

The Menoras Hamaor Midrash Anthology

The Weekday Festivals: Rosh Chodesh, Chanukah, Purim

An Annotated Excerpt from
The Light of Mitzvos,
the third Light of the Menorah

Rabbeinu Yitzchak Abohav

Translated by

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Translator's Foreword

The Weekday Festivals: Rosh Chodesh, Chanukah, Purim is the fourth in a series of excerpts from *Menoras Hamaor* published by C.I.S. Publications Division in conjunction with Mifal Torah Vodaath Youth Centers for Sephardic Children in Israel. The previous excerpts include *Shalosh Regalim: The Three Festivals, The Ten Days of Teshuvah* and *Parents and Children*.

Menoras Hamaor, one of the great classics of Torah literature, was written by Rabbeinu Yitzchak Abohav in Spain over six hundred years ago. Over the centuries, it has enjoyed immense popularity. It has appeared in seventy-nine editions and has been translated into Ladino, German and Yiddish. These volumes represent the first appearance of the *Menoras Hamaor* in the English language.

There are seven separate sections in *Menoras Hamaor*, each dealing with a distinct area of Yiddishkeit. The chapters in this excerpt are drawn from Section IV of *The Light of Mitzvos*, the Third Light of the Menorah, where they appear as Parts One, Two and Three.

It is interesting to note that, in the section dealing with all the festivals of the Jewish calendar, the author chooses to open with *Rosh Chodesh, Chanukah* and *Purim*, the festivals of Rabbinic origin, before going on to discuss *Pesach, Shavuos* and *Sukkos*, the three major festivals specified in the Torah. It is almost as if the author intends to emphasize the importance of those festivals during which labors are not forbidden, making them, in effect, Weekday Festivals. Indeed, the very first point addressed in the discussion of *Rosh Chodesh* is that it is a true festival, in spite of its having no prohibition against *melachos*, forbidden labors. Mention is made, however, that it is customary for women to avoid doing *melachos* on *Rosh Chodesh* and the origins of this custom are traced.

Rabbeinu Abohav goes on to discuss some of the more singular aspects of *Rosh Chodesh* as a *zman kapparah*, an occasion for atonement, and also draws an illuminating parallel between the ever changing fortunes of *Klal Yisrael* and the waxing and waning of the moon during the lunar cycle. He concludes this section with a detailed description of *Kiddush Levanah*, the *berachah* recited upon viewing the new moon.

The chapters pertaining to the Festival of *Chanukah* begin with a brief review of the familiar story of the victorious Chashmonaim entering the *Bais Hamikdash* to relight the holy *Menorah* only to find just one small flask of uncontaminated oil, enough for just one day, and how this small amount of oil burned miraculously for eight full days. The author then quotes extensively from the *Midrash* and the writings of the Rishonim which find many allusions in the Torah (*Parshas Beha'aloscha*) to the Festival of Chanukah and offers an intriguing reason for the *Chanukah menorah* having eight branches while the *Menorah* in the *Bais Hamikdash* had only seven.

The chapters pertaining to the Festival of *Purim*, points out that when a calamity threatens the safety of *Mai Yisrael* it should be viewed as a sign that the *Ribono She! Olam* awaits our *teshuvah*. The author goes on to identify the shortcomings of the Jewish people which brought on this period of great peril. Talmudic sources are also used to develop the story of Purim, as related in *Megillas Esther*, and to prove the *Megillah* was written with *Ruach Hakodesh*, Divine Inspiration.

This specially prepared excerpt of the *Menoras Hamaor* has also been enhanced by the inclusion of the entire *Megillah* and a new translation in verse form. The emphasis of this new translation is on creating a metric pattern in which the tenor of the *Megillah* is preserved.

Much of the credit for the success of this series is due to the efforts and dedication of our good friend Rabbi Mendel Belsky *shilta*, the executive vice president of Mifal Torah Vodaath, May the *zechus* of his devotion to his

worthy cause bring him and his family much happiness and *Yiddishe nachas*.

PART I

Rosh Chodesh

&&Chapter One

FESTIVITY AND ATONEMENT

As each new month begins, we celebrate the Festival of *Rosh Chodesh*, the Festival of the New Month. Although *Rosh Chodesh* is not a full-fledged festival and *melachos* are not forbidden, it is a true festival nonetheless. Fasting is forbidden, and the newly departed are not eulogized. The abbreviated form of *Hallel* is also said. It is also a *mitzvah* to make *Rosh Chodesh seudos* festive occasions.

The *Yerushalmi* tells us that it is customary for women to avoid *melachos* on *Rosh Chodesh* (*Yerushalmi Pesachim* 4:1). The *Midrash* explains that this custom dates back to the time when *Klal Yisrael* prepared to make a golden calf-idol in the Desert after *Yetzias Mitzraim*. The men demanded that their wives give their gold jewelry to be melted down to make the idol, but the women refused. As a reward *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* granted a higher form of observance of *Rosh Chodesh* to women than to men (*Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer* 45).

Some scholars offer an explanation for the observance of *Rosh Chodesh* being singled out as the women's reward. The three major festivals represent our three forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. *Pesach* represents Avraham,¹ *Shavuos* represents Yitzchak,² and *Sukkos* represents Yaakov.³ The twelve days of *Rosh Chodesh* throughout the year represent

¹ As it is written, And Avraham hurried towards the tent to Sarah, and he said, Bring quickly three *se'ah* measures of flour, knead it, and prepare loaves (*Beraishis* 18:6). This took place on *Pesach*.

² *Shavuos* is the Festival that commemorates the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, *The shofar* that heralded the giving of the Torah was made from the horn of the ram that was sacrificed on the *Akeidah* in Yitzchak's stead.

[Translator's note: A reference to the events described in *Beraishis* 22:1-19]

³ As it is written, And Yaakov traveled to *Sukkos*, and he built himself a house, and for his livestock he made booths, therefore he named the place *Sukkos* (*Beraishis* 33:17).

the twelve tribes of Yisrael. After the tribes of Yisrael sinned by making a golden calf-idol they were no longer worthy of having these special holidays, and they lost them, Nevertheless, the observance of *Rosh Chodesh* was not discontinued altogether. It was henceforth reserved for the Jewish women as a remembrance of their refusal to participate in the sin of the golden calf-idol.

Rosh Chodesh is a time of *kapparah*, atonement. During the time of the *Bais Hamikdash* the people would bring sacrifices to incur the goodwill of the Creator and to atone for their own sins. And it was particularly appropriate to bring sacrifices at this time, the time of the new moon. The waning and waxing of the moon had led some people to believe it was a deity, that it brought good fortune as it grew larger and ill fortune as it shrank. The *Rosh Chodesh* sacrifices reaffirmed the beliefs of the Jewish people and protected them from such foolish notions and from all other provocations by their evil inclinations.

The *Talmud* tells of another aspect of "atonement" of the *Rosh Chodesh* sacrifices (*Chulin 60b*):

%%Rabbi Shimeon the son of Pazi asked: "It is written, And the Lord made the two great lights, the great light to rule the day, and the small light to rule the night (Beraishis 1:16). In the beginning of the verse both the sun and the moon are called great lights. Yet, as the verse goes on, the sun is called the great light, while the moon is called the small light. Why is this so?

"The verse alludes to the following exchange:

"The (designated angel of the) moon said before .Hakadosh Baruch Hu: 'Master of the Universe! Can two kings share a single crown?'

"Hakadosh Baruch Hu replied: 'You then shall become the smaller of the two lights.'

"The moon said before Him: 'Just because I was the one that brought up a valid point why should I be the one that becomes smaller?'

"Hakadosh Baruch Hu replied; 'You shall be compensated by giving light both during the night and during the day.'"

"The moon said to Him: 'What purpose will I serve during the day? Of what use is a candle in the daylight?'"

"Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to the moon: 'The people of Yisrael will calculate their months and years according to you.'"

"The moon still objected: 'They will also calculate their seasons according to the sun, as it is written, And the Lord said, Let there be lights in the canopy of the skies to divide between the day and the night, and they shall serve as signs for the seasons and the days and the years (Beraishis 1:14).'"

"He replied: 'Righteous men will also be designated as small, just as you have been: Yaakov the Small,⁴ Shmuel the Small,⁵ David the Small.⁶'"

"Hakadosh Baruch Hu saw that the moon was not completely satisfied, and He said: 'Let the Jewish people bring a sacrifice to atone for Me that I have diminished the moon.'"

"Hakadosh Baruch Hu said: 'This goat shall be an atonement for Me that I have diminished the moon.'"

This coincides with that which Rabbi Levi said: "Why is the goat sacrificed on Rosh Chodesh mentioned in the unusual form of that which is written, And a young goat for a guilt-offering for God (Bamidbar 28:15)?"

&&The Midrash offers a different interpretation (Beraishis Rabah 6:1):

%%Rabbi Yochanan began to expound: "It is written, He has prepared the moon for the appointed times (Tehillim 104:19). Only the sun was created to provide illumination. Why then was the moon created? It was

⁴ [Translator's Note: Rashi explains that this refers to that which is written, Who shall support Yaakov, for he is small (Amos 7:2)]

⁵ Translator's Note: Maharsha notes that the Shmuel the Small referred to here is not the Prophet Shmuel, since we find no mention of him being referred to as "small". Rather it is a *Tana*, a disciple of Rabban Gamaliel, mentioned in *Sanhedrin 11a*. Rashash agrees with this view and uses it to support a variant text wherein Shmuel the Small is mentioned last.]

⁶ Translator's Note: Rashi explains that this refers to that which is written, And David was the smallest of his brothers (Shmuel I 17:14).]

created as a special sphere by which to sanctify the new months and the years.

Rabbi Berachiah says in the name of Rabbi Seemon: "Both the sun and the moon were created to provide illumination, as it is written, And they shall serve as lights in the canopy of the skies to illuminate the earth (Beraishis 1:15) and, And the Lord placed them in the canopy of the Skies to illuminate the earth (Beraishis 1:17).

It is written, And they shall serve as signs for the seasons and the days and the years (Beraishis 1:14). This refers to determining the beginning of Shabbos by the setting of the sun and calculating the proper dates for the festivals, for Rosh Chodesh, and for the new year,

Rabbi Yuden says in the name of Rabbi Tanchum the son of Chiya and Rabbi Pinchas the son. of Rabbi Seemon: "If at first both the sun and the moon were called "great lights' why is the moon referred to afterwards as 'the small light'?"

"Because the moon trespassed on the domain of the sun, appearing in the evening sky before the sun had set, its light was diminished. "

Rabbi Pinchas said: "When speaking of other sacrifices it is written, And a young goat as a guilt-offering (Bamidbar 29:4). Of the Rosh Chodesh sacrifice, however, it is written, And one young goat for a guilt-offering for God (Bamidbar 28:15). Why is this so?"

"Hakadosh Baruch Hu said: 'I was the One who caused the moon to trespass on the domain of the sun and, thus, to be diminished.'

"If Hakadosh Baruch Hu diminished the moon for trespassing with His permission, certainly it is a grave infraction to trespass without permission."

Rabbi Levi said in the name of Rabbi Yosi the son of Ila'i: "In the way of the world the older one should count according to the greater sign, and the younger one according to the lesser sign. And indeed, the gentile nations, who are descended from Eisav, the older son of Yitzchak, calculate their calendar according to the sun, while the Jewish people who are

descended from Yaakov, the younger son of Yitzchak, calculate their calendar according to the moon."

Rabbi Nachman said: "This bodes well for the Jewish people. The fortunes of Eisav, who calculates by the sun, can be deduced from the sun. Just as the sun rules only by day, never by night, so too does Eisav have a share only in this world, not in the world to come. The fortunes of Yaakov, who calculates by the moon, can be deduced from the moon. Just as the moon rules both by day and by night, so too does Klal Yisrael have a share both in this world and in the world to come."

&&It is customary to read the one hundred and fourth psalm on *Rosh Chodesh*, because it includes the verse, He has prepared the moon for the appointed times (*Tehillim* 104:19). This is meant to teach us that the waning and waxing of the moon were not designed to affect the fortunes of people, as the astrologers claim. They were designed as a tool for determining the dates of the Jewish people's "appointed times" with the Creator. This particular method is also symbolic of the complete sovereignty of the Creator over His universe. In fact, this entire psalm testifies to the order of creation. It proclaims that He is King, that He created everything, that He is Master of everything. It proclaims that all the hosts of heaven and earth must abide by His Will as He ordained it in the order of creation. If there is ever any reason to deviate from the natural order of creation it is He alone who commands and effects these changes as He sees fit according to the state of the general populace or the state of the individual.⁷

The psalm, therefore, both begins and ends with the verse O, my soul, bless God (*Tehillim* 104:1, 35). It is telling us that the intelligent person who perceives the true nature of the world does not thank or praise the hosts of the skies. He realizes that they have no control over anything, not even their own movements. They move according to the nature instilled in them

⁷ This is the implication in that which is written, And I will favor those that I wish to favor (*Shemos* 33:19).

by the Will of their Master. The intelligent person blesses the One that commanded the creation of the world.

The psalm concludes, Let sinners be eradicated from the earth, and villains be no more, O, my soul, bless God, praise God (*Tehillim* 104:35). Only when the fundamental truths set forth in this psalm are universally accepted will the final downfall of villainy come about. The *Talmud* tells us (*Berachos* 9b):

%%Rabbi Shimeon the son of Pazi said: "David Hamelech wrote one hundred and three psalms in Tehillim before he wrote this psalm, but he did not conclude any of them with the phrase 'praise God'

"Only when he came to the psalm where he foresaw the alternate downfall of sinners, as it is written, Let sinners be eradicated from the earth (Tehillim 104:35), did he find it appropriate to use this phrase. For nothing brings more praise and Joyful song to the world than the downfall of villains, the destroyers of the world, as it is written, And when villains are destroyed there is joyful song (Mishlei 11:10). And it is also written, And God's redeemed shall return, and they shall come to Zion with joyful song (Yeshayahu 35:10)."

&&The destruction of the villains signals salvation and joyful song for the righteous. The Talmud makes this point in reference to that which is written Tyre speaking of Yerushalayim, I will be fulfilled by her destruction (Yechezkel 26:2). The Talmud understands this to mean that the fortunes of the Jewish nation and the gentile nations are in counterbalance; when the one is fulfilled the other is desolate (Pesachim 42b).

This is also the meaning of that which is written, Your guilt is ended, O daughter of Zion, it shall no longer cause you to be exiled, He visits your guilt, O daughter of Edom (*Eichah* 4:22). When the villainous Edom will be destroyed, salvation will come to Zion.

Chapter Two

THE BLESSING OVER THE NEW MOON

The purpose of the blessing at the first sight of the new moon is again to reaffirm our belief that Hashem created everything by His Word, No creature has the power to accomplish anything in the world, good or evil, without the consent of the Master. With this in mind, the *Talmud* tells us (*Sanhedrin* 42a):

%%Rabbi Aba the son of Chanina said in the name of Rav Asi who said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: "Whoever makes the blessing over the new moon is considered to have welcomed the Shechinah . . ."

It was taught in the school of Rabbi Yishmael: If the Jewish people had merited only this one mitzvah which is compared to welcoming the Shechinah it would have been sufficient.

Abaye said: "Because making this blessing is compared to welcoming the Shechinah one must stand up when one makes it."

Meraimar and Mar Zutra used to put their arms about each other's shoulders while snaking the blessing to express their esteem for the mitzvah.

Rav Ada said to Rav Ashi: In Eretz Yisrael the blessing is made as follows: Blessed are You, O God our Lord, King of the Universe, who renews the months."

Rav Ashi responded: "A simple blessing such. as this could be formulated by anyone. Rather, the blessing should be made according to Rabbi Yehudah's suggestion.

"For Rabbi Yehudah said: The blessing should be as follows: Blessed are you, O God our Lord, King of the Universe, who created the heavens with His Word, and all their host with the breath from His Mouth, He established rules and times for them, that they should not alter their mission, they rejoice and are happy to do the Will of their Master, the Maker of Truth, whose work is true,⁸ and of the moon He said that it should be renewed, a crown of glory for those carried in the womb that they are destined to be renewed as well, and to glorify their Creator, for the name of the glory of His kingdom, blessed are You O God, who renews the months."

&&As long as the light of the moon is increasing it is considered a new moon and the blessing can be made over it. The Talmud tells us (*Sanhedrin* 41b):

%%*Rav Acha the son of Chanina said in the name of Rav Asi who said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: "How long can one make the blessing over the full moon? Until its darkened part fills in."*

How long is that?

Rabbi Yaakov said in the name of Rav Yehudah: "Until the sixteenth day of the month."

Both of these views follow Rabbi Yochanan's statement. One contends that it is full when it resembles an undrawn bow. The other contends that it is full when it is round as a sieve.

&&Elsewhere, the *Talmud* discusses when and how to make the blessing (*Sofrim* 20):

%%*The blessing over the new moon is made on the night following Shabbos when a person is in a good mood and beautifully dressed.*

⁸ [Translator's note: According to Rashi's version of the text this phrase refers to the heavenly hosts as truthful workers who do not deviate from their tasks.]

*He fixes his gaze on the moon, straightens his feet, makes the blessing, and says three times: "Let this be a good sign for us and for all the people of Yisrael. Blessed is your Creator, Blessed is your Maker. Blessed is your Sanctifier."*⁹

He then leaps up three times, each time saying: "Just as I leap before you but cannot touch you, so too should those who leap at me to cause me harm not be able to touch me."

He then quotes: "Let fear and dread fall upon them, by the greatness of Your Arm, let them fall silent as stone (Shemos 15:16)."

He repeats this quote two more times, and then says the words in reverse order three times.

He then says: "Amen, Amen, praise God."

*He tells three others: "Peace to you." Then he goes home in good spirits.*¹⁰

⁹ Some say this in the following form and order: Blessed is your Maker. Blessed is the One who formed you. Blessed is your Master. Blessed is your Creator. This version forms an acrostic allusion to the name Yaakov. As explained in the previous chapter, the moon is the symbol for Yaakov.

[Translator's note; Our standard text follows this version.]

¹⁰ (Translator's note: Elsewhere, the *Talmud* mentions that it is also customary to say, "David, King of Yisrael, lives and endures" (*Rosh Hashanah* 25a). This reference is, of course, to the Davidic dynasty, which will eventually be reinstated with the coming of *Mashiach*, the anointed king who will reign over Yisrael after the ultimate redemption.

Rashi explains that reference is made to the Davidic dynasty during the new moon ceremony because David Hamelech is symbolized by the moon, as it is written, His offspring shall endure Forever, and his throne shall be like the sun before Me, like the moon it shall be established forever (*Tehillim* 89:37-38). Maharsha, in *Chidushei Agados on Sanhedrin* 38a, writes that just as the moon goes through a period of decline only to return in full radiance so too will the House of David return to its glory at the time of the ultimate redemption of the Jewish people.

Rav Shlomo Kluger, in *Chachmas Shlomo*, his commentary on *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 426:2, points out that the verses quoted by Rashi compare David to both the sun and the moon. Why then is the moon considered the symbol for David any more than the sun?

He answers that the moon symbolizes the cyclical fortunes of the Davidic dynasty in this world, indicating a period of restoration following the period of decline. However, it should not be assumed that this period of decline reflects a spiritual decline in the Eyes of Heaven within the House of David. The House of David remains intact; it is only its position in this world that deteriorates. This accounts for the dual symbols in the abovementioned verses. The throne of David is like the constantly brilliant sun before Hashem, but its fortunes in this world are cyclical, waning and waxing like the moon. He goes to make this connection even more specific by quoting from Akeidas Yitzchak that just as the moon goes through fifteen days of growth followed by fifteen days of decline so too did the Jewish people go through fifteen stages of ascent, from the time of Yetzias Mitzraim until they reached the pinnacle during the reign of Shlomo Hamelech, and fifteen stages of decline since.

This symbolism may also shed light on the custom of reciting the verse, "Let fear and dread fall upon them . . .," both in its correct form and in reverse order. This is to signify

&&We also find that the renewal of the moon in this world signals a corresponding renewal in the world of souls. The *Talmud* tells us (*Bava Metzia 85b*):

%%The prophet Eliyahu would regularly attend Rabi's academy. One day, on Rosh Chodesh, Eliyahu was delayed and did not appear,

At their next meeting Rabi asked Eliyahu: "What delayed the master?"

He replied: "I had to bring our forefather Avraham back to life, and I had to give him water with which to wash his hands. Then he had to pray, after which I had to return him to his resting place. Then I had to go through this process with our forefather Yitzchak and again with our forefather Yaakov."

Rabi asked: "But why didn't you bring them all to life together?"

Eliyahu replied: "Because together they would have prayed for mercy so strongly that they would have brought Mashiach before the proper time."

Rabi asked: "Is there anyone alive today who has such power?"

Eliyahu replied: "Rabbi Chiya together with his sons."

It once happened that there was a drought. Rabi declared a public fast. He appointed Rabbi Chiya and his son to lead the prayers, They said, "He causes the wind to blow." The wind immediately began to blow. They said, "He causes the rain to fall." Rain immediately began to fall. When they were about to say that He brings the dead back to life the world began to tremble.

that the fortunes of the Jewish people will ultimately be reversed and they will return to their former glory. And it is said during the new moon ceremony because the cyclical moon is the symbol for this.

It is interesting to note that this verse numbers eight Hebrew words, a total of sixteen in the correct form and the reverse order combined. Since the moon waxes for fifteen days and wanes for fifteen days any sixteen day period must necessarily contain elements of both the declining and ascendant phases.

In the same vein, we can also offer an explanation for the custom of the Rokeach, quoted in *Match Moshe*, which requires the recitation of the entire verse, both in the correct form and in reverse order. The full verse contains seventeen words. A seventeen day period in the lunar cycle can span three phases — the last day of ascent, the entire period of decline, and the first day of the new ascent. Thus, we have not only the symbol of a cyclical moon, but also a positive sign that this cycle will ultimately result in the rise of the fortunes of the Jewish people with the coming of Mashiach, at which point they will become as the constant sun, never again to decline.]

It was asked in Heaven: Who revealed to the world this secret power of Rabbi Chiya and his sons?"

It was answered: "Eliyahu."

Eliyahu was brought and struck with sixty fiery rods. He then assumed the guise of a bear and appeared among Rabbi Chiya and his sons. in this way, he managed to separate and confuse them, and they were unable to finish the prayers together.

&&PART II

Chanukah

&&Chapter Three

THE MEANING OF THE MENORAH

&&From time to time, as the need arises, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* performs spectacular miracles for the Jewish people. He does this to show His greatness to the world, so that people will not think the world functions on its own, so that they will realize He created the substance of the world from nothingness and the nature He instituted in it is at His command.

Among these great miracles was the miracle Hashem performed for the Jewish people during the time of the Second *Bais Hamikdash*.¹¹ At that time Eretz Yisrael was ruled by the Chashmonaim, a family of *kohanim*. The Greeks had overpowered the Chashmonaim, but the Jewish people, led by the royal House of Chashmonai, rose up against the Greeks and Hashem made them victorious. But when they entered the *Bais Hamikdash* to remove the idols brought in by the Greeks, to reconsecrate it and light the holy *menorah*, they found that the Greeks had contaminated all the oils. They found only one small flask of uncontaminated oil, enough to light the candles of the *menorah* for just one day. The *Talmud* tells us (*Shabbos 21b*):

%%Our rabbis have taught: On the twenty-fifth day of the month of Kislev the days of Chanukah begin.

¹¹ [Translator's note: The author appears to be focusing on the miracle of *yesh me'ayin*, substance from nothingness, as the fundamental testament to the mastery of Hashem over the world. In this context, the author discusses the miracle of Chanukah, the miraculous appearance of enough oil to burn for eight days.]

During these eight days the departed are not to be eulogized and no public fasts are to be declared. For when the Greeks entered the Sanctum of the Bais Hamikdash they contaminated all of the oils. When the royal House of Chashmonai prevailed and was victorious, they searched but could find but one flask unopened and marked with the seal of the kohen gadol. it contained enough oil for just one day, but miraculously, it burned for eight days.

The following year they established these eight days as a permanent festival.

&&Indeed, we find that there is an allusion in the Torah itself to this future miracle and to the festival that would result from it. After the Torah concludes the portion about the part played by the Princes of the Tribes in the consecration of the *Mishkan*, it is written, And God spoke to Moshe, saying, Speak to Aharon and say to him, When you light the candles . . . *Bamidbar* 8:1-2). Rashi quotes from the *Midrash*:

Why was the portion about the light of the menorah written immediately after the portion about the consecration of the Mishkan by the Nesiim the Princes?

When Aharon witnessed the consecration of the Mishkan by the Nesiim he felt discouraged because he did not share in it, not he himself, nor any member of his tribe.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to him: I swear by your life that your share is greater than theirs, for you shall trim and light the candles every evening and morning."

&&Ramban raises several questions about this Midrash, if it is interpreted as referring to the lighting of the *menorah* in the *Mishkan* and the *Bais Hamikdash*: Why didn't Hashem reassure Aharon by reminding him of his duty to burn the *ketores* incense every evening and morning? Indeed, we find the burning of the *ketores* incense listed among the most praiseworthy things, as it is written, They shall teach Your laws to Yaakov, and Your Torah to Yisrael, they shall place *ketores* incense before You

(*Devarim* 33:10). Second, why didn't Hashem reassure Aharon by reminding him that he alone was privileged to perform the service of *Yarn Kippur*? Third, why didn't He reassure Aharon by reminding him of all the sacrifices that had to be brought through him? Furthermore, by bringing the special daily sacrifices during the period of the consecration was not Aharon's share in the consecration itself greater than that of the Princes?

Therefore, Ramban concludes that this *Midrash* is deriving an allusion to the *Chanukah* lights from the juxtaposition of these two portions of the Torah. Hashem was telling Aharon that his own descendants, the kohanim of the House of Chashmonai, would have the privilege of reconsecrating the *Bais Hamikdash*, much as the Princes had participated in the original consecration. Ramban then mentions finding this passage from the *Midrash*, quoted in *Megillas Setarim* of Rabbeinu Nissim, in a variant version that expressly states Ramban's interpretation:

%%When the Twelve tribes brought sacrifices at the consecration of the Mishkan, and the tribe of Levi did not, Aharon became discouraged.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to Moshe: "Speak to Aharon and say to him . . . (Bamidbar 8:2).

"There will someday be another Chanukah (consecration) that will be centered around the lighting of candles. Through your descendants I will work miracles and salvation. And they will make a new consecration that will be named after them — the Chanukah of the House of Chashmonai,"

That is why the portion about the lighting of the menorah is written next to the portion about the consecration of the Mishkan.

&&Elsewhere, the Midrash tells us (Bamidbar Rabah 15:6):

%%Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to Moshe: "Go say to Aharon; 'Fear not! You are destined for greater things. Sacrifices can be brought only as long as there is a Bais Hamikdash, but the candles of the menorah will always remain. And the privilege I gave you to bless Klal Yisrael will also endure forever'

&&Ramban points out that this cannot be referring to the menorah in the *Bais Hamikdash*, because this *menorah* will not outlast the sacrifices. The destruction of the *Bais Hamikdash* will bring an end to both at the same time. Rather, this is referring to the lighting of the *Chanukah menorah* which will continue even after the destruction of the *Bais Hamikdash* and throughout the exile of the Jewish people, as will the blessing of the *kohanim* to the people. That is why the portion about the consecration by the Princes is preceded by the portion about the *kohanim* blessings and followed by the portion about the *menorah*. In this way Aharon and his descendants would not be dishonored by their omission from the middle portion.

It should be noted that the *Chanukah menorah* differs from the *menorah* in the *Bais Hamikdash*. The *Chanukah menorah* has eight candles, while the *menorah* in the *Bais Hamikdash* only had seven candles. This is so because the *Chanukah menorah* symbolizes more than just the *menorah* of the *Bais Hamikdash*,

In the Sanctum of the *Bais Hamikdash* there were two major holy vessels, the *menorah* and the *shulchan*, the table upon which the *lechem hapanim*, the loaves of showbread,, were arranged. The *menorah* consisted of seven candles, these seven candles corresponding to the seven "moving stars" — the sun, the moon, and the five planets closest to the earth. Arranged upon the table were twelve loaves of showbread, these corresponding to the twelve constellations used as the astrological signs of the Zodiac. Furthermore, these loaves are arranged in two tiers of six, because of the twelve signs, six are always in the ascendant and six in decline. Thus, the *menorah* stood for the heavenly lights and the *shulchan* for the astrological signs. Therefore, the *menorah* stood towards the south and the *shulchan* towards the north.

The purpose of this symbolism was to emphasize that all that transpires in the world is by His Word alone; nature is only at His command. The

hosts of the heavens and the astrological signs do not control the fate of the world.

The *Chanukah menorah*, which would endure even after the destruction of the *Bais Hamikdash*, contains within itself both the symbol of the *menorah* and the symbol of the *shulchan*. It contains the seven lights that represent the seven "moving stars". And it contains an eighth light that represents the entire Zodiac.¹² During the long exile of the Jewish people they would serve as a remembrance that the exile was not caused by stars or astrological signs, for they are impotent. The only true candle and light are the Torah and *mitzvos*, as it is written, For the mitzvah is a candle and the Torah light (*Mishlei 6:23*).

The *Chanukah menorah* is a reminder that the ultimate redemption of the Jewish people will come only when it is the Will of the Almighty Lord that it come. He sent them into exile because of their sins, and He will redeem them with wonderful miracles when the time comes. So did He do when He brought them forth from Egypt, and so did He do countless other times. So did He do with the oil of the menorah in full view of the Jewish people and the Greeks. So does He every day that He sustains the Jewish people in their exile in the jaws of the gentile lion. He shields them and delivers them in times of grave danger. He causes hostile governments to favor the Jews and protect them from their enemies until He will look down from Heaven and deliver the Jewish people forevermore.

¹² [Translator's note: This thesis presents yet another solution to Rabbeinu Yosef Karo's celebrated question: Since there was already enough oil for one day the miracle of Chanukah covered only seven of the eight days; why then do we light candles for the entire eight days? According to the author's thesis that the eight lights are symbolic of the seven moving stars and the Zodiac, we can also account for the lighting of the candles for seven days.

Chapter Four

THE MITZVAH OF CHANUKAH

Our Sages instituted the practice of lighting *a menorah* on *Chanukah* every year as a remembrance of the great miracle performed for the Jewish people in the time of the Chashmonaim and to publicize it. The *Talmud* tells us (*Shabbos* 21b):

%%Our rabbis have taught: The mitzvah of Chanukah mandates that a lamp be lit for every man and his household. The zealous provide a lamp for each member of the household.

As to the extremely zealous —

The disciples of the school of Shammai say: "On the first day one lights eight candles and from then on one less every day."

The disciples of the school of Hillel say: "On the first day one lights one candle and from then on one more every day."

The view of the school of Shammai parallels the system of sacrifices brought on the festival of Sukkos, their number diminishing with every successive day.

Otherwise, the number of candles is meant to correspond to the number of days remaining to Chanukah.

The view of the school of Hillel is that the number of candles is meant to correspond to the number of days of Chanukah already elapsed.

Otherwise, Holy matters require progress, not regression.

. . . Our rabbis have taught: It is a mitzvah to place the Chanukah lamp in the outside entrance to one's house. If one lives in an upper story, one should place the Chanukah lamp in a window overlooking the street. If, however, it is dangerous to do so because it would violate a government decree then it is sufficient to place the Chanukah lamp on one's table.

&&The Talmud goes on (Shabbos 22a):

%%Rabah said: It is a mitzvah to place the Chanukah lamp within a tefach measure of the doorway."

Where does one put it?

Rav Acha the son of Rav said: "On the right side,"

Rav Yirmiyah from Difti said: On the left side."

The authoritative view is that it is placed on the left side so that the doorway should have the mezuzah on the right side and the Chanukah lamp on the left side.

&&The Talmud continues (Shabbos 22a):

%%Rav Chiya the son. of Ashi said in the name of Rav: "One who lights a Chanukah lamp must make a blessing over it."

And Rabbi Yirmiyah the son of Aba said: "One who sees a Chanukah lamp must make a blessing over it."

What blessing does he make?

Rav Yehudah said: "The first day the one who lights makes three blessings, and the one who sees makes two blessings. From then on, the one who lights makes two blessings, and the one who sees makes one blessing."

What blessing does he make?

Blessed are You, O God, our Lord, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us through His mitzvos, and He has commanded us to light the Chanukah lamp.

And, Blessed are You, O God, our Lord, King of the Universe, who performed miracles for our forefathers in those days during this time.

And, Blessed are You, O God, our Lord, King of the Universe, who has sustained us, and preserved us, and brought us to this time.

&&The *Talmud* tells us how precious the *mitzvah* of lighting the *Chanukah menorah* is (*Shabbos 23b*):

%%*Rava said: "It is obvious to me that if on that Shabbos, a person only has enough money for either lights for his home or for the Chanukah lamp he should spend his money on lights for his home, because they are necessary for domestic harmony. Similarly, if a person only has enough money for either lights for his home or wine for kiddush he should spend his money on lights for his home, because they are necessary for domestic harmony."*

Rava asked: "If a person only has enough money for either the Chanukah lamp or kiddush wine which takes precedence? Does the wine rank higher because it is a mitzvah that comes regularly? Or does the Chanukah lamp rank higher because it publicizes a miracle?"

After asking the question Rava found the solution: The Chanukah lamp ranks higher because it publicizes a miracle,"

&&Because the *mitzvah* of *Chanukah* is of Rabbinic origin it is particularly important to fulfill it carefully. The *Talmud* tells us that one who does so will have sons who are Torah scholars (*Ibid.*).

The *mitzvah* of *Chanukah* reminds us that, although we have been beset by harsh decrees because of our sins, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* has not abandoned us to the inexorable tide of history. Nor has He left us completely at the mercy of our enemies. We have seen many nations whom Hashem has condemned to exile amidst their conquerors. Some of these nations have been wiped out in the course of time; others have become assimilated into the culture of their conquerors. But Hashem has always watched over us that we not be destroyed. He has rescued us from calamity and extricated us from harsh decrees and assimilative campaigns. In every period of history, He has provided us with great men, pillars of the world, who have stood in the breach, who have come to our aid and support in troubled times, The *Talmud* tells us (*Megillah 11a*):

%%It was taught in a teaching: It is written, And yet, for all that, even when they are in the land of their enemies I have not rejected them, nor have I loathed them, to annihilate them, to annul My covenant with them, for I am God their Lord (Vayikra 26:44).

"I have not rejected them" in the days of the Kasdim when I appointed Chananiah, Mishael, and Azariah to them.

"And I have not loathed them" in the days of the Greeks when I appointed Mattisyahu the Chashmonai and his group to them.

"To annihilate them" in the days of Haman when I appointed Mordechai and Esther to them.

"To annul My covenant with them" in the days of the Romans when I appointed the Torah dynasty of Rabi and the Torah scholars of future generations to them.

"For I am God their Lord." In the future time, no nation or nationality will be able to touch them.

&&PART III

Purim

Chapter Five

INDUCEMENT TO TESHUVAH

&&*Hakadosh Baruch Hu* wants the Jewish people to return to Him through *teshuvah*, repentance, and he sometimes places them in terrifying situations to induce them to do *teshuvah*. He also puts them through ordeals from time to time so that they may become worthy of greater reward. Nevertheless, it is perfectly clear that He does neither of these things unless the Jewish people have made themselves vulnerable through their own guilt. If they bear no guilt they are not subject to calamity or intimidation, nor are they even subject to minor annoyances.

If they do bear guilt, however, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* disciplines them as a father disciplines his wayward but beloved son. He periodically metes out punishment to prevent the Jewish people from accumulating an abundance of guilt. And he metes out the punishment in small, bearable doses, always waiting expectantly for them to mend their ways. The *Talmud* tells us (*Avodah Zarah 4a*):

%%Rabbi Abahu described Rav Safra to the infidels as a great man. Out of respect, they exempted Rav Safra from paying taxes for thirteen years.

One day, they came upon Rav Safra and asked him; "It is written, Only you did I love among all the clans of the earth, therefore I shall visit upon you all of your guilt (Amos 3:2). If someone has within him great fury, does he unleash it on his loved ones?"

Rav Safra was at a loss for a proper response. The infidels tied a halter about Rav Safra's neck and began to harass him.

Rabbi Abahu came upon this scene and said to them: "Why are you harassing him?"

They said: "Did you not tell us that he was a great man? He couldn't even explain this verse to us."

Rabbi Abahu replied: "I was only referring to Oral Law teachings, not to Scriptural verses."

They said: "Then why is it that the members of your school are proficient in the Scripture?"

Rabbi Abahu replied: "Since we live among you, who always question us about the meaning of the Scripture, we make it a point to closely study the Scripture. Rav Safra and his colleagues do not live among people who question them about the Scripture and, therefore, do not study it as closely as we do.

They said: "Then you tell us the meaning of that verse."

Rabbi Abahu explained: "Let me draw an analogy for you. Two people borrow money from the same person, one is his friend and the other his enemy. When the loans come due, he demands payment in full from his enemy, but he lets his friend schedule his payment in small amounts over a period of time."

&&When the Jewish people were turned over to the murderous hands of the villain Haman, their very existence as a nation was threatened. The Talmud discusses the guilt that was the cause of this grave danger (*Megillah* 12a):

%%Rabbi Shimeon the son of Yochai's disciples asked him; "Why did the enemies of Yisrael¹³ of that generation deserve to be annihilated?"

He replied: "Tell me yourselves."

¹³ [Translator's note; "Enemies of Yisrael" was a commonly used euphemism when speaking of the misfortune of Yisrael.]

They said: "Because they participated in the feast given by that villain King Achashverosh."

Rabbi Shimeon the son of Yochai asked: "If this were the reason then only the Jews of the capital city Shushan deserved to die; why did all the Jews of the world deserve to die?"

They said: "You tell us the reason then."

He said: "Because they bowed down to idol-images during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar."

They asked: "Was partiality shown to them? Why did they deserve a miracle?"

He replied: "They only bowed down out of fear, therefore Hakadosh Baruch Hu decreed that they only be chastised, not destroyed. For so it is written, For He does not torment wholeheartedly (Eichah 3:33)."

&&Indeed, the ideal *teshuvah* does not come as a result of grave danger but from sincere inner conviction. The *Talmud* tells us, however, that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* accepts even this lesser form of *teshuvah* (*Megillah* 14a):

%It is written, And the king removed his signet-ring (Esther 3:10).

Rabbi Aba the son of Kehana said: "The removal of King Achashverosh's signet-ring and its delivery into Haman's hands was more effective than the forty-eight prophets and seven prophetesses who spoke to the people of Yisrael. These forty-eight prophets and seven prophetesses who spoke to the people of Yisrael could not convince them to mend their ways, but this one removal of the signet-ring did accomplish it."

&&*Hakadosh Baruch Hu* accepted the *teshuvah* of the Jewish people, and He took pity on them. He brought about the downfall of Haman, his sons, and all of his relatives who were persecuting the Jewish people. He then replaced them in their positions of power with the righteous Mordechai and Esther through whom the rescue of the people had been effected.

The *Talmud* tells of the various expositions of the *Amoraim* on the occasion of *Purim* (*Megillah* 10b):

%%Rabbi Shmuel the son of Nachmeini began to expound upon the events of Purim: "It is written, Instead of the thorn a fir tree shall come up, and instead of the nettle a myrtle shall come up (Yeshayahu 55:13).

"The thorn refers to Haman who declared himself an idol, and idols are called thorns .. .

"The fir tree refers to Mordechai .

"The nettle refers to the evil Queen Vashti, the granddaughter of the evil Nebuchadnezzar who burned the regal House of our Lord . .

"The myrtle refers to the righteous Esther, who was also known by the name Hadassah, the Hebrew word for myrtle, as it is written, And he had brought up Hadassah (Esther 2:7)

"The verse continues, And it shall be for God for a name (Yeshayahu 55:13). This refers to Purim.

"The verse concludes, For an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off (Ibid.). This refers to the reading of the Megillah."

Rabbi Aba the son of Kehana began to expound: "It is written, He gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to a person who is good before Him (Koheles 2:26). This refers to Mordechai.

"The verse continues, And to the sinner He gives the opportunity to gather and to collect (Ibid.). This refers to Haman.

"The verse concludes, That he may give it to the one who is good before the Lord (Ibid.). This refers to Haman's being replaced by Mordechai, as it is written, And the king removed his signet-ring, which he had taken away from Haman, and he gave it to Mordechai, and Esther appointed Mordechai over the House of Haman (Esther 8:2)."

Rabbi Aba the son of Afron began to expound: "It is written, And I will place My chair in Eilat, and I will destroy from there kings and princes, by the Word of God (Yirmiyahu 49:38). 'King' refers to Vashti and 'princes' to Haman and his sons."

Rav Dimi the son of Yitzchak began to expound: "It is written, For we were slaves, but our Lord did not abandon us in our bondage, and He made

us find favor before the kings of Paras (Persia), to provide us with sustenance, to raise up the House of our Lord, and to restore its ruins, and to give us a boundary in Yehudah and in Yerushalayim (Ezra 9:9).

"When did He make us find favor before the kings of Persia?

"In the days of Mordechai and Esther."

&&The *Talmud* tells us that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* prepared the remedy before the trouble developed (*Megillah* 13b):

%%*Rabbi Shimeon said; "It was perfectly clear to the One who commanded the creation of the world that Haman would one day pay shekels for the right to do with Jews as he pleased. Therefore, Hakadosh Baruch Ha anticipated those shekels by giving the Jewish people the opportunity to counteract them by fulfilling the mitzvah of giving shekels to the Bais Hamikdash.*

"And so have we been taught: On the first day of Adar the call for the shekels goes out."

&&With the power of this remedy, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* caused King Achashverosh to be captivated by his wife, the righteous and wise Esther. The Jewish people had been handed over to the evil Haman by King Achashverosh and Esther had to find a way to defeat Haman. She had to find a way to get the king to grant her any request. She decided that the best way to do this was to invite the king and Haman to dine with her. The *Talmud* explains (*Megillah* 15b):

%%*Our rabbis have taught: Why did Esther see fit to invite Haman to dine?*

Rabbi Elazar says; "She prepared a snare with which to entrap, as it is written, Let their table become as a snare before them (Tehillim 9:23)."

Rabbi Yehoshua says; "She had learned this method of overcoming enemies in her father's house. For it is written, if your enemy is hungry feed him bread, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink, for you will be heaping burning coals upon his head, and God will repay you (Mishlei

25:21-22). In a variant reading, the verse is saying that God will turn him over to you."

Rabbi Meir says: "She did so to give Haman a false sense of security and prevent him from revolting against the king."

Rabbi Yehudah says: "She did so to hide the fact that she was Jewish."

Rabbi Nechemiah says: "Esther was afraid that the Jewish people would think they did not have to pray for mercy since one of their own was the king's wife. Therefore, she invited Haman to her house to give the Jewish people the false impression that she was allied with Haman and to induce them to pray to Hashem."

Rabbi Yosi says: She wanted Haman to be in her company frequently, because hopefully an opportunity for entrapping him would present itself."

Rabbi Shimeon the son of Menasia says: "She did so hoping that the Omnipresent would take note of her desperation and perform miracles for the Jewish people."

Rabbi Yehoshua the son of Karchah says: "She wanted to show a friendly interest in Haman so that King Achashverosh would put both Haman and her to death."

Rabban Gamaliel said: "Achashverosh was a very fickle-minded king."¹⁴

Rabban Gamaliel said: "After everything, we still need the explanation of Rabbi Elazar from Moda."

It was taught: Rabbi Elazar from Moda says: "Esther wanted to arouse the jealousy of the king against Haman and also the jealousy of all the other ministers she had not invited."

Rabah quoted: "Before destruction comes prominence (Mishlei 16:18)."

Abaye and Rava both quoted: "When they are heated I will prepare their feasts, and I will intoxicate them so that they shall revel, they shall

¹⁴ [Translator's note; Rashi explains that Esther was afraid that even if she convinced Achashverosh to execute Haman he might change his mind the following day. Therefore, she wanted Haman there so that the king's command could be carried out immediately.]

*sleep eternal sleep, and they shall not awaken, by the Word of God
(Yirmiyahu 51:39)."*

*Rabah the son of Avuha met the prophet Eliyahu and asked him: "What
was really Esther's reason for inviting the king and Haman to dine with
her?"*

*Eliyahu replied: "Her reasons included all of those put forth by all the
Tanaim and Amoraim."*

&&Chapter Six

THE MEGILLAH (THE BOOK OF ESTHER)

&&The mitzvah of reading the Megillah (The Book of Esther) on Purim is not mentioned explicitly in the Torah- Nevertheless, the Jewish people undertook to do so, at that time and for all generations to come. The Talmud tells us (Megillah 14a):

%%Our rabbis have taught: There were forty-eight prophets and seven prophetesses who prophesied for the Jewish people, and none of them added or subtracted so much as a letter of the Torah, except for the reading of the Megillah.

How did they know to do so?

Rabbi Chiya the son of Aba said in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua the son of Karchah: "The rules applying to the greater can be inferred from the rules applying to the lesser. If being delivered from the bondage of Egypt to freedom mandated the saying of Shirah, being delivered from death certainly required the singing of the praises of Hashem."

If so why don't we recite the Hallel on Purim?

Rabbi Yitzchak said: "Because Hallel is not said for a miracle performed outside Eretz Yisrael."'¹⁵

¹⁵ . The rest of this passage has been quoted in the context of the discussion about the *Hallel* in Section III, Chapter 24.

Why then is Shirah said for the miracles performed for the Jewish people when they went forth from Egypt being that those miracles were performed outside Eretz Yisrael?

This is according to that which was taught: Before the Jewish people entered Eretz Yisrael all lands were deemed worthy of having Shirah said for miracles performed within them. Once the Jewish people entered Eretz Yisrael all other lands were no longer deemed worthy.

&&Although the reading of the *Megillah* was instituted by the Rabbinic Court of this world, the *Talmud* tells us that this enactment was endorsed by the Court of the Upper World (*Makos* 23b, *Shevuos* 39a). The *Talmud* also tells us that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* indicated to Moshe Rabbeinu that the reading of the *Megillah* would be instituted in the future (*Megillah* 19b).

It is important to note that the *Megillah* is not merely a chronicle of the events that transpired in Shushan at that time. The *Talmud* tells us that the *Megillah* was written with divine inspiration (*Megillah* 7a):

%%Rabbi Eliezer says: "The Book of Esther was written with Ruach Hakodesh, For it is written, And Haman thought to himself . . . (Esther 6:6), a fact not discernible other than through Ruach Hakodesh."

Rabbi Akiva says: "The Book of Esther was written with Ruach Hakodesh. For it is written, And Esther found favor in the eyes of all who saw her (Esther 2:15), a fact not discernible other than through Ruach Hakodesh."

Rabbi Yosi the son of Durmaskis says: "The Book of Esther was written with divine inspiration. For it is written, In those days, while Mordechai was sitting in the king's gate, Bigsan and Seresh, two officers of the king, of the guards of the threshold, became infuriated and conspired to harm the king, Achashverosh, and the thing became known to Mordechai, and he told it to Esther, the queen, and Esther said it to the king in the name of Mordechai (Esther 2:21-22). How did the thing become known to

Mordechai if not through Ruach Hakodesh?"¹⁶Rabbi Meir says: The Book of Esther was written with Ruach Hakodesh. For it is written, But they did not stretch out their hands to the plunder (Esther 9:10). How did the writer of the Megillah know that even the Jews in distant place did not touch the plunder if not through Ruach Hakodesh?¹⁷

Rabbi Yehudah said in the name of Shmuel: "If I had been present at this conversation among Tanaim I would have told them that I have an even better proof. For it is written, They endorsed it, and the Jews took it upon themselves, and upon their offspring, and upon all that join with them, that none should fail to celebrate these two days (Esther 9:27), and our rabbis have taken this to mean that the Court of the Upper World endorsed what the lower court took upon itself. How did the writers of the Megillah know this if not through Ruach Hakodesh?"

Rabah said: "I can refute all of these proofs except for Shmuel's proof."

. . . Rav Yosef said: "It can be proven from that which is written, And these days of Purim will not pass from amidst the Jews (Esther 9:28). How could they know this if not through Ruach Hakodesh?"

Rav Nachman the son of Yitzchak said: "It can be proven from the conclusion of the verse, And their remembrance shall not cease from their offspring (Ibid)."¹⁸

&&Our Sages have also inferred from this last verse that the *Megillah* would be read for all future generations (*Yerushalmi Megillah* 1:5).

Furthermore, the Midrash tells us¹⁹ that all festivals will be discontinued but for the days of *Purim*.

¹⁶ [Translator's note: Rabbi Yosi the son of Durmaskis proves that divine inspiration played a role in the events recorded in the *Megillah*. He therefore assumes that this divine inspiration extended to the writing of it as well.]

¹⁷ [Translator's note: *Tosefos* explains that Rav Nachman the son of Yitzchak felt that the first part of the verse, speaking of that generation, was not as strong a proof as the conclusion of the verse which assures remembrance for generations to come. See also commentary of *Maharsha*.]

¹⁸

¹⁹ In a discussion about that which is written, She has slaughtered her cattle, she has blended her wine, she has also arranged her table (*Mishlei* 9:2).

%%All festivals will be discontinued but the days of Purim will never be discontinued, as it is written, And their remembrance shall not cease from their offspring (Esther 9:28).

Rabi said: "Yom Kippur will also never be discontinued, as it is written, And this shall be for you for an everlasting law (Vayikra 16:34)."

&&It would appear to me that this passage is discussing the time the Jewish people will spend in exile. It is telling us that it is inevitable that their sinfulness will cause them to neglect the observance of the Festivals, as it is indeed written, God has made the Festival and Shabbos be forgotten in Zion (*Eichah* 2:6). The Torah assures us, however, that the days of Purim will not suffer such neglect. It also assures us that *Yom Kippur* will atone for the Jewish people even if they do not do proper *teshuvah*.

Chapter Seven

THE CELEBRATION OF PURIM

Our Sages have established the days of *Purim* as days of feasting and rejoicing for the sake of Heaven, days for sending presents to one another and for giving gifts to poor people. The *Talmud* tells us (*Megillah 7a*):

%%Rav Yosef taught: It is written, And of sending presents to one another (Esther 9:22). Two presents to one person.

The verse concludes, And gifts to paupers (Ibid.). Two gifts to two people.

Rabbi Yehudah the Prince sent a flank of prime calf meat and a jug of wine to Rabbi Yehoshua on Purim.

Rabbi Yehoshua sent back a message: Our master, you have fulfilled through us the mitzvah of giving gifts to paupers.

Rabbi Yehuda the Prince then sent him a whole prime calf and three jugs of wine.

Rabbi Yehoshua sent back a message: Our master, with this larger gift you have also fulfilled through us the mitzvah of sending presents to one another."

Rabah sent Abaye to give a basket of dates and a basket of flour of kiln-dried green wheat to Mari the son of Mar.

Abaya told him: "Seeing this lowly gift from you who have become prosperous, Mari will repeat the popular saying that a peasant may become a king but the basket of cattle-feed will never come down from his neck.

Mari the son of Mar sent back with Abaye a basket of ginger and a jar of long peppers.

Abaye told him: My master will say that he sent you sweet things and you are sending him sharp things.

Abaye said: When I left the house of my master I was full, but when I came to Mari the son of Mar's home I was served sixty dishes of various prepared foods. I ate parts of these sixty dishes. The last dish contained a roast that was so good that I ate all of it, and I even wanted to consume the dish itself. This is consistent with the popular saying that a poor man is so hungry that he doesn't even know when he is full and with the popular saying that there is always room for something delicious.

Abaye the son of Avin and Rav Chananiah the son of Avin used to take turns visiting each other for the Purim feast.

Rava said: A person is required to become so intoxicated on Purim that he cannot distinguish between saying Blessed is Mordechai and saying Cursed is Haman.

Rava and Rabbi Zeira celebrated the Purim feast together. Rava became intoxicated, and he killed Rabbi Zeira. The following day, when the effects of the wine had worn off, he prayed for mercy, and Rabbi Zeira was restored to health.²⁰

The following year, Rava said to Rabbi Zeira; Let the master come, and we will celebrate the Purim feast together.

Rabbi Zeira declined: A miracle does not occur very often.

Rava said: One does not fulfill one's obligation by eating the Purim feast on the [preceding] night of Purim.

What is the reason?

²⁰ [Translator's note: *Maharsha* explains that, although intoxicated, Rava would certainly not have killed Rabbi Zeira. Rather, this means that he plied Rabbi Zeira with so much wine that he became mortally ill. There is a divergence here between the author's text and the standard text. In the standard text, Rava prayed for mercy, and Rabbi Zeira "was brought back to life." *Maharsha* contends that this expression can be properly used in reference to recovery from mortal illness. In the author's version, Rabbi Zeira "was restored to health," and *Maharsha's* interpretation is certainly the indicated one.]

Because it is written, Days of feasting and rejoicing (Esther 9:22).

Rav Ashi was sitting before Rav Kehana on Purim. It became late in the day, and still the rabbis had not come to study the Torah.

Rav Kehana asked Rav Ashi: Why haven't the rabbis come?

Rav Ashi replied: Maybe they are busy with the Purim feast.

Rav Kehana asked: Why didn't they eat it last night?

Rav Ashi asked: Doesn't the master agree with Rava's statement? For Rava has said: One does not fulfill one's obligation by eating the Purim feast on the night of Purim. What is the reason? Because it is written, Days of feasting and rejoicing (Ibid.).

Rav Kehana asked: Did Rava indeed say so?

Rav Ashi replied: Yes.

Rav Kehana learned it from him forty times, after which it was as if he had this information in his pocket.

&&We learn from this passage that the Purim feast is celebrated by day, even if one has already celebrated on the previous night; that the main rejoicing of *Purim* is in the sending of presents to each other and, especially, the giving of gifts to poor people; that to heighten the joy of *Purim* one should become intoxicated, provided that one's intention in doing so is for the sake of the *mitzvah*.

It must also be understood, however, that the strong intoxication mentioned in the *Talmud* applies only to the Sages who did not drink their fill of wine all year; their drinking was clearly for the celebration of the *mitzvah*. In our time, people like to make their whole life one long celebration; they drink their fill of wine every day. Therefore, the main celebration should be through presents and gifts, with only a slight increase in food and wine for the sake of the celebration of Purim.

MEGILLAS ESTHER

Chapter I

Queen Vashti is removed from the throne of Persia

1. And it happened in the days of Achashverosh, the same Achashverosh who reigned from Hodu to Kush, over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces.
2. In those days, when King Achashverosh was sitting on his royal throne in Shushan, the capital city.
3. In the third year of his reign he made a feast for all his ministers and his servants, the armies of Persia and Media, the aristocrats and the ministers of the provinces came before him.
4. When he flaunted the wealth of his glorious kingdom, and the splendor of his magnificent greatness, for many days, one hundred and eighty days.
5. And when these days were completed, the King prepared for all the commonfolk to be found in Shushan, the capital city, from the greatest to the smallest, a feast to last seven days, in the courtyard of the King's palatial gardens.
6. Draperies of white linen, fine cotton and indigo wool, gathered with flaxen and purple sashes, upon silver reels and marble columns, couches of gold and silver,

on a terrace of alabaster and marble,
of mother-of-pearl and onyx.

7. Drinks were given in golden vessels,
each vessel of different design,
and the royal wine was plentiful,
according to the bounty of the King.

8 And the drinking was mandated,
but no one was forced,
for so did the King decree
for all the stewards of his household,
to fulfill the wishes of each and every man.

9. Queen Vashti also made a feast for women
in the royal palace of King Achashverosh.

10. On the seventh day,
when the mood of the King was mellowed by wine,
he commanded Mehuman, Bizesa, Charbona,
Bigsa and Avagsa, Zeisar and Charkas,
the seven courtiers serving King Achashverosh.

11. To bring Queen Vashti before the King,
wearing her royal crown,
to show her beauty to the people and the ministers,
for she was of a pleasing appearance.

12. And Queen Vashti refused to come
at the King's summons borne by the courtiers,
and the King became very angry,
and his rage smoldered within him.

13. And the King sought the advice of the wise men,
the ones familiar with the times,
for such was the practice of the King,
to confer with experts of custom and law.

14. And the closest to him were Karshena,
Sheissar, Admassa, Sarshish,
Meress, Marssena, Memuchan,
the seven ministers of Persia and Media,
who could enter the presence of the King,
who held the highest station in the realm.

15. What does the law demand
to be done to Queen Vashti
for not obeying the word of King Achashverosh,
as borne by the courtiers?

16. And Memuchan said to the King and the ministers:
"Not only the King did Queen Vashti offend,
but also all the ministers and all the commonfolk
in all the provinces of King Achashverosh.

17. "For the reports of the Queen's conduct
will encourage all the women,
to look with contempt upon their husbands,
for they will tell each other,
`Indeed, even King Achashverosh
summoned, the Queen, but she would not come. •

18. "And this day will be mentioned
by all the noblewomen of Persia and Medai,
hearing the reports of the Queen's conduct,
to all the King's noblemen,
causing humiliation and resentment.

19. "If it pleases the King,
let him issue a royal decree,
and let it be irrevocably written
into the laws of Persia and Media,
that Queen Vashti never again come
into the presence of King Achashverosh

and let the King give her queenhood
to another who is better than she.

20. "And the decree the King will issue,
shall be heard throughout the realm,
for it is a great thing,
and all the women
shall show respect to their husbands,
from the greatest to the smallest."

21. And these words found favor
in the eyes of the King and the ministers,
and the King acted on the advice of Memuchan.

22. And he sent scrolls to all the provinces of the King,
to every province in its own writing
and to every people in its own tongue,
that each man should be
the master of his own home
and speak in the language of his people.

Chapter II

The Jewish girl Esther

becomes the Queen of Persia

1. After these things,
when the wrath of King Achashverosh subsided,
he remembered Vashti,
and what she had done,
and what was decreed against her.

2. And the King's youths, his attendants, said:
"Let there be sought out for the King
beautiful virgin maidens.

3. "And let the King appoint overseers
in all the provinces of his kingdom,

and they shall bring together
all the beautiful virgin maidens
into Shushan, the capital city,
to the harem, into the charge of Haigeh,
courtier of the King, guardian of the women,
and let them be given their cosmetics.

4. And the maiden who finds favor
in the eyes of the King
shall reign in Vashti's stead."
And this thing found favor
in the eyes of the King,
and he did it.

5. There was a Jewish man
in Shushan, the capital city,
and his name was Mordechai, the son of Ya'ir,
the son of Shim'i, the son of Kish,
of the Tribe of Binyamin.

6. He had been exiled from Yerushalayim,
among the exiles who had been exiled
with Yechanyah, King of Yehudah,
whom Nebuchadnezzar, King of Bavel had sent into exile.

7. And he had brought up Hadassah,
who was Esther, his uncle's daughter,
for she had no father or mother,
and the maiden had beautiful features,
and a pleasant appearance,
and when her father and mother had died,
Mordechai had adopted her as a daughter.

8. And when the King's words
and his decree became known,
and when many maidens were brought together

into Shushan, the capital city,
then was Esther taken to the King's palace,
into the charge of Haigeh, guardian of the women.

9. And the maiden was pleasing in his eyes,
and she won his favor,
and he rushed to provide her
with her cosmetics and her gifts
and the seven handmaidens from the King's palace
to whom she was entitled,
and he moved her and her handmaidens
to the best part of the harem.

10. Esther did not tell of her people
or her birthright,
for Mordechai had commanded her
that she should not tell.

11. And each and every day,
Mordechai would stroll
before the courtyard of the harem
to learn of Esther's welfare
and what was being done with her.

12. And when the turn came
for each and every maiden
to come to King Achashverosh,
after she had received for twelve months
what was customary for women,
for thus did they complete
the days of their ministrations,
six months with oil of myrrh,
and six months with perfumes
and feminine cosmetics.

13. And thus would the maiden come to the King,
all that she would ask she would be given,
to bring with her from the harem
to the palace of the King.

14. She would come in the evening,
and in the morning
she would return to the second harem,
to the charge of Shashgaz,
courtier of the King, guardian of the concubines,
she would no longer return to the King,
unless the King desired her
and she was summoned by name.

15. And when it came to be the turn
of Esther, daughter of Avichail,
the uncle of Mordechai,
who had adopted her as a daughter,
to come to the King,
she did not ask for anything,
other than that suggested by Haigeh,
courtier of the King, guardian of the women,
and Esther found favor
in the eyes of all who saw her.

16. And Esther was taken to King Achashverosh,
to his royal palace,
in the tenth month, the month of Teves,
in the seventh year of his reign.

17. And the King loved Esther
more than all the women,
and she won his grace and his favor
beyond all the other virgins,

and he placed the royal crown on her head,
and he anointed her in Vashti's stead.

18. And the King made a great feast
for all his ministers and his servants,
it was the Feast of Esther,
and he granted amnesty to the provinces
and he gave gifts in royal style.

19. And when the virgins were gathered anew,
and Mordechai sat at the King's gate,

20. Esther still would not reveal
her birthright or her people,
as Mordechai had commanded her,
and Esther did as Mordechai said,
just as when she was reared by him.

21. In those days,
while Mordechai sat at the King's gate,
Bigshan and Seresh, two courtiers of the king,
the guardians of the threshold,
became enraged and schemed
to do harm to King Achashverosh.

22. And the matter became known to Mordechai,
and he reported it to Queen Esther,
and Esther told it to the King
in Mordechai's name.

23. And the matter was investigated
and found to be true,
and they were both hanged on a gallows,
and it was recorded in the chronicles,
in the presence of the King.

Chapter III

*Haman rises to power
and schemes against the Jews*

1. After these things,
King Achashverosh elevated Haman,
the son of Hamedasa, the Agagi,
and he set his chair above
all the ministers with him.

2. And all the King's servants
that were at the King's gate
would bow and genuflect to Haman,
for thus did the King command for him,
but Mordechai would not bow or genuflect.

3. And the King's servants
that were at the King's Gate
said to Mordechai:

"Why do you violate
the command of the King?"

4. And when they had spoken to him day after day
and he did not heed them,
then they told Haman
to see if Mordechai's arguments would stand,
for he had told them he was a Jew.

5. And Haman saw
that Mordechai would not bow
or genuflect to him,
and Haman was filled with rage.

6. And it was not enough for him
to harm Mordechai alone,
for they had revealed to him
Mordechai's nationality,
and Haman sought to destroy

all the Jews
in the realm of Achashverosh,
the people of Mordechai.

7. In the first month, the month of Nissan,
in the twelfth year of King Achashverosh,
the Pur was cast, that is the lot,
in the presence of Haman,
each day of each month,
until the twelfth month,
that is the month of Adar.

8. And Haman said to King Achashverosh:
"There is one people,
scattered and dispersed among the peoples
in all the provinces of your realm,
and their customs differ from all other people's,
nor do they practice the customs of the King,
and it is not worthwhile for the King
to endure them.

9. "If it pleases the King,
let it be written that they be destroyed,
and I shall deliver
ten thousand talents of silver
into the hands of the officers on duty
to be brought to the treasuries of the King."

10. And the King removed his ring from his hand,
and he gave it to Haman,
the son of Hamedasa, the Agagi,
persecutor of the Jews.

11. And the King said to Haman:
"The silver is given back to you,

and the people also,
to do with them as you see fit."

12. And the scribes of the King were summoned
on the thirteenth day of the first month,
and it was written, just as Haman
had commanded the knights of the King
and the consuls of every province
and the ministers of every people,
to each province in its own writing,
and to each people in its own tongue,
it was written in the name King Achashverosh
and sealed with the ring of the King.

13. And scrolls were sent with runners
to all the provinces of the King
to destroy, to kill, and to wipe out
all the Jews, young and old,
infants and women, in a single day,
on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month,
that is the month of Adar,
and to despoil their possessions.

14. Copies of the proclamation
were to be enacted as law
in each and every province,
made known to all the peoples,
to await this day.

15. The runners rushed off
by order of the King,
and the law was enacted
in Shushan, the capital city,
and the King and Haman

sat down to drink,
and the city of Shushan was dismayed.

Chapter IV

*Mordechai pleads with Esther
to appeal to King Achashverosh*

1. And Mordechai knew of all that had been done,
and Mordechai rent his garments,
and he put on sackcloth and ashes,
and he went out into the midst of the city,
and he cried out a great and bitter cry.

2. And he came until the front of the King's gate,
for it was forbidden to enter the King's gate
clothed in garments of sackcloth.

3. And in each and every province,
wherever the King's word and his law did reach,
there was great mourning for the Jews,
and fasting, and weeping, and lament,
sackcloth and ashes
were the bedding of many.

4. And Esther's maidens came,
along with her courtiers,
and they told her about it,
and the Queen was very terrified,
and she sent garments to clothe Mordechai,
and to replace the sackcloth that was on him,
but he would not accept them.

5. And Esther summoned Hasach,
one of the courtiers of the King
whom he had stationed with her,
and she dispatched him to Mordechai,

to learn what this was
and how it had been caused.

6. And Hasach went out to Mordechai,
to the main avenue of the city,
which was in front of the King's gate.

7. And Mordechai told him
of all he had encountered,
and of the payment of silver
that Haman had offered to deliver
to the treasuries of the King
for the Jews,
to wipe them out.

8. And the copy of the proclamation
that was enacted in Shushan
to destroy them,
he gave him to show Esther,
and to inform her and compel her
to come to the King to appeal to him,
and to plead with him for her people.

9. And Hasach came, and he reported
the words of Mordechai to Esther,

10. And Esther spoke to Hasach,
commanding him to tell it to Mordechai

11. "All the servants of the King
and the people of the provinces of the King
know that any man or woman
who comes to the King,
to the inner courtyard,
without having been summoned
is invariably condemned to death,
except for the one to whom

the King extends the golden scepter,
only he shall remain alive,
and I have not been summoned
to come to the King
for these past thirty days."

12. And they told Mordechai
the words of Esther.

13. And Mordechai said
in reply to Esther:
"Do not suppose that you yourself
will be rescued by the royal palace
from among all the Jews.

14. "For if you remain silent
during this time,
relief and deliverance
will come to the Jews
from another place,
but you and your father's household
shall be wiped out,
and who can know
if for a time such as this
did you attain the queenhood."

15. And Esther said
in reply to Mordechai:

16. "Go, assemble all the Jews
to be found in Shushan,
and fast for my sake,
and do not eat, and do not drink
for three days, night and day,
also I and my maidens
shall fast this way,

and thus shall I come to the King,
although it is not permitted,
and if I am lost, I am lost."

17. And Mordechai departed,
and he did everything
Esther had instructed him.

Chapter V

Esther invites King Achashverosh and Haman to a feast

1. And it was on the third day,
and Esther dressed in royal style,
and she stood in the inner courtyard
of the palace of the King,
facing the palace of the King,
and the King was sitting on his royal throne
in the chamber of the throne,
facing the entrance to the palace.

2. And it happened when the King saw
Queen Esther standing in the courtyard
that she won his grace,
and the King extended to Esther
the golden scepter that was in his hand,
and Esther approached,
and she touched the tip of the scepter.

3. And the King said to her:
"What do you desire, Queen Esther,
and what is your entreaty?
up to half the kingdom,
and it shall be given to you."

4. And Esther said:
"If it pleases the King,
let the King and Haman come today
to the feast I have prepared for him."

5. And the King said:
"Hasten Haman to do as Esther bids."
And the King and Haman came to the feast
that Esther had prepared.

6. And the King said to Esther:
"What is your request?
and it shall be given to you,
and what is your entreaty?
up to half the kingdom,
and it shall be done."

7. And Esther replied, saying:
"This is my request
and my entreaty.

8. "If I have found grace
in the eyes of the King,
and if it pleases the King
to grant my request
and to fulfill my entreaty,
let the King and Haman come
to the feast I shall prepare for them,
and tomorrow I shall do
the bidding of the King."

9. And Haman went forth on that day
joyful and in good spirits,
and when Haman saw Mordechai
at the King's gate
,and he did not rise

or tremble before him,
and Haman was filled
with wrath against Mordechai.

10. And Haman controlled himself
and he came to his house,
and he summoned and brought his friends
and his wife Zeresh.

11. And Haman told them
of his glorious wealth
and his many children,
and all the King had done
to raise him high,
and how he had elevated him
above the ministers
and the servants of the King.

12. And Haman said:
"Queen Esther did not even bring
along with the King,
to the feast she had prepared,
anyone other than myself,
and tomorrow too I am invited by her
along with the King.

13. "And all this is worthless to me,
every time I see Mordechai the Jew
sitting at the King's gate."

14. And his wife Zeresh said to him,
as did all his friends:
"Let them prepare a gallows,
fifty cubits high,
and in the morning speak to the King,
that they hang Mordechai upon it,

and then you can come joyfully
along with the King to the feast."
And the matter pleased Haman,
and he prepared the gallows.

Chapter VI

Mordechai begins to prevail over Haman

1. During that night
the sleep of the King was disturbed,
and he asked to be shown
the book of records and chronicles,
and they were read before the King.

2. And it was found written that Mordechai
had told of Bigsan and Seresh,
two courtiers of the King,
of the guardians of the threshold,
that they had schemed to do harm
to King Achashverosh.

3. And the King said:
"What honor and great thing
have been done to Mordechai for this?"
And the King's youths, his attendants, said:
"Nothing was done for him."

4. And the King said:
"Who is in the courtyard?"
And Haman had come
to the outer courtyard
of the palace of the King
to speak with the King
about hanging Mordechai

on the gallows
he had prepared for him.

5. And the King's youths said to him:
"Behold, it is Haman
standing in the courtyard."
And the King said
Let him enter.↵

6. And Haman entered,
and the King said to him:
"What should be done with the man
whom the King wishes to honor?"
And Haman thought in his heart:
"For whom would the King
want more to do honor
than for me?"

7. And Haman said to the King:
"The man whom the King
wishes to honor —

8. "Let them bring a royal robe
that the King has worn,
and a horse upon which
the King has ridden,
and let the royal crown
be placed upon his head.

9. "And let the robe and the horse
be given over to one
of the King's exalted ministers,
and let them clothe the man
whom the King wishes to honor,
and let them parade him on the horse
through the main avenue of the city,

and let them call out before him:

‘So shall be done for the man
whom the King wishes to honor.’

10. And the King said to Haman:

"Hurry, take the robe and the horse,
just as you have spoken,
and do thus for Mordechai the Jew,
who is sitting at the King's gate,
do not omit one thing
from all that you have spoken."

11. And Haman took the robe and the horse,

and he clothed Mordechai,
and paraded him
in the main avenue of the city,
and he called out before him:

"So shall be done for the man
whom the King wishes to honor."

12. And Mordechai returned to the King's gate;

and Haman hastened to his house,
mournful and with covered head.

13. And Haman told his wife Zeresh

and all of his friends
all he had encountered,
and his wise men
and his wife Zeresh said to him:
"If he is from Jewish seed,
this Mordechai before whom
you have begun to fall,
you shall not prevail against him,
for surely shall you fall before him."

14. They were still speaking with him,
when the courtiers of the King arrived,
and they rushed to bring Haman
to the feast Esther had prepared.

Chapter VII

Human is disgraced at
Queen Esther's feast

1. And the King and Haman came
to drink with Queen Esther

2. And the King said to Esther
also on the second day
at the feast of the wine:

"What is your request, Queen Esther?
and it shall be given to you,
and what is your entreaty?
until half the kingdom,
and it shall be done."

3. And Queen Esther replied, saying:
"If I have found grace in your eyes, O King,
and if it pleases the King,
let my life be given to me for my request,
and my people for my entreaty.

4. "For we have been sold, I and my people,
to be destroyed, to be killed,
to be wiped out,
and had we been sold
for slaves and bondswomen
I would have remained silent,

but the oppressor values not
the damage of the King."

5. And King Achashverosh spoke
and he said to Queen Esther:
"Who is this, and where is he,
that his heart encouraged him to do this?"

6. And Esther said:
"It is an oppressor and a foe,
this villainous Haman.
And Haman shrank in terror,
from before the King and Queen.

7. And the King arose in his wrath
from the feast of the wine
to go into the palatial gardens,
and Haman stood up
to beg Queen Esther for his life,
for he saw that his evil fate
had been decided by the King.

8. And the King returned
from the palatial gardens
to the chamber of the feast of the wine,
and Haman had fallen on the couch
upon which Esther was lying,
and the King said:

"Would you also overpower the Queen
with me still in the palace?"

The word went forth
from the mouth of the King,
and Haman's face collapsed.

9. Then said Charbonah, one of the courtiers
who attended the King:

"Indeed, behold the gallows
that Haman has constructed
for Mordechai, who spoke well for the King,
still stands in the house of Haman,
at a height of fifty cubits."

And the King said:

"Hang him upon it!"

10. And they hanged Haman on the gallows
he had prepared for Mordechai,
and the wrath of the King subsided.

Chapter VIII

*Haman's decree against the Jews
is rescinded*

1. On that day, King Achashverosh gave Queen Esther
the estates of Haman, persecutor of the Jews,
and Mordechai came before the King,
for Esther had revealed
what he was to her

2. And the King removed his ring,
that he had taken away from Haman,
and he gave it to Mordechai,
and Esther appointed Mordechai
to oversee the estates of Haman.

3. And Esther spoke again before the King,
and she fell before his feet,
and she wept and she appealed to him
to rescind the evil of Haman the Agagi,
and the schemes he had schemed
against the Jews.

4. And the King extended the golden scepter
to Esther, and Esther arose,
and she stood before the King.

5. And she said
"If it pleases the King,
and if I have found grace before him,
and the thing seems proper to the King,
and I am pleasing in his eyes,
let it be written to bring back
the scrolls of the scheme of Haman,
the son of Hamedasa, the Agagi,
that he had written to wipe out the Jews
of all the provinces of the King.

6. "For how can I bear to see the evil
that will befall my people,
and how can I bear to see
the destruction of my birthright."

7. And King Achashverosh said to Queen Esther
and to Mordechai the Jew
"Behold, I have given
the estates of Haman to Esther
and they have hanged him on the gallows,
because he laid hands upon the Jews.

8. "And you may write of the Jews as you please,
in the name of the King,
and seal it with the ring of the King,
for a proclamation that has been written
in the name of the King
and sealed with the ring of the King
cannot be rescinded."

9. And the scribes of the King were summoned
at that time, in the third month,

that is the month of Sivan,
on its twenty-third day,
and it was written down,
just as Mordechai had commanded
to the Jews, the knights and the consuls
and the ministers of the provinces
that reached From Hodu to Kush,
one hundred and twenty-seven provinces,
to each and every province in its own writing,
and each and every people in its own tongue,
and to the Jews in their writing and their tongue.

10. And he wrote it in the name of the King,
and he sealed it with the ring of the King,
and he sent scrolls with messengers on horseback
the mounted riders of mules and young steeds.

11. That the King had permitted the Jews
in each and every city
to rally and defend themselves,
to destroy, to kill, to wipe out
all the armies of any people or province
that continue to oppress them,
even infants and women,
and to despoil their possessions.

12. On a single day, in all the provinces
of King Achashverosh,
on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month,
that is the month of Adar.

13. Copies of the proclamation
were to be enacted as law
in each and every province,
made known to all the peoples,

and for the Jews to await this day
to take revenge upon their foes.

14. The runners, riders mounted on mules,
frenzied and rushed,
went forth by order of the King,
and the law was enacted
in Shushan, the capital city.

15. And Mordechai went forth
from the presence of the King
dressed in royal robes
of indigo wool and white linen
and a large golden coronet
and a flaxen purple mantle,
and the city of Shushan
was exultant and joyful.

16. For the Jews there was light
and joy and merriment and honor.

17. And in each and every province,
and in each and every city,
wherever the King's word and his law did reach,
there was joy and merriment for the Jews,
a feast and a holiday,
and many of the people of the land
asked to be made Jews,
for the dread of the Jews
had fallen upon them.

Chapter IX

Mordechai and Esther

establish the festival of Purim

1. And in the twelfth month,
that is the month of Adar,
on its thirteenth day,
when the time came for the King's word
and his law to be fulfilled,
on the same day that the foes of the Jews
had planned to overcome them,
but it was turned about,
that the Jews should overcome,
they upon their enemies.

2. The Jews rallied in their cities
in all the provinces of King Achashverosh
to lay hand upon those who wished them ill,
and not a man stood against them,
for the dread of the Jews
had fallen on all the peoples.

3. And all the ministers of the provinces,
and the King's knights and consuls
and the officers on duty
elevated the Jews,
for the dread of Mordechai
had fallen upon them.

4. For Mordechai had become great
in the palace of the King,
and his fame spread through all the provinces
that the man Mordechai
grows ever greater.

5. And the Jews struck at their foes
with sword blows and death and elimination,
and they did with their enemies as they wished.

6. And in Shushan, the capital city,
the Jews killed and eliminated
five hundred men.

7. And Parshandasa and Dalphon and Aspasa.

8. And Porasa and Adalia and Aridasa.

9. And Parmash'sa and Arisai
and Aridai and Vayezasa.

10. The ten sons of Haman, the son of Hamedasa,
persecutor of the Jews, did they kill,
but they did not lay their hands on the spoils.

11. On that day, an account of the dead
in Shushan, the capital city,
came to the attention of the King.

12. And the King said to Queen Esther:
"In Shushan, the capital city,
the Jews killed and eliminated
five hundred men and the ten sons of Haman,
what have they done
in the rest of the King's provinces?
and what is your request?
and it shall be given to you,
and what else is your entreaty?
and it shall be done."

13. And Esther said:
"If it pleases the King,
let tomorrow also be given
to the Jews that are in Shushan
to do as was the law this day,
and let them hang the ten sons of Haman
on the gallows.

14. And the King ordered this to be done,
and the law was enacted in Shushan,
and they hanged the ten sons of Haman.

15. And the Jews rallied in Shushan again
on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar,
and they killed in Shushan
three hundred men,
but they did not lay their hands on the spoils.

16. And the rest of the Jews
that were in the provinces of the King
rallied and defended themselves,
and they were relieved from their foes,
and the dead among their enemies
numbered seventy-five thousand,
but they did not lay their hands on the spoils.

17. It was on the thirteenth day
of the month of Adar,
and they were relieved
on its fourteenth day,
and they established it
as a day of feasting and joy.

18. And the Jews that were in Shushan
rallied on its thirteenth day,
and on its fourteenth day,
and they were relieved
on its fifteenth day,
and they established it
as a day of feasting and joy.

19. Therefore the rural Jews
who live in the unwalled towns
make the fourteenth day

of the month of Adar
one of joy and feasting and celebration
and sending portions to each other.

20. And Mordechai inscribed these things,
and he sent scrolls to all the Jews
that were in all the provinces
of King Achashverosh, near and far.

21. To take upon themselves
to make the fourteenth day
of the month of Adar,
and its fifteenth day,
in each and every year.

22. As the days on which the Jews
were relieved from their foes,
and this month was turned about for them
from sorrow to joy,
from mourning to celebration,
to establish them as days of feasting and joy
and sending portions to each other
and gifts to the poor.

23. And the Jews took upon themselves
all they had begun to do,
and what Mordechai had written to them.

24. For Haman, the son of Hamedasa,
the Agagi, persecutor of all the Jews,
schemed against the Jews to wipe them out,
and he cast the Fur, that is the lot,
to confound them and eliminate them.

25. And when she came before the King
he ordered through a scroll
that his evil scheme

he schemed against the Jews
be visited upon his own head,
and they hanged him and his sons
on the gallows.

26. Therefore they called these days Purim,
in the name of the Pur,
therefore, because of all the words of this letter,
and what they had seen from it,
and what had happened to them.

27. The Jews took upon themselves and accepted,
and for their offspring and all their adherents,
that it shall not be violated,
to establish these two days
as was prescribed and in their proper time
in each and every year.

28. And these days are remembered and celebrated
in each and every generation,
in each and every family,
in each and every province,
and in each and every city,
and these days of 'Purim
will never pass away from among the Jews,
and their remembrance shall not cease
from their offspring.

29. And Queen Esther, the daughter of Avichail,
and Mordechai the Jew
wrote with all due emphasis
to endorse this second letter of the Purim.

30. And he sent scrolls to all the Jews,
to the hundred and twenty-seven provinces

of the realm of Achashverosh,
words of peace and truth.

31. To undertake these days of Purim
in their proper time,
as Mordechai the Jew and Queen Esther
took it upon themselves,
and as they had taken upon themselves
and upon their offspring
the matters of the fast days and the outcries.

32. And Esther's order endorsed
these matters of the Purim,
and it was inscribed in the book.

Chapter X

Mordechai is remembered

as a great leader of the Jews

1. And King Achashverosh levied a tax
on the land and the isles of the sea.

2. And all his strong and mighty deeds,
and the account of the greatness of Mordechai
whom the King had elevated,
are indeed inscribed in the chronicles
of the kings of Media and Persia.

3. For Mordechai the Jew

was viceroy to King Achashverosh
and a great leader among the Jews,
and accepted by multitudes of his brothers,
he sought the good of his people,
and spoke of peace to all his offspring.