, just when everything seems hopeless, a dramatic shift occurs. This change is illustrative of the dynamic discussed above, in which all of history is understood as a series of attempts to rectify the sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil; a redemptive process which will, in effect, rectify the role of women in the world, rebalance the relationship between women and men, and, ultimately, return the moon to her former glory alongside her partner, the sun. In fact, the Book of Esther symbolizes, on many different levels, the rectifications that need to be made in order to reverse the deleterious effects of being exiled from the Garden of Eden. It is these very rectifications that will ultimately lead to the Messianic era and the proverbial return of humanity to the Garden of Eden.

First of all, we see that both Mordechai and Esther fight back against Haman instead of passively following the cunning arguments of the snake, as was done in the Garden. Identifying evil and standing up for what is right is the beginning of both personal and universal redemption. Although in the beginning, Esther is reluctant to assert herself in the defense of her people, adopting a more passive position, the entire process of saving the Jews effectively begins when she takes a proactive attitude, and in fact risks her very life. This change in Esther’s approach and expression represents most forcefully the spiritual and social nature of Tikkun Chavah, the rectification of Eve predicted before the Mashiach comes.

Once Esther made her decision to assert herself in the dire situation, she, in a sense, proceeds to take charge of all the subsequent events as described in the story. With deep insight and a pinch of cunning she succeeds in arousing King Ahashverosh’s fear and jealousy of Haman in such a manner as to guarantee a successful conclusion and defeat of Haman’s plans.

After Esther reveals her identity as a Jewess and accuses Haman of plotting to kill all the Jews, King Achashverosh storms out of the room. Haman then approaches Esther and pleads for his life. At that moment, according to the Midrash, an angel came and pushed Haman, who literally fell on top of Esther on the couch. Just then, Achashverosh reenters the room, and in a fit of fury at Haman’s outrageous behavior, orders him to be hanged. This incident is a rectified replay of the snake in the Garden of Eden who, according to the Midrash, seduced Eve not just with words, but sexually as well. Yet, here we see the story ending differently, with Haman’s falling upon Esther ushering his final curtain call, rather than his decisive victory.

At the end of the story, Mordecai is raised up to the same powerful position once held by Haman. In addition to the Jews being saved from annihilation, Mordecai’s elevation in the eyes of the public resulted in many people throughout the land wanting to become Jewish. These events foretell not only the rise of women in every area of society as the Messianic era approaches, but also, just as importantly, how Israel will rise from its lowly position among the nations to recapture its ancient power and glory in the eyes of the world.

The idea that the righteous must sometimes adopt their opponents’ strategies in order to defeat them is alluded to by the numerical value of two archetypal rivals’ names: nachash (the Hebrew name for the primordial serpent of the Garden of Eden) and Mashiach; both equaling 358. The serpent draws his energy and power from the lowest levels of cunning and deceit, and therefore can only be defeated by someone who can nullify the snake’s source of power by matching his cunning. Relatedly, the Mashiach must descend to the very lowest realms of reality in order to uplift all the sparks that have fallen so low. Esther, in a cunning move of Messianic proportions, ultimately defeated Haman at his own game.

Although the energy of the nachash and Mashiach seem diametrically opposed to each other – and for the most part they are – the fact that they share the same gematria alerts us to a shared energy at their source. This is very similar to the idea that although the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil appear to be utter opposites, they in fact, according to Kabbalah and Chassidut, share the same root system and are both placed in the middle of the Garden, thus revealing that they are, at root, intrinsically connected and even inter-dependent.

Earlier, we discussed the way in which women are compared to the moon and how their fallen status is reflected in the Talmudic account of the moon being made smaller. Interestingly, Israel is also compared to the moon, especially in terms of how the waxing and waning of the moon symbolizes the ongoing cycle of exile and redemption in Jewish history. The fact that the Jewish calendar is primarily based on the lunar count is further proof of the intrinsic connection between Israel and the moon.

It is therefore not surprising that the elevation of women’s status around the world in our time coincides with Israel’s rising from millennia of oppression and the ashes of the Holocaust, returning to their ancient homeland to create a strong and independent nation! From a Torah perspective, these two processes are intimately connected.

The Megila of Esther, like all of Torah, can be understood on multiple levels simultaneously. Analyzing this text as a parable mirroring the events in the Garden of Eden and their ultimate repair is profoundly thought-provoking on both personal and prophetic levels. According to the Sages, Esther is one of seven prophetesses mentioned in Tanach.[[89]](#footnote-89) Embedded in her book are hints and allusions to not only past events like the Garden of Eden, but also to the future Messianic age already being revealed in the present.[[90]](#footnote-90)

We are again at the cusp of history.

Amalek through Hamas attacks us when? Shemini Aseret – The day set aside for us and Hashem. We are in the ikvei Meshicha. Just as Amalek did when we left Egypt, they attack those who are defenseless and it is up to us fight them.

# Conclusion

At this point we need to be able to put some pieces together. This Torah knowledge must be applied in a practical way. We must learn from the Purim experience. So, lets understand how to apply this lesson:

Just prior to the beginning of World War II, Germany was known as place of culture and hospitality. Germans were known as warm loving people. Germany, in the days of Hitler, was very much like Babylon in the days of Haman.

Haman had no particular education, training, or noble birth that he should be entitled to rule. In fact, he was Mordechai’s barber. It seems that his only qualification to rule was because HaShem wished to use his intense hatred of Jews.

Hitler, like Haman, had no particular education, training, or noble birth that he should be entitled to rule. It seems that his only qualification to rule was because HaShem wished to use his intense hatred of Jews.

From the Purim story we learn that the proper response to a totally irrational hatred of Jews, is teshuva – repentance. Just as this was the proper response in the days of Haman, so it should have been the response of every Jew during the days of Hitler. HaShem brought this intense hatred against us in order to drive us to repentance. Because of our stony hearts, HaShem allowed Hitler to bring his illogical hatred to such an intense level, ONLY to drive us to repentance. He proved that the destruction of the Jews was his total and complete focus. He killed Jews rather than use those resources to defend his country.

To a physical, illogical, and irrational, hatred that focuses on our physical destruction, our response must be spiritual! We must recognize that HaShem is behind this. We must see that our total response must be teshuva – repentance! We must not react physically.

The Gulf war was another such illogical war as it applied to the Jew. Saddam, like Hitler and Haman, had no particular education, training, or noble birth that he should be entitled to rule. It seems that his only qualification to rule was because HaShem wished to use his intense hatred of Jews. When he wished to fight Kuwait and the allied army, he shot scud missiles at Israel. What an illogical reaction. This response, alone, should make us realize that HaShem’s hand is behind it. The very lack of logic should cause us to see the hand of HaShem.

To a physical, illogical, and irrational, hatred that focuses on our physical destruction, our response must be spiritual! We must recognize that HaShem is behind this. We must see that our total response must be teshuva – repentance! We must not react physically.

Purim is a time for illogical events and actions. It is a time when HaShem turns the world upside down. At Purim time, HaShem reverses the ways of the world and brings deliverance to His people when they have done teshuva.

# Secular Holidays vs. Purim

**Q**: What’s the difference between Purim and Halloween?

**A**: Halloween is about **taking** treats; Purim is about **giving** them.

**\* \* \***

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1. Esther 9:18 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Although the Megilla should be read in the “walled cities” on the fifteenth, the Sages prohibited the reading of the Megilla on Shabbat, lest the Megilla scroll be inadvertently carried in the public domain by people seeking someone capable of reading it for them, a violation of the laws of Shabbat. When then was the reading not delayed until Sunday, the sixteenth? The Sages deduced from specific verses of the Megilla that when the reading cannot be done at its proper time, it should be read earlier than required rather than later. [This is in contradiction to other Rabbinic obligations, e.g., the fast of Tisha B’Ab, which are fulfilled later, if the time for their fulfillment falls on Shabbat. The verse in the Megilla states: “And these days of Purim shall not pass” (Esther 9:27) that is, we are not permitted to allow the days of Purim, the fourteenth and fifteenth of Adar, to pass without our having observed the mitzva, but we are permitted to do so earlier than required. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah) 29:10 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Euphemism for ‘Israel‘. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Achashverosh. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. As only those in Susa were invited. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Set up by Nebuchadnezzar. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. By delivering them, since they really deserved to be exterminated. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Lit., ‘they did only for appearance’. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Lamentations 3:33. [uckn is rendered ‘without heart’, n being taken as partitive: G-d does not afflict him who sins without intent (Maharsha).] [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Esther 1:5. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Lit., ‘he who was worthy’. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Amalekites are any people who try to destroy Jews even if they are killed themselves – like suicide bombers in Israel. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. King Saul was a Benjamite. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Esther 2:5. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. And not mention three names only. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Lit., ‘crowned with his nimus’. The word nimus means in the Talmud ‘manner’, or ‘way’ (\*\*), hence bearing, character. Rashi translates ‘with his names’ (as just explained) as if ‘nimus’ here = Greek \*\*. [Var. lec. add ‘as an ornament’, hsgf. V. Aruch who explains: He was adorned with the precepts of the Law as with an ornament. Yehudi as applied to Mordecai then does not denote a tribal name but is an epithet of distinction.] [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. I.e., derogatory. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Daniel 3:12. Though Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah to whom he refers were not of the tribe of Judah. V. Sanh. 93 b (Tosaf.). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Ibid. 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Genesis 41:12. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. There was a Tarsus in Cilicia and in Cappodocia and it is not certain which is referred to. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Having always to dance attendance on Achashverosh. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. The meeting place of the Sanhedrin in the Temple at Jerusalem. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. V. Sanh. 17a. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. So that neither of us can do duty for both. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. E.V., ‘it was found’. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Hat worn by orthodox Jews. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Bamidbar (Numbers) 15:37ff [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Radal emends: If there is no Israel, why should there be a Passover? [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. The word wa-ya’abor (went his way), which literally means ‘passed’, and can also be rendered ‘transgressed ‘. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Esther 6:13 [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Esther 7:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Esther 7:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Esther 7:8 [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Tanchuma Bo 13; Rashi on Exodus 13:14 [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. The so called “Old Testament”. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Newsweek, October 28, 1946 [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Klal Israel = All of the Children of Israel [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. see Divrei Hayamim (Chronicles) 29:1 & 29:19 [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. see Melachim bet (II Kings) 25:27 & Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 39:1. Marduk was a late-generation god from ancient Mesopotamia and patron deity of the city of Babylon. When Babylon became the political center of the Euphrates valley in the time of Hammurabi (18th century BC), he slowly started to rise to the position of the head of the Babylonian pantheon, a position he fully acquired by the second half of the second millennium BC. In the city of Babylon, Marduk was worshiped in the temple Esagila. Marduk is associated with the divine weapon Imhullu. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. I learned this insight from: *Purim In A New Light*, as revealed through the writings of Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner, interpreted and adapted by Rabbi Pinchas Stolper. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Amalekites are any people who try to destroy Jews even if they are killed themselves – like suicide bombers in Israel. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Talmud - Berachoth 33b [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Insights from Rabbi David Dov Levanon and Rabbi Mendel Kessin - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xIX\_eS\_PQ2g&t=4115s [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Shemot (Exodus) 19:17 [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Esther 9:27 [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Tosefot ad loc., and others [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Midrash Tanchuma Noach 3 [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Shemot (Exodus) 34 [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 9:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Shemot (Exodus) 19:17 [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Debarim (Deuteronomy) 6:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Ibid. III, 11. Heb. המן The first word can be read as Haman, and the second can refer to the tree or gallows upon which Haman was hanged; cf. Esther 7:10. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Devarim (Deuteronomy) 31:18. The second word is very like the name Esther, both in spelling and in sound. The verse in general foretells the many evils and troubles that shall befall Israel when they forsake the ways of God, and this was the case at the time of Esther, cf. Meg. 12a. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Shemot (Exodus) 30:23 [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. The aramaic translation of Onkelos renders the Hebrew by xxxx, which words both in spelling and in sound resemble: Mordecai. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Chullin 139b [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. This section came from Rabbi David Fohrman’s shiur on, “**Why Doesn't Mordechai Bow To Haman?”** [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Bereshit (Genesis) 3:2-3 [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Esther 5:13 [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Esther 5:14 [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Bereshit (Genesis) 3:6 [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Bereshit (Genesis) 3:3 [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Esther 7:10 [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Haman was an Agagite who was a descendant of Amalek. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Bechorot 5b [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Rashi [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Bamidbar 21:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Rashi [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Bereshit (Genesis) 2:18-21 [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Esther 2:2-17 [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Esther 2:14 [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Bereshit (Genesis) 2:23 & 3:20 [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Bereshit (Genesis) 2:20-25 [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Bereshit (Genesis) 2:16-17 [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Esther 2:10 & 2:20 [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Bereshit (Genesis) 2:16 - עַל-הָאָדָם [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Esther 2:10 - עָלֶיהָ [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Esther 2:11 - מִתְהַלֵּךְ [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Bereshit (Genesis) 3:8 - מִתְהַלֵּךְ [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Yalkut Reuveini (Bereshit 505) [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Esther Rabbah 7, 13 [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Bereshit (Genesis) 3:16 [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. The Bnei Yissaschar (Adar 7, 9) explains the significance of this fact based on what is written in Mishnas Chassidim (Maseches Adar 3, 5-6) in the name of the Arizal. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Nachash HaKadmoni = The first serpent in the Garden of Eden. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Bereshit Rabbah 19:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Bereshit (Genesis) 1:16; Chullin 60a [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Megillah 14a [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Rabbi Avraham Arieh and Rachel Trugman [↑](#footnote-ref-90)