



Yarchei Kallah 2012: Shiur/Chabura Companion

Thank you so much for participating on Yarchei Kallah!

This guide will help you prepare for the chaburas on Yarchei Kallah

- ❖ By now you should know that you are giving a chabura and which shiur your teens are participating in.
- ❖ Try to get in touch with the shiur leader to see if there is anything they would like you to focus on.
- ❖ If you have any more questions about preparation or Yarchei Kallah, don't hesitate to get in touch with Dovid Bashevkin: dbash@ou.org

Below are some preparation materials that will help you on Yarchei Kallah:

The sources and questions this year have been compiled by the brilliant Asher Becker. The questions and topics are meant to be a basic outline of some of the issues that arise in the Megillah story.

Wednesday's shiur will focus on the downfall and decree against the Jewish people.

Thursday's chabura will discuss the Jewish people's salvation.

Looking forward to seeing you there!

-Dovid

Some Recommended Books on the Megilah:

❖ **What's Bothering Rashi by Avigdor Boncheck**

- Available on Google Books:

<http://books.google.com/books?id=93MsBtMGA3sC&pg=PA1&lpg=PA1&dq=what's+bothering+rashi+megillah&source=bl&ots=W5DHv847Nv&sig=XH8ZwTBv93Tcta6Doraewi6W210&hl=en&sa=X&ei=-RfUUJbCD63SiALV5YDQAg&ved=0CEAQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=what's%20bothering%20rashi%20megillah&f=false>

❖ **The Queen You Thought You Knew by Rabbi Dovid Forhman**

- Here is a review with some outtakes:

<http://curiousjew.blogspot.com/2011/03/book-review-queen-you-thought-you-knew.html>

❖ **YU Torah Purim to Go**

- Has some great pieces on the Megilah
- Available online here: <http://www.yutorah.org/togo/Purim/>

❖ **NCSY Education Website**

- Rising to the Occasion: Understanding What It Means to be a Jew Through the Purim Story
 - <http://adamsimon.org/wpsandbox/education/2012/02/23/rising-to-the-occasion-understanding-what-it-means-to-be-a-jew-through-the-purim-story/>

The Downfall of the Jewish People

The Purim Story

Created by Asher Becker

What led to the spiritual downfall of the Jewish people at the beginning of the Purim Story? What did the Jews do that warranted their imminent destruction?

אסתר פרק ד פסוק ג

וּבְכָל מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר הַמֶּלֶךְ וְדָתוֹ מֵגִיעַ אֶבֶל גָּדוֹל לַיהוּדִים וְצוֹם וּבְכִי וּמִסְפַּד שֶׁקֹּץ וְאִפְרָיִם יֵצֵעַ לְרַבִּים:
In each and every province, the place where the word of the king and his decree reached, there was a great mourning for the Jews, and fasting, crying, and eulogy, sackcloth and ash were spread out for the public.

אסתר פרק ג פסוק טו

הָרָצִים יֵצְאוּ דְחוּפִים בְּדִבְרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַדָּת נִתְּנָה בְּשׁוֹשַׁן הַבִּירָה וְהַמֶּלֶךְ וְהָמָן יֹשְׁבוּ לִשְׁתוֹת וְהָעִיר שׁוֹשֶׁן נְבוֹכָה:
The runners went out hurriedly by the word of the king and the law was given in Shushan the Capital, and the King and Haman sat down to drink, and the city of Shushan was bewildered.

אסתר פרק ח פסוק יד

הָרָצִים רַכְבֵּי הָרָכָשׁ הָאֲחֻשְׁתָּרָנִים יֵצְאוּ מְבֻהָלִים וְדְחוּפִים בְּדִבְרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַדָּת נִתְּנָה בְּשׁוֹשַׁן הַבִּירָה:
The runners, the riders and the couriers went out hurriedly and befuddled by the word of the king, and the law was given in Shushan the Capital.

אסתר פרק ח פסוק טו

וּמֹרְדֵכַי יֵצֵא מִלִּפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּלְבוּשׁ מַלְכוּת תְּכֵלֶת וְחוּר וְעֶשְׂרֵת זָהָב גְּדוּלָּה וְתַכְרִיף בּוּץ וְאַרְגָּמָן וְהָעִיר שׁוֹשֶׁן צָהֳלָה וְשִׂמְחָה:
And Mordechai went out from before the king with a royal garb of turquoise, white, a large golden crown, a coat of linen and royal purple, and the city of Shushan was rejoicing and happy.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת מגילה דף יב עמוד א

שאלו תלמידיו את רבי שמעון בן יוחאי: מפני מה נתחייבו שונאיהן של ישראל שבאותו הדור כליה? אמר להם: אמרו אתם! - אמרו לו: מפני שנהנו מסעודתו של אותו רשע. - אם כן שבשושן יהרגו, שבכל העולם כולו אל יהרגו! - אמרו לו: אמור אתה! - אמר להם: מפני שהשתחוו לצלם. - אמרו לו: וכי משוא פנים יש בדבר? - אמר להם: הם לא עשו אלא לפנים - אף הקדוש ברוך הוא לא עשה עמהן אלא לפנים, והיינו דכתיב +איכה ג'+ כי לא ענה מלכו.

His students asked R' Shimon bar Yochai: For what reason did the Jews (literally the enemies of the Jews, it is a euphemism) of that generation warrant destruction? He said to them: You tell me. They said to him: Because they benefitted from the meal of Achashverosh (literally that wicked person.) R' Shimon bar Yochai said to them: If that is the case then only the Jews of Shushan warrant destruction, but the Jews around the world

do not warrant destruction! The students responded: You tell us the reason. R' Shimon bar Yochai responded: The reason why the Jews warranted destruction was because they bowed down to the idol (of Nevuchadnezzar.) His students said back to him: But why would Hashem show them favor and miraculously spare them? He said to them, they only acted out of fear (of destruction), hence Hashem responded in kind, namely He frightened them with the threat of death without ever meaning to eradicate them, and this is what the pasuk means when it says that Hashem did not afflict them from His heart, meaning He never intended to wipe them out.

שיר השירים רבה (וילנא) פרשה ז ד"ה א [ח] זאת

למה באו ישראל בספק בימי המן, רבנן ורשב"י רבנן אמרי על שעבדו ישראל עבודת כוכבים, ור' שמעון אמר על שאכלו מתבשיל הגוים, אמרו לו והלא לא אכלו סעודה אלא אנשי שושן הבירה בלבד הה"ד (אסתר א') ובמלאת הימים האלה, אמרו לו והלא כל ישראל ערבין אילין באילין דכתיב (ויקרא כ"ו) וכשלו איש באחיו, איש בעון אחיו. Why were the Jewish people endangered of being wiped out in the days of Haman? The Rabbis say because they worshipped idols. R' Shimon says because they ate from the food of the non-Jews. The students said to R' Shimon, but only the Jews from Shushan partook of the meal, hence only they should be wiped out! R' Shimon responded: But isn't every Jew responsible for one another, as the pasuk says, and each man will stumble with his brother, each man will be held accountable for the sin of his brother.

- What image is evoked in your mind by the destruction and downfall of the Jewish people?
- Do you find it striking that the one of the causes of the downfall of the Jewish people was that each and every Jew is held accountable for one another? How might this alter your perspective on the person sitting next to you?
- Why do you think the Jews were in this state of sackcloth and mourning? They were praying to Hashem to try and eradicate the terrible decree that had been imposed against them.
- How does the imagery of the plight of the Jewish people at the beginning of the Purim story contrast with the way they are portrayed at the end? At the beginning they are bewildered and astounded as to the magnitude of the decree against them. At the end they are rejoicing in the streets as a result of their salvation.

How did Achashverosh rise to become king of 127 provinces? Was he an effective ruler?

אסתר פרק א פסוק א

וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם אֲחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ הוּא אֲחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ הַמֶּלֶךְ מֵהֹדוּ וְעַד כּוּשׁ שֶׁבַע וָעֶשְׂרִים וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה:

And it was in the days of Achashverosh he was Achashverosh who ruled from Hodu until Kush, 127 provinces.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת מגילה דף יא עמוד א

המלך אמר רב: שמלך מעצמו. אמרי לה לשבח, ואמרי לה לגנאי. אמרי לה לשבח - דלא הוה איניש דחשיב למלכא כוותיה, ואמרי לה לגנאי - דלא הוה חזי למלכותא, וממונא יתירא הוא דיהב וקם.

The pasuk says Hamoleich, the one who ruled. Rav says that he (Achashverosh) ruled from himself. Some say this as a positive and some as a negative. Those who say it as a positive say that there was no one as worthy to become king like him, and those who say it disparagingly say that he was not fit to become king, but he gave a lot of extra money and was elevated to royalty undeservedly.

אסתר פרק א פסוק ה

ובמלואת הימים האלה עשה המלך לכל העם הנמצאים בשושן הבירה למגדול ועד קטן משתה שבועת ימים בחדר גנת ביתן המלך:

And at the conclusion of these days, the king made for all the nation that was found in Shushan the capital, from old to young, a party of seven days, in the courtyard of the garden of the chamber of the king.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת מגילה דף יב עמוד א

ובמלאות הימים האלה וגו' רב ושמואל; חד אמר: מלך פיקח היה, וחד אמר: מלך טיפש היה. מאן דאמר מלך פיקח היה – שפיר עבד דקריב רחיקא ברישא, דבני מאתיה כל אימת דבעי מפייס להו. ומאן דאמר טיפש היה – דאיבעי ליה לקרובי בני מאתיה ברישא, דאי מרדו ביה הנך – הני הוו קיימי בהדיה.

At the conclusion of these 180 days, Achashverosh threw another party which was seven days long. Rav and Shmuel argue: One says that Achashverosh was a wise king, and one says that he was a foolish king. The one who says that he was a wise king, he did well that he invited those who hailed from far-flung lands first, for his own townsmen he could invite whenever he so desired. The other one says that he was a foolish king, for he should have brought close his own townspeople first, for if the foreigners were to rebel, his own townsmen would stand by him and defend him.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת מגילה דף יא עמוד א

אחשורוש, אמר רב: אחיו של ראש, ובן גילו של ראש. אחיו של ראש – אחיו של נבוכדנצר הרשע שנקרא ראש, שנאמר +דניאל ב'+ אתה הוא רישא די דהבא. בן גילו של ראש, הוא הרג – הוא ביקש להרוג, הוא החריב – הוא בקש להחריב, שנאמר +עזרא ד'+ ובמלכות אחשורוש בתחלת מלכותו כתבו שטנה על ישבי יהודה וירושלים. ושמואל אמר: שהושחרו פניהם של ישראל בימיו כשולי קדרה. ורבי יוחנן אמר: כל שזוכרו אמר: אח לראשו. ורבי חנינא אמר: שהכל נעשו רשין בימיו, שנאמר +אסתר י'+ וישם המלך אחשורוש מס. הוא אחשורוש – הוא ברשעו מתחילתו ועד סופו.

Achashverosh- Rav said that he was the brother of Rosh, and he had the same constellation as Rosh. He was the brother of Rosh- he was the brother of Nevuchadnezzar the wicked one who is called Rosh, as the pasuk says “it was a head of gold” (this is a reference to a statue of Nevuchadnezzar which he sees in his dream.) He had the same constellation as Rosh, Nevuchadnezzar killed, Achashverosh wanted to kill, Nevuchadnezzar destroyed, Achashverosh wanted to destroy, as the pasuk says in the beginning of the reign of Achashverosh they wrote hate letters against the inhabitants of Judah and Yerushalayim. Shmuel says that Achashverosh blackened the faces of the Jewish people like the bottom of a pot. R' Yochanan says: Whoever recalls Achashverosh will say Woe to his head (a contraction of the word Achashverosh.) R' Chanina says: Everyone became destitute in his

time, as the pasuk says and King Achashverosh imposed a tax. He was Achashverosh- He was in his state of wickedness from beginning to end.

- How would your perception of Achashverosh change if you knew that he usurped the throne by bribing his way into becoming king?
- If you were Achashverosh, who would you have invited to the party first? Why?
- To which negative descriptions of Achashverosh do you most relate? What negative description would you give to aptly describe Achashverosh?
- How does the pasuk demonstrate the imposing strength of Achashverosh?
It says that he ruled over 127 provinces.
- What was the purpose of all of the parties?
To curry favor both with people who lived locally as well as those who lived in far-flung provinces.

Hashem's name is conspicuously missing from Megillas Esther. Why?

אסתר פרק ה

ותאמר אסתר אם על המלך טוב יבוא המלך והמן היום אל המשתה אשר עשיתי לו:

And Esther said, if it is befitting for the king, let the king and Haman come today to a feast that I made for him. (The first letters of the words והמן היום spell out the four letter name of ה'. This פסוק is colloquially used to express a place in the Megillah where Hashem's Name is referenced.)

דברים פרק לא

ואנכי הסתר אסתיר פני ביום ההוא על כל הרעה אשר עשה כי פנה אל אלהים אחרים:

And I will turn My face on that day from all the evil that was done, for you have turned towards other gods.

אבן עזרא דברים פרק לא פסוק יח

וטעם הסתר אסתיר - שאם יקראו אלי לא אענה.

The effect of Me turning My face from you is that if you call out to Me I will not answer your pleas.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת חולין דף קלט עמוד ב

אסתר מן התורה מניין? +דברים ל"א+ ואנכי הסתר אסתיר

What is the source for Esther from the Torah? "And I will turn away My face."

ליקוטי מוהר"ן תנינא סימן יב

'אם יאמר לך אדם, היכן אלקיך תאמר לו: בפרך גדול של רומי' (ירושלמי תענית פרק א) 'שגם שם, ששם לאים גלולים ועבודת - זרה, גם שם מסתתר הוא יתברך בנ"ל. והפך כל שנופל לשם, חס ושלום, אזי כשמתחיל לבקש איה מקום כבודו, בזה הוא מתחיל את עצמו מחיות הקדושה... אבל תכף כשמתבקשין איה מקום כבודו, נמצא שיודעין על - כל - פנים שיש אלו"ק יתברך, רק שהוא נסתר ונעלם, ועל - פן מבקשין 'איה מקום כבודו'. ובזה בעצמו מתחיל עצמו במקום נפילתו... ואחר - כך זוכה לעלות משם לגמרי אל הקדושה בעצמה, דהינו במקום התגלות כבודו יתברך, כי עקר הקדושה שיתגלה כבודו יתברך. פרוך ה' לעולם אמן ואמן:"

If a person says to you, where is your G-d? You will say to him that He is in the large city of Rome, that even there, in a place full of contamination and idolatry, even there Hashem is hidden. And the rule is, when you fall to such a level, G-d forbid, then when you begin

seeking where His place of glory is located, this act invigorates yourself from the holy forces of invigoration. But immediately when you start seeking His place of glory, it comes out that at least you know that there is a G-d, just that He is hidden, and therefore you seek out His place of glory. And this itself will invigorate you and prevent you from falling down. And then you will merit to go up from there to be completely shrouded in holiness, that is in the place of His glorious revelation, for the primary holiness is the revelation of the glory of Hashem. Blessed is Hashem forever, Amen and Amen.

- Have you even been in a situation in which you have felt as if Hashem has turned His face away from you?
 - How have you rebounded from such a low?
 - How does the fact that one of the primary characters of the Purim story is given her name because Hashem turned away His face make you feel about your own experiences and struggles in life?
 - Why do you think it is so important to have Hashem's name obliquely referenced in the Megillah without ever stating it explicitly?
- The underlying theme of the Purim story is that Hashem's hand is there even when He is the least visible, He is still always there, looking out for us.

Many different people miscalculated as to when the Jews would be redeemed from Bavel. Why is their miscalculation significant?

תלמוד בבלי מסכת מגילה דף יא עמוד ב

אמר: בלשצר חשב וטעה, אנא חשיבנא ולא טעינא... אמר: השתא ודאי תו לא מיפרקי, אפיק מאני דבי מקדשא ואשתמש בהו. היינו דקאמר ליה דניאל: +דניאל ה'+ ועל מרא שמיא התרוממת ולמאניא די ביתה הייתי קדמך, וכתוב +דניאל ה'+ בה בליליא קטיל בלשצר מלכא [כשדאי] וכתוב +דניאל ה'+ ודריש מדא קבל מלכותא כבר שנין שתין ותרתי. אמר: איהו מיטעא טעי, אנא חשיבנא ולא טעינא... כיון דחזי דמלו שבעין ולא איפרוק, אמר: השתא ודאי תו לא מיפרקי, אפיק מאני דבי מקדשא ואשתמש בהו... אמר רבא: אף דניאל טעה בהאי חושבנא.

Achashverosh said: Balshezar calculated and he erred, I will calculate and I will not err. Once Achashverosh saw that the 70 years had passed (these refer to the 70 years after Yirmiyahu prophesied that the Jewish people would be redeemed from Bavel) he said now they will certainly no longer be redeemed, and he took out the vessels of the Beis Hamikdash and he used them for his own personal benefit. Rava said: Even Daniel erred in the calculation.

חידושי הרמב"ן מסכת מגילה דף יא עמוד ב

קשה עלי זה הענין, כיון שראה אחשוורוש דבלשצר טעה ונענש בידוע ודאי שהן עתידין להגאל ונבואה של ירמיה ששמע עליה נבואת אמת היא, וכיון שכן היאך הוא סומך על שום חשבון ודאי עתיד הדבר ליגע ויענש. ועוד קשה לי האיך אמר כיון דמלו שבעין ולא אפרוק והלא כבר עלו ברשיון כורש כל הקהל כאחד ארבע רבוא ונתיישבו בערי יהודה ושוב לא עלו בבנין הבית אלא מועטים עם עזרא במצות דריוש הפרסי בנו של אחשוורוש ואסתר, ועוד היכי אפיק מאני דבי מקדשא ואשתמש בהו והלא בימי כורש כבר העלו אותם כדכתיב (עזרא א' ז') והמלך כורש הוציא את כלי בית ה' אשר הוציא נבוכדנצר מירושלם ויתנם בבית אלהיו ויוציאם כורש מלך פרס על ידי מתרדת הגזבר ויספרם לשבאצר הנשיא ליהודה וכתוב הכל העלה שבאצר עם העלות הגולה מבבל לירושלם. וי"ל ולתרץ שהיה אחשוורוש סובר בלשצר מנה וטעה ונענש לפי שבימיו עתידין להיות להם פקידה וכבר נפקדו ועלו, ואנא מנינא ולא טעינא ואראה אם יהיה להם עוד גאולה אחרת ובנין בית המקדש, וכיון דחזא דמלו לחשבוננו נמי ולא

נבנה הבית ולא נגאלו לגמרי אבל נשאר גדוליהם ורובן בבבל, אמר תו לא מפרקי הני ולא יהיה להם גאולה אחרת ולא יבנה ביהמ"ק שלהם.

The matter is difficult, for once Achashverosh saw that Belshazar erred and was subsequently punished, then Achashverosh must have known that the Jewish people were destined to be redeemed and that the prophesy of Yirmiyahu was a truthful one, hence Achashverosh should not have relied on any sort of calculation, for it was inevitable that he was going to be punished! Moreover, how could Achashverosh say that the 70 years had passed and they were not redeemed, the Jews had already gone up with the permission of Koresh as a congregation of 4,000 and had settled in the land of Yehuda? Finally, how could Achashverosh use the vessels from the Beis Hamikdash, hadn't Koresh already brought the vessels back up to the Beis Hamikdash?

Achashverosh thought that Balshazar had miscalculated because and was punished because in his time there was meant to be a redemption and the Jews had been redeemed, but Achashverosh said I will calculate and I will not err and I will see if they have another redemption and a rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash. Once Achashverosh saw that the calculation was up and the Beis Hamikdash had not been built and not all of the Jewish people had been redeemed, but rather some of the prominent members of the Jewish people remained in Bavel, he said that now these remaining Jews will most certainly not be redeemed and their Beis Hamikdash will not be rebuilt.

- Have you ever miscalculated in your life? Were the results catastrophic or more toned down?
- What does it tell you that even great people like Daniel can miscalculate?
- Do you think Achashverosh's reasoning was sound as to why he thought the Jews would no longer be redeemed or perhaps he should have reconsidered?
- Has there ever been a major event in your life that you just wish you could go back and erase or do over? If given this option, how would you respond differently the second time around?

Where does the story of Bigsan and Teresh fit in to the Purim story? How do you see the providence of Hashem over everything from this story?

אסתר פרק ב

(כא) בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם וּמָרְדֳּכָי יָשָׁב בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ קִצְרִי בִגְתָּן וְתֶרֶשׁ שְׁנֵי סָרִיסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁמָרֵי הַסֶּף וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ לְשַׁלֵּחַ יָד בַּמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֵרֶשׁ:

(כב) וַיִּוָּדַע הַדָּבָר לְמָרְדֳּכָי וַיֵּגֵד לְאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה וַתֹּאמֶר אֲסֵתֶר לְמָלֶכְךָ בְּשֵׁם מָרְדֳּכָי:

(כג) וַיִּבְקֶשׁ הַדָּבָר וַיִּמָּצֵא וַיִּתְּלוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם עַל עֵץ וַיִּכְתֹּב בְּסֵפֶר דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ:

In those days and Mordechai was sitting by the gate of the king, Bigsan and Seresh, two officers of the King became angry, and they wanted to harm (and ultimately kill) Achashverosh. And the matter was made known to Mordechai and he related the information to Queen Esther, and Esther told the king in Mordechai's name. The matter was investigated and it was found to be true, and they hanged both of them on a tree, and it was written in the Book of Chronicles before the king.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת מגילה דף יג עמוד ב

בימים ההם ומרדכי יושב בשער המלך קצף בגתן ותרש, אמר רבי חייא בר אבא אמר רבי יוחנן: הקציף הקדוש ברוך הוא אדון על עבדיו לעשות רצון צדיק, ומנו - יוסף, שנאמר +בראשית מ"א+ ושם אתנו נער עברי וגו'. עבדים על אדוניהן לעשות נס לצדיק, ומנו - מרדכי, דכתיב ויודע הדבר למרדכי וגו'.

In those days and Mordechai was sitting by the gate of the king, Bigsan and Seresh became angry etc. R' Chiya bar Abba said in the name of R' Yochanan: Hashem made the master (Paroh) angry at the servants (the butler and the baker) to do the will of the tzadik, and who was that tzadik? Yosef (who was released from prison as a result.) Hashem also made the servants (Bigsan and Seresh) angry at the master (Achashverosh) in order to do the will of the tzadik, and who was that tzadik? Mordechai, for it is written and the matter was made known to Mordechai.

- Why do you think Bigsan and Seresh were so angry at Achashverosh?
The Gemara tells us that Bigsan and Seresh were the butler's of Achashverosh. Once Achashverosh married Esther he was constantly having relations with her, hence this made him very thirsty. As a result, Bigsan and Seresh were constantly bringing him drinks and they were not getting any sleep.
- What is significant about the fact that Esther relayed the information to Achashverosh **in Mordechai's name**?
The Gemara tells us that whoever repeats something in the name of the person from whom he heard it, will bring redemption to the world.

Why did Vashti refuse to accede to Achashverosh's request? Was Achashverosh's response proper?

אסתר פרק א פסוקים יא-יב

לְהָבִיא אֶת וַשְׁתִּי הַמֶּלֶכָה לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּכֶתֶר מַלְכוּת לְהִרְאוֹת הָעַמִּים וְהַשָּׂרִים אֶת יָפֶיהָ כִּי טוֹבַת מַרְאֶה הִיא: וּתְמַאֵן הַמֶּלֶכָה וַשְׁתִּי לְבּוֹא בְּדֶבֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר בֶּיַד הַסָּרִיסִים וַיִּקְצָף הַמֶּלֶךְ מְאֹד וַחֲמָתוֹ בָּעֶרְהָ בּוֹ:

(Achashverosh demanded) to have Vashti the Queen brought before the king with her crown of kingship, to show the nations and the officers her beauty for she was of beautiful appearance. And the Queen Vashti refused to come by the word of the king which was delivered in the hands of the officers, and the king became very angry, and his anger burned within him.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת מגילה דף יב עמוד ב

מאי טעמא לא אתאי? אמר רבי יוסי בר חנינא: מלמד שפרחה בה צרעת במתניתא תנא: [בא גבריאלי ועשה לה זנב]. ויקצף המלך מאד, אמאי דלקה ביה כולי האי? אמר רבא: שלחה ליה: בר אהורייירה דאבא! אבא לקבל אלפא חמרא שתי ולא רוי, וההוא גברא אשתטי בחמריה. מיד וחמתו בערה בו.

Why did Vashti not come? R' Yose bar Chanina said: Thus teaches us that tzaraas broke out on her body. In a baraita it was taught that the malaach Gavriel came and made her a tail. And the king was very angry. Why was he so angry? Rava said: Vashti sent Achashverosh the following message: Stable boy of my father, my father would drink 1,000 barrels of wine and he would not become inebriated, but you drink much less and you become inebriated, immediately his anger welled up inside of him.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת מגילה דף יב עמוד ב

אבל אומות העולם שאוכלין ושותין - אין מתחילין אלא בדברי תיפלות. וכן בסעודתו של אותו רשע, הללו אומרים: מדיות נאות, והללו אומרים: פרסיות נאות. אמר להם אחשוורוש: כלי שאני משתמש בו אינו לא מדיי ולא פרסי אלא

כשדיי, רצונכם לראותה? - אמרו לו: אין, ובלבד שתהא ערומה. שבמדה שאדם מודד בה מודדין לו. מלמד שהיתה ושתי הרשעה מביאה בנות ישראל ומפשיטן ערומות ועושה בהן מלאכה בשבת. היינו דכתיב אחר הדברים האלה כשך חמת המלך אחשוורוש זכר את ושתי ואת אשר עשתה ואת אשר נגזר עליה, כשם שעשתה - כך נגזר עליה.

But when the nations of the world eat and drink, they only open up talking words of vanity. And so too at the meal of that rasha (Achashverosh), these people were saying the women from Medai are the most beautiful, and these people were saying the Persian women are the most beautiful. Achashverosh said to them: The vessel that I use is neither Median nor Persian, rather she is Chaldean, do you want to see her? They said yes, provided that she is naked, for the measure that a person measures out is measured to him. This teaches us that Vashti the wicked brought Jewish girls, stripped them naked, and made them work on Shabbos. This is what the pasuk means when it writes "After these matters when the anger of Achashverosh subsided he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what he had decreed upon her, just as she did (stripping Jewish girls naked), so too was it decreed upon her (that she should be stripped naked.)"

מלבי"ם אסתר פרק א פסוק יב

ותמאן, מבאר כי מה שושתי לא רצתה לבא היה על כי הבינה כונתו שרוצה להורדיה ממעלתה שחשבה עד עתה שיש לה חלק בהמלכות מצד נחלת אבותיה, וז"ש ותמאן יען שהיא לפי דעתה המלכה ושתי שמלכותה מצד עצמה, ע"כ לא רצתה לבא משני טעמים. (א) בדבר המלך יען שפקד עליה שתבא באופן שיתראה שאין לה חלק במלוכה ולא תלבש הכתר טרם בואה לפניו, (ב) אשר ביד הסריסים אשר צוה להביא ע"י הסריסים שכדי בזיון וקצף, והנה בזה הפירה כל עצתו שרצה להחזיק מלכות החלקית והיא עמדה נגדו לאמר שמלכותו לא נצמח רק על ידה, וע"ז ויקצוף המלך מאד.

And she refused to accede to his request. It is clear that that which Vashti did not want to come was because she understood his intention that he wanted to remove her from her position of greatness, for she thought until now that she had a portion in the kingship based on an inheritance from her fathers. And this is why she refused, namely because in her mind she was the Queen Vashti, meaning she was royalty in her own right, therefore she did not want to come for two reasons. First, he commanded her to come in a way that would show that she had no inherent portion in the kingship, and she would not wear the royal crown before she came to him. Second, she was told to come in the hands of the lowly officers (the eunuchs), for it was an immense degradation to be brought with these lowly officers. With this she undid his entire plot for he wanted to take the kingship for himself, and she stood in his way saying that the kingship would only sprout from her, and for this reason the king became very angry.

- Why do you think Achashverosh acceded to the people's request to have Vashti brought before them naked?
It was his own decision to display her nakedness and to show off her beauty.
- Why do you think Vashti had such a degrading message to deliver to Achashverosh? Do you think she could have chosen her words more carefully?
She came from royal stock and she felt degraded that she had to answer to someone who merely usurped the throne.
- Why was there so much tension between Achashverosh and Vashti?
Achashverosh was trying to make himself more credible by attributing the kingship to himself alone, and Vashti was trying to undermine him.
- What do you think the pasuk is alluding to when it says that Vashti should be brought "with the crown of kingship"?
The keser malchus means that she should be brought in front of me with nothing but the keser malchus, meaning to say completely naked.

The Salvation of the Jewish People

The Purim Story

Created by Asher Becker

What was the purpose of Esther's parties?

אסתר פרק ה

(ג) וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ הַמֶּלֶךְ מַה לָּךְ אֶסְתֵּר הַמֶּלֶכָה וּמָה בְּקִשְׁתְּךָ עַד חֲצֵי הַמַּלְכוּת וַיִּנָּתֶן לָהּ:
(ד) וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר אִם עַל הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב יָבוֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּן הַיּוֹם אֶל הַמִּשְׁתָּה אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי לוֹ:
(ה) וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ מִהֲרִי אֶת הַמֶּן לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת דְּבַר אֶסְתֵּר וַיָּבֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּן אֶל הַמִּשְׁתָּה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂתָה אֶסְתֵּר:
(ו) וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאֶסְתֵּר בְּמִשְׁתָּה הַיּוֹם מַה שְּׂאֵלְתְּךָ וַיִּנָּתֶן לָהּ וּמָה בְּקִשְׁתְּךָ עַד חֲצֵי הַמַּלְכוּת וַתַּעֲשׂ:
(ז) וַתַּעַן אֶסְתֵּר וַתֹּאמֶר שְׂאֵלְתִי וּבְקִשְׁתִּי:
(ח) אִם מִצָּאֵתִי חַן בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאִם עַל הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב לָתֵת אֶת שְׂאֵלְתִי וְלַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת בְּקִשְׁתִּי יָבוֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּן אֶל הַמִּשְׁתָּה אֲשֶׁר אֶעֱשֶׂה לָהֶם וּמִחָר אֶעֱשֶׂה כְּדַבַּר הַמֶּלֶךְ:

And the king said to her, what do you desire Esther the Queen, and what is your request, up to half the kingdom and it will be given to you. And Esther said if it is good with the King, let the King and Haman come today to a feast that I will make for him. And the king said, hurry Haman to do the will of Esther, and the King and Haman came to the feast that Esther made. And the King said to Esther at the feast of wine, what is your request and it will be given to you, and what is your desire up to half the kingdom and it will be given to you. And Esther responded and she said my request and my desire. If I have found favor in the eyes of the King and if it is good with the King to grant my request and to do my desire, the King and Haman should come to the party that I will make for them, and tomorrow I will do like the word of the king.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת מגילה דף טו עמוד ב

יבא המלך והמן... אל המשתה. תנו רבנן: מה ראתה אסתר שזימנה את המן? רבי אליעזר אומר: פחים טמנה לו, שנאמר +תהלים ס"ט+ יהי שלחנם לפניך לפח, רבי יהושע אומר: מבית אביה למדה, שנאמר +משלי כ"ה+ אם רעב שונאך האכילהו לחם וגו', רבי מאיר אומר: כדי שלא יטול עצה וימרוד, רבי יהודה אומר: כדי שלא יכירו בה שהיא יהודית, רבי נחמיה אומר: כדי שלא יאמרו ישראל אחות יש לנו בבית המלך ויסיחו דעתן מן הרחמים. רבי יוסי אומר: כדי שיהא מצוי לה בכל עת. רבי שמעון בן מנסיא אומר: אולי ירגיש המקום ויעשה לנו נס. רבי יהושע בן קרחה אומר: אסביר לו פנים כדי שיהרג הוא והיא. רבן גמליאל אומר: מלך הפכפכן היה. אמר רבן גמליאל: עדיין צריכין אנו למודעי. דתניא, רבי אליעזר המודעי אומר: קנאתו במלך, קנאתו בשרים, רבה אמר: +משלי ט"ז+ לפני שבר גאון, אביי ורבה דאמרי תרווייהו: +ירמיהו נ"א+ בחמם אשית את משתייהם וגו', אשכחיה רבה בר אבוה לאליהו, אמר ליה: כמאן חזיא אסתר ועבדא הכי? - אמר ליה: ככולהו תנאי וככולהו אמוראי.

The King and Haman should come to the party. The Rabbis taught: Why did Esther see fit to invite Haman? R' Eliezer says: She was setting a trap for him, as it says "Let your table be before them as a trap." R' Yehoshua says: She learned this from her father's house, as it says "If your enemy is hungry feed him bread". R' Meir says: In order that Haman should not take advice and rebel (meaning Haman would feel slighted if he was not invited to such an

exclusive party, and he would use that as an excuse to start a rebellion.) R' Yehuda says: In order that Haman should not recognize that Esther was a Jewess. R' Nechemya says: In order that the Jewish people should not say that we have a sister in the palace, and as a result they would turn away from begging for mercy from Hashem. R' Yose says: In order that he should always be around her (in the hope that he might slip up in front of the King). R' Shimon ben Menasya says: Maybe Hashem will feel what I am doing (namely bringing close an enemy of the Jewish people, or the fact that I have to flatter an enemy of the Jewish people) and He will perform a miracle for us. R' Yehoshua ben Karcha says: I will show him grace (I will pretend that we are having an affair) in order that he kill Haman as well as me. R' Gamliel says: Achashverosh was a wishy-washy king (meaning Esther wanted Haman there in order that Achashverosh would not change his mind.) R' Gamliel said: We still need the opinion of the Modai, for we learnt in a baraiisa, R' Eliezer Hamodai says: Jealousy by the king translates into jealousy amongst the officers (meaning Esther wanted to make Achashverosh jealous that she also invited Haman, and she wanted to make all the other officers jealous that she only invited Haman.) Rabbah says: Before the downfall there is pride (meaning Esther wanted to make Haman feel like he was on a pedestal before he fell from his position.) Abaye and Rava both say: In their heatedness I will give them to drink (meaning Esther intended to make her part specifically at this moment in order that Achashverosh's wrath would flare up even further against Haman.) Rabbah bar Avuha found Eliyahu, he said to him: Like whom did Esther did see fit and do what she did (meaning which one of these opinions is the real reason Esther made her party)? He said to him: Like all the Tanaaim and all the Amoraim (they are all correct.)

- What do you think Achashverosh intended by his offer to Esther of up to half the kingdom?
The Gemara relates that up to half the kingdom but not the whole kingdom and not something which would divide the kingdom, namely the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash.
- Why do you think Esther was insistent that the King and Haman should come today to her party?
She needed to put her plan into action immediately in order to foil Haman's plot.
- Of all the reasons given as to why Esther invited Haman, which one resonates with you the most and why?
- Esther had many different motives as to why she invited Haman to the party. Have you ever been faced with a situation where many different reasons are flying at you and are pulling at you in different directions? How did you respond to that pressure?

Why was the city of Shushan so ecstatic?

אסתר פרק ח

(ט) וּמֶרְדֵּכִי יָצָא מִלִּפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּלִבּוּשׁ מַלְכוּת תְּכֵלֶת וְחוּר וְעֹטֶרֶת זָהָב גְּדוּלָּה וְתַכְרִיף בּוּץ וְאַרְגָּמָן וְהָעִיר שׁוֹשַׁן צְהֵלָה וְשִׁמְחָה:

(טז) לַיהוּדִים הָיְתָה אוֹרָה וְשִׁמְחָה וְשׁוֹשַׁן וִיקָר:

(יז) ובכל מדינה ומדינה ובכל עיר ועיר מקום אשר דבר המלך ונתן מגיע שמחה וששון ליהודים משנה יום טוב ורבים מעמי הארץ מתהדים כי נפל פחד היהודים עליהם:

And Mordechai went out from before the king with a garb of royalty, turquoise and white, a large golden crown, shrouds of linen and royal purple, and the city of Shushan rejoiced and were happy. To the Jews there was light, happiness, joy, and glory. And in every province and in every city, the place in which the word of the King and his law reached, there was happiness and joy to the Jews, feasting and a holiday, and many of the people of the land converted to Judaism for the fear of the Jews were upon them.

אבן עזרא אסתר פרק ח פסוק טו

והעיר שושן צהלה ושמחה - פירוש צהלה כטעם אורה כאדם שהוא יושב בחושך ויצא לאור העולם שהוא הפך בלא אמצעי כן היה דבר ישראל:

And the city of Shushan rejoiced and were happy- Meaning, rejoicing over the light, like a person sitting in darkness and he comes out to the light of the world and he flips around completely without any external means, so too was the matter of the Jewish people.

- What is the significance of all the colors with which Mordechai is adorned?
They are colors of royalty and they symbolize his rise to power and the newly elevated position of the Jewish people.
- How did you think it must have felt to be a Jew in this time period?
- Do you think that it was a natural reaction that so many people converted to Judaism as a result of this incident?
- What do you think the אבן עזרא means when he says that the matter of the Jewish people was like a person who went from darkness to light with no external means?
It means that it was a total reversal of the situation, everything was completely flipped on its head.

How are we to relate to the downfall of our enemies?

אסתר פרק ז

(י) ויתלו את המן על העץ אשר הכין למרדכי וחתמת המלך שככה:

And they hanged Haman on the tree that he had prepared for Mordechai, the King's anger abated.

אסתר פרק ט

(יג) ותאמר אסתר אם על המלך טוב ינתן גם מקור ליהודים אשר בשושן לעשות כדת היום ואת עשרת בני המן יתלו על העץ:

(יד) ויאמר המלך להעשות כן ותנתן דת בשושן ואת עשרת בני המן תלו:

And Esther said if it is good by the king, let him give also tomorrow to the Jews in Shushan in order to do the law of the day and the ten sons of Haman should be hanged on a tree. And the king said to do so and the law was given in Shushan, and the ten sons of Haman were hanged.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת מגילה דף טז עמוד א

אמר ליה: סק ורכב. - אמר ליה: לא יכולנא, דכחישא חילאי מימי תעניתא. גחין וסליק. כי סליק בעט ביה. - אמר ליה: לא כתיב לכו +משלי כ"ד+ בנפל איבך אל תשמח? - אמר ליה: הני מילי - בישראל, אבל בדידכו כתיב - +דברים ל"ג+ ואתה על במותימו תדרך.

Haman said to Mordechai, get up and ride the horse. Mordechai said to Haman: I am unable, for I am weak from my days of fasting. Haman bent over and Mordechai stepped on his back in order to ascend the horse. As Mordechai was ascending the horse he kicked Haman. Haman said to Mordechai: Doesn't it say "Do not rejoice at the downfall of your enemies"? Mordechai responded: That verse was written by Jews, but by you it says, "And you will trample on their high places."

תלמוד בבלי מסכת מגילה דף י עמוד ב

והיה כאשר שש' עליכם להיטיב אתכם... כן ישיש להרע אתכם. ומי חדי הקדוש ברוך הוא במפלתן של רשעים? והא כתיב +דברי הימים ב' כ'+ בצאת לפני החלוצין ואמרים הודו לה' כי לעולם חסדו, ואמר רבי יוחנן: מפני מה לא נאמר כי טוב בהודאה זו - לפי שאין הקדוש ברוך הוא שמח במפלתן של רשעים. ואמר רבי יוחנן: מאי דכתיב +שמות י"ד+ ולא קרב זה אל זה כל הלילה - בקשו מלאכי השרת לומר שירה, אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא: מעשה ידי טובעין בים ואתם אומרים שירה? - אמר רבי אלעזר: הוא אינו שש, אבל אחרים משיש.

"And it will be that just as Hashem rejoices over doing good to you, so too He will rejoice to harm you. But does Hashem rejoice at the downfall of the wicked, but the pasuk says "When you go out in front of the army and they will say Praise to Hashem for His kindness is eternal, and R' Yochanan says: Why does it not state כי טוב, for He is good, in this praise? Because Hashem does not rejoice at the downfall of the wicked. And R' Yochanan said: What does the pasuk mean when it says "And they (the Egyptians) did not approach them (the Jews) the whole night"? The ministering angels wanted to recite a song, Hashem said: My handiwork is drowning in the ocean and you want to sing? R' Elazar says, He does not rejoice at the downfall of His enemies, but others rejoice.

- If you were living in Shushan when Haman and his sons were hanged, how would you feel?
- Why do you think that the mandate to not rejoice at the downfall of your enemies is limited to the Jewish people?
Perhaps there is something inherent about being a Jew, some inherent level of sanctity that does not allow you to hate another Jew.
- If Hashem does not rejoice at the downfall of the wicked, then how do we have the right to do so?
Hashem feels much more acutely the distress of every single human being for He created everyone.
- What would be your natural reaction if you heard that a terrible enemy of the Jewish people or the free world at large had seen his demise?

How do we keep the inspiration alive? The epilogue to the Purim story.

אסתר פרק י פסוק ג

כִּי מָרְדֳּכָי הַיְּהוּדִי מִשְׁנָה לְמֶלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ וְגָדוֹל לַיְּהוּדִים וְרָצוּי לְרַב אֶחָיו דָּרָשׁ טוֹב לַעֲמֹו וְדֹבֵר שְׁלוֹם לְכָל יִרְעֹו:
For Mordechai the Jew was viceroy to Achashverosh, and he was prominent amongst the Jews, and he was pleasing to the majority of his brothers. He would seek good for his nation and he spoke of peace to all his descendants.

אבן עזרא אסתר פרק י פסוק ג

ורצוי לרב אחיו - כי אין יכולת באדם לרצות הכל בעבור קנאת האחים:
And he was pleasing to the majority of his brothers- For it is impossible for a person to please everyone because of jealousy amongst brothers.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת מגילה דף טז עמוד ב

ורצוי לרב אחיו, לרוב אחיו - ולא לכל אחיו, מלמד: שפירשו ממנו מקצת סנהדרין.
And he was pleasing to the majority of his brother- To the majority of his brothers but not to all of his brothers. This teaches us that some of the members of the Sanhedrin separated from Mordechai.

רש"י מסכת מגילה דף טז עמוד ב

שפירשו ממנו - לפי שבטל מדברי תורה ונכנס לשררה.
They separated from him because he nullified his learning Torah and he entered a governmental position.

- Can you relate to the feeling that it is impossible to please everyone?
- Why do you think people looked down at Mordechai for taking a governmental position?
They felt that he was better suited to teach Torah.
- If you were Mordechai at the end of the Purim story, after Haman and all of his sons had been hanged and the Jewish people were rejoicing, what would you have done?
- Why do you think Mordechai decided to take up a governmental position?
Mordechai reasoned that he would more effectively be able to assist the Jewish people from a position of power, but the Rabbis frowned upon such an attitude for Mordechai was better suited to learn and teach Torah.