

וְהָא שְׁפִיר חָשִׁיב? אִיהוּ נְמִי מִיטְעָא
טְעִי, דְּאִיבְעִי לִיהּ לְמִימְנֵי מַחְרְבוֹת
יְרוּשָׁלַיִם.

The Gemara asks: **But he calculated properly**; why then did this happen? The Gemara answers: **He too erred** in his calculation, **for he should have counted from the destruction of Jerusalem** at the time of the exile of Zedekiah and not from the first exile of Jehoiachin.

סוּף סוּף כְּמָה בְּצִירָן (חֲדִיסָר). אִיהוּ
כְּמָה מֶלֶךְ – אַרְבֵּיסָר, בְּאַרְבֵּיסָר דִּי דִיָּה
אִיבְעִי לִיהּ לְמִיבְנֵי בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ!
אֵלְמָה פְּתִיב: “בְּאֲדִין בְּטִילַת עֲבִידַת
בֵּית אֱלֹהֵי דִי בִירוּשָׁלַיִם!” אָמַר רַבָּא:
שָׁנִים מְקוּטְעוֹת הֲוֵי.

The Gemara asks: **Ultimately, how many years were lacking? Eleven**, for the exile of Zedekiah took place eleven years after that of Jehoiachin. **How many years did Ahasuerus reign as king? Fourteen**. Indeed, **in his fourteenth year, then, the Temple should have been built**. If so, why is it written: “**Then the work of the House of God, which is in Jerusalem, ceased**; so it ceased until the second year of the reign of Darius, king of Persia” (Ezra 4:24), which indicates that the Temple was not built during the entire reign of Ahasuerus? **Rava said: The years reckoned were partial years**. To complete the seventy years, it was necessary to wait until the second year of the rule of Darius II, when indeed the Temple was built.

תִּנְיָא נְמִי הָכִי: וְעוֹד שָׁנָה אַחֲרַת לְבָבֶל,
וְעַמְד דְּרוּשׁ וְהַשְׁלִימָה.

This is also taught in a *baraita*, as an indication that the years counted were only partial years: **And** when Belshazzar was killed, **there was still another year left for Babylonia** before the reckoning of the seventy years was completed. **And then Darius arose and completed it**. Although seventy years were previously counted according to Belshazzar’s count, from the exile of Jehoiakim, because the years were only partial, there was still one year left in order to complete those seventy years.

אָמַר רַבָּא: אִף דְּנִיֵּאל טְעָה בְּהֵאֵי
חוּשְׁבָנָא, דְּכְתִיב: “בְּשָׁנַת אַחַת לְמָלְכוֹ
אֲנִי דְּנִיֵּאל בִּינוֹתֵי בְּסִפְרִים,” מִדְּקָאֵמַר
“בִּינוֹתֵי” – מְקַלְל דְּטְעָה.

Rava said: Daniel also erred in this calculation, as it is written: “**In the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, meditated in the books** over the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish for the desolations of Jerusalem seventy years” (Daniel 9:2). **From the fact that he said “I meditated,”** a term indicating recounting and calculating, **it can be inferred that he had previously erred**.

מְקַלְל מְקוֹם קָשׁוּ קְרָאֵי אֲהַדְרֵי: כְּתִיב:
“מְלֵאוֹת לְבָבֶל” וְכְתִיב: “לְחֲרֹבוֹת
יְרוּשָׁלַיִם!”

The Gemara comments: **In any case, the verses contradict each other** with regard to how the seventy years should be calculated. In one verse **it is written**: “**After seventy years are accomplished for Babylonia I will remember [efkod] you, and perform My good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place**” (Jeremiah 29:10), which indicates that the seventy years should be counted from the Babylonian exile. **And** in another verse **it is written**: “**That he would accomplish for the desolations of Jerusalem seventy years**” (Daniel 9:2), indicating that the seventy years are calculated from the destruction of Jerusalem.

אָמַר רַבָּא: לְפָקִידָה בְּעֵלְמָא. וְהִינּוּ
דְּכְתִיב: “כֹּה אָמַר בּוֹרֵשׁ מֶלֶךְ פָּרַס
כֹּל מַמְלְכוֹת הָאָרֶץ נָתַן לִי ה' אֱלֹהֵי
הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהוּא פָּקַד עָלַי לְבָנוֹת לוֹ בְּיַת
בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם.”

Rava said in response: The seventy years that “are accomplished for Babylonia” were **only for being remembered [lifekida]**, as mentioned in the verse, allowing the Jews to return to Eretz Yisrael but not to build the Temple. **And this is as it is written** with regard to Cyrus’s proclamation permitting the Jewish people’s return to Eretz Yisrael, in the seventieth year of the Babylonian exile: “**Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The Lord, God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and He has charged [pakad] me to build Him a house in Jerusalem**” (Ezra 1:2). The verse makes use of the same root, *peh-kuf-dalet*, heralding the return to Jerusalem to build the Temple, but not its actual completion.

I am complaining to you about Cyrus – קובל אני לך על – כורש: According to Rav Nahman bar Rav Hisha's interpretation, God said to the Messiah: I am complaining with regard to Cyrus, for if he had acted accordingly, the Second Temple would have been built differently, and it would not have been destroyed. There wouldn't have been a last exile, and the coming of the Messiah would have been sooner (*Hiddushei Aggadot LaRashba*).

I had said: He shall build My House and gather My exiles – אני אמרתי הוא יבנה ביתי ויקבץ גלותי – This verse appears with different wording later in Isaiah: "He will build My cities and send My exiles" (45:13). This is the text quoted by Rashi, and it appears to be the correct wording of the verse.

Of the kings of Media and Persia – למלכי מדי ופרס – The Maharsha and the *Turei Even* explain, based on *Ester Rabba*, that the essential question is: Why is Persia preceding Media in some verses and vice versa in other verses?

BACKGROUND

Persia and Media – פרס ומדי – Although the Persian Empire began with Cyrus's decisive victory over the Median Empire, in truth Cyrus brought about a situation in which there were two nations sharing the throne. He appointed Medes to prominent positions in the country, even among the ranks of the highest authorities. Statues from the period include soldiers of the king of Persia lined up in pairs, one Persian and one Median.



Carving of Persian soldiers

דרש רב נחמן בר רב חסדא. מאי דכתיב: "כה אמר ה' למשיחו לכורש אשר החזקתי בימני", וכי כורש משיח היה? אלא אמר ליה הקדוש ברוך הוא למשיח: קובל אני לך על כורש, אני אמרתי "הוא יבנה ביתי ויקבץ גלותי". והוא אמר: "מי בכם מכל עמו... ויעל".

"חיל פרס ומדי הפרתמים" וכתוב: "למלכי מדי ופרס!" אמר רבא: אתנוי אתנו בהדדי: אי מינן מלכי – מיניכו איפרכי, ואי מיניכו מלכי מינן איפרכי.

"בהראותו את עושר כבוד מלכותו", אמר רבי יוסי בר חנינא: מלמד שלבש בגדי כהונה, כתיב הכא: "יקר תפארת גדולתו", וכתוב התם: "לכבוד ולתפארת".

"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 שאלו בהדיה.

Apropos its mention of Cyrus, the Gemara states that Rav Nahman bar Rav Hisha interpreted homiletically a verse concerning Cyrus: What is the meaning of that which is written: "Thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held" (Isaiah 45:1), which seemingly is referring to Cyrus as God's anointed? Now was Cyrus God's anointed one, i.e., the Messiah, that the verse should refer to him in this manner? Rather, the verse should be understood as God speaking to the Messiah with regard to Cyrus: The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to the Messiah: I am complaining to you about Cyrus,^N who is not acting in accordance with what he is intended to do. I had said: "He shall build My House and gather My exiles" (see Isaiah 45:13),^N but he did not carry this out. Rather, he said: "Whoever is among you of all His people... let him go up to Jerusalem" (Ezra 1:3). He gave permission to return to Israel, but he did no more than that.

§ The Gemara returns to its interpretations of verses in the Megilla. The Megilla mentions that among those invited to the king's feast were: "The army of Persia and Media,^B the nobles and princes of the provinces" (Esther 1:3), and it is written near the conclusion of the Megilla: "In the book of chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia" (Esther 10:2).^N Why is Persia mentioned first at the beginning of the Megilla, while later in the Megilla, Media is mentioned first? Rava said in response: These two peoples, the Persians and the Medes, stipulated with each other, saying: If the kings will come from us, the ministers will come from you; and if the kings will come from you, the ministers will come from us. Therefore, in reference to kings, Media is mentioned first, whereas in connection with nobles and princes, Persia is given priority.

The verse states: "When he showed the riches of his glorious [kevod] kingdom and the honor of his majestic [tiferet] greatness" (Esther 1:4). Rabbi Yosei bar Hanina said: This teaches that Ahasuerus wore the priestly vestments. Proof for this assertion may be adduced from the fact that the same terms are written with regard to the priestly vestments, as it is written here: "The riches of his glorious [kevod] kingdom and the honor of his majestic [tiferet] greatness." And it is written there, with regard to the priestly garments: "For glory [kavod] and for majesty [tiferet]" (Exodus 28:2).

The verse states: "And when these days were fulfilled, the king made a feast for all the people that were present in Shushan the capital" (Esther 1:5). Rav and Shmuel disagreed as to whether this was a wise decision. One said: Ahasuerus arranged a feast for the residents of Shushan, the capital, after the feast for foreign dignitaries that preceded it, as mentioned in the earlier verses, indicating that he was a clever king. And the other one said: It is precisely this that indicates that he was a foolish king. The one who said that this proves that he was a clever king maintains that he acted well when he first brought close those more distant subjects by inviting them to the earlier celebration, as he could appease the residents of his own city whenever he wished. And the one who said that he was foolish maintains that he should have invited the residents of his city first, so that if those faraway subjects rebelled against him, these who lived close by would have stood with him.^B

BACKGROUND

Clever or foolish king – מלך פיקח או מלך טיפש: This dispute concerning Ahasuerus's reputation still exists among historians today. His character, as it appears from the lines of the book of Esther, and more so from the midrash, is that of an unbalanced man who is easily influenced by his advisors and chamberlains, unstable and controlled by the women of his palace.

In addition, the Greeks he fought against, and to whom he suffered a number of defeats, vilified him in several ways. Their description of him is quite negative. However, Ahasuerus

succeeded in the early years of his rule, until his mind was put at ease, as mentioned earlier (11b). He quelled severe rebellions in Egypt and Babylonia and proved his militaristic abilities in these wars. His grandiose initiative to build Persepolis and other cities with enormous buildings demonstrates his ingenuity and cleverness, although it appears that a large portion of the assets that he amassed through intense taxation were used entirely for this purpose. Therefore, it is difficult to reach a uniformed classification of his character and achievements.

He said to them, Say the answer yourselves – אָמרוּ לָהֶם: Many commentaries question this exchange. Apparently, if the students asked, they did not know the answer. If so, why did Rabbi Shimon ask them for their answer? Some explain that their central question was: Why did the Jewish people deserve to be destroyed? They understood that the people had sinned, yet they couldn't understand why they were punished so severely. For this reason, Rabbi Shimon replied: Say yourselves at least what you do understand; explain the reason you feel that they deserve any punishment (Maharam Schiff; see Rabbi Yoshiya Pinto).

In the work *Ginzei HaMelekh* there is an interesting explanation provided, relating the discussion here to the dispute recorded later (19a) with regard to which part of the Megilla must be read on Purim. Rabbi Shimon maintains that the Megilla is read only from the chapter that begins with “On that night” (Esther, chapter 6), and therefore he is not as concerned with what occurred in the initial chapters of the Megilla. His students, however, maintain that the Megilla should be read in its entirety, as they view the beginning of the Megilla as essential to the unfolding of the story. Therefore, the students asked Rabbi Shimon what is indicated in the latter chapters of the Megilla regarding the cause for Israel's danger. Rabbi Shimon responded to his students, that they who are of the opinion that the beginning of the Megilla is essential, should be the ones to explain what is detailed in the initial chapters as a reason for the impending destruction?

They partook of the feast of that wicked one – מִפְּנֵי שָׁנְהוּ: Apparently, the Jewish people ate forbidden foods. Secondly, the Gemara mentions earlier that Ahasuerus held the feast as an act of disbelief in Jeremiah's prophecy, expressing his certainty that the Jews would never return to the Temple. The Jews' participation in the party lent support to Ahasuerus's convictions, and it was therefore a desecration of God's name (Rabbi Yoshiya Pinto).

Only for appearance – אֵלֵא לְפָנִים: The Maharsha explains that the Jewish people's prostration before the idols was only out of fear, and thereby it was an act with only the outer appearance of idol worship. Therefore, the Holy One, Blessed be He, treated them accordingly and only gave the appearance that He would decimate them. In fact, His heart was as true to them as theirs was to Him.

Many holes [harei harei] – חֲרֵי חֲרֵי: This explanation of the word *hur* indicates that Ahasuerus used porous fabric as partitions, so that the attendees at his party could all see each other. Alternatively, the word *hur* come from *herut*, freedom, and it indicated that the partygoers wore clothes worthy of free men (*Aruk*).

שָׂאוּ תְלִמִידָיו אֶת רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בַּר יוֹחָאי: מִפְּנֵי מַה נִּתְחַיֵּבוּ שׁוֹנְאֵיהֶן שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁבָּאוּתוֹ הַדּוֹר בְּלֵיהָ? אָמַר לָהֶם: אָמְרוּ אַתֶּם! אָמְרוּ לוֹ: מִפְּנֵי שָׁנְהוּ מִסְּעוּדָתוֹ שֶׁל אוֹתוֹ רִשְׁעִי. אִם כֵּן שֶׁבָּשׂוּשׁוֹן יִהְרָגוּ, שֶׁבְּכָל הָעוֹלָם בּוֹלוֹ אֵל יִהְרָגוּ! אָמְרוּ לוֹ: אָמְרוּ אַתֶּם! אָמַר לָהֶם: מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לְצֹלָם.

אָמְרוּ לוֹ: וְכִי מִשׁוּא פָּנִים יֵשׁ בַּדְּבָר? אָמַר לָהֶם: הֵם לֹא עָשׂוּ אֵלֵא לְפָנִים – אִף הִקְדוּשׁ בְּרִיךְ הוּא לֹא עָשָׂה עִמָּהֶן אֵלֵא לְפָנִים, וְהֵינּוּ דְבָתִּיב: “כִּי לֹא עָנָה מְלִבוֹ.”

“בְּחֻצַּר גִּנַּת בֵּיתוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ” רַב וּשְׁמוּאֵל; חֵד אָמַר: הָרְאוּ לְחֻצַּר – לְחֻצַּר, הָרְאוּ לְגִינָה – לְגִינָה, הָרְאוּ לְבֵיתוֹ – לְבֵיתוֹ וְחֵד אָמַר: הוֹשִׁיבֵן בְּחֻצַּר – וְלֹא הִחְוּיָקְתוּן, עַד שֶׁהִכְנִסוּן לְבֵיתוֹ וְהִחְוּיָקְתוּן. בְּמַתְנֵי תַּנְא: הוֹשִׁיבֵן בְּחֻצַּר, וּפְתַח לָהֶם שְׁנֵי פְתָחִים אֶחָד לְגִינָה וְאֶחָד לְבֵיתוֹ.

“חֹר בְּרַפֵּס וּתְכֵלֶת”, מֵאֵי חוֹר? רַב אָמַר: חֲרֵי חֲרֵי, וּשְׁמוּאֵל אָמַר: מִילֵת לְבָנָה הַצֵּיעַ לָהֶם. “בְּרַפֵּס” אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹסִי בַר חֲנִינָא: בְּרִים שֶׁל פְּסִים.

The students of Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai⁹ asked him: For what reason were the enemies of Jewish people, a euphemism for the Jewish people themselves when exhibiting behavior that is not in their best interests, in that generation deserving of annihilation? He, Rabbi Shimon, said to them: Say the answer to your question yourselves.¹⁰ They said to him: It is because they partook of the feast of that wicked one,¹¹ Ahasuerus, and they partook there of forbidden foods. Rabbi Shimon responded: If so, those in Shushan should have been killed as punishment, but those in the rest of the world, who did not participate in the feast, should not have been killed. They said to him: Then you say your response to our question. He said to them: It is because they prostrated before the idol that Nebuchadnezzar had made, as is recorded that the entire world bowed down before it, except for Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

They said to him: But if it is true that they worshipped idols and therefore deserved to be destroyed, why was a miracle performed on their behalf? Is there favoritism expressed by God here? He said to them: They did not really worship the idol, but pretended to do so only for appearance,¹² acting as if they were carrying out the king's command to bow before the idol. So too, the Holy One, Blessed be He, did not destroy them but did act angry with them only for appearance. He too merely pretended to desire to destroy them, as all He did was issue a threat, but in the end the decree was annulled. And this is as it is written: “For He does not afflict from His heart willingly” (Lamentations 3:33), but only for appearances' sake.

The verse states: “In the court of the garden of the king's palace” (Esther 1:5). Rav and Shmuel disagreed with regard to how to understand the relationship between these three places: Court, garden, and palace: One said: The guests were received in different places. One who, according to his stature, was fit for the courtyard was brought to the courtyard; one who was fit for the garden was brought to the garden; and one who was fit for the palace was brought to the palace. And the other one said: He first sat them in the courtyard, but it did not hold them, as they were too numerous. He then sat them in the garden, but it did not hold them either, until he brought them into the palace and it held them. A third understanding was taught in a *baraita*: He sat them in the courtyard and opened two entranceways for them, one to the garden and one to the palace.

The verse states: “There were hangings of *hur*, *karpas*, and sky blue” (Esther 1:6). The Gemara asks: What is *hur*? Rav said: A fabric fashioned with many holes [*harei harei*],¹³ similar to lace. And Shmuel said: He spread out for them carpets of white wool, as the word *havar* means white. And what is *karpas*? Rabbi Yosei bar Ḥanina said: Cushions [*karim*] of velvet [*pasim*].

PERSONALITIES

Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai – רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בַּר יוֹחָאי: Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai was one of the greatest *tanna'im* of the generation prior to the redaction of the Mishna. Rabbi Shimon was the preeminent student of Rabbi Akiva, and he considered himself Rabbi Akiva's spiritual heir. Rabbi Akiva had a great deal of respect for his student and said: It is enough for you that I and your Creator recognize your strength. Rabbi Shimon's greatness was manifest in his mastery of both *halakha* and *aggada*, and his statements can be found on all topics in every tractate of the Talmud.

The *halakha* is not always ruled in accordance with Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai's opinion, especially in disputes with Rabbi Yosei and Rabbi Yehuda. Nevertheless, the *halakha* follows his opinion with regard to several core issues. He had his own unique method of deriving *halakha* from the Torah, as he factored in the rationale of the verse and inferred halakhic conclusions from the Bible based on the spirit and purpose of the law.

Rabbi Shimon traveled to Rome as an emissary of the people, but he harbored profound enmity toward the Romans. He made no attempt to conceal his feelings of disgust for Rome and was therefore sentenced to death and forced into hiding for many years.

He was an ascetic by nature. He was very exacting, and he was famous in his generation for his righteousness and his performance of miracles. There are many anecdotes related in the Talmud about miraculous acts he performed. The *Sifrei*, a collection of halakhic derivations on Numbers and Deuteronomy, was developed in his study hall. He is also credited with having authored the fundamental kabbalistic work, the *Zohar*. His greatest students were Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi; Rabbi Shimon ben Yehuda; and his son, Rabbi Elazar ben Rabbi Shimon, who was also among the most prominent *tanna'im*.

על גלילי כסף ועמודי שש מטות זהב וכסף. תניא, רבי יהודה אומר: הראוי לכסף – לכסף, הראוי לזהב – לזהב. אומר לו רבי נחמיה: אם כן אתה מטיל קנאה בסעודה, אלא: הם של כסף ורגליהן של זהב.

בַּהַט וְשֵׁשׁ" אָמַר רַבִּי אֲסִי אֲבָנִים שֶׁמִּתְחַוְּטוּת עַל בְּעֲלֵיהֶן, וְכֵן הוּא אֹמֵר "אֲבָנֵי נֹר מִתְנַסְּסוֹת עַל אֲדָמָתוֹ".

וְדָר וְסוֹחֶרֶת" רַב אָמַר: דָּרֵי דָרֵי וְשִׁמּוּאֵל אָמַר: אֲבָן טוֹבָה יֵשׁ בְּכַרְבֵּי הַיָּם וְדָרָה שְׁמָה, הוֹשִׁיבָה בְּאֲמֻצַּע סְעוּדָה וּמְאִירָה לָהֶם בְּצַהָרִים. דָּבִי רַבִּי יִשְׁמַעֵאל תֵּנָא: שְׁקָרָא דְרוּר לְכָל בְּעֲלֵי סוֹחֶרָה.

"וְהַשְּׁקוּת בְּכֵלֵי זָהָב וְכֵלֵי מַכְלִים שׁוֹנִים" מִשׁוֹנִים מִיִּבְעֵי לֵיהּ! אָמַר רַבָּא: יִצְתָה בַת קוֹל וְאָמְרָה לָהֶם: רַאשׁוֹנִים בְּלוּ מִפְּנֵי כֵלִים וְאַתֶּם שׁוֹנִים בְּהֶם! "וַיִּזְנוּ מִלְּכוֹת רַב" אָמַר רַב: מְלִמְד שְׁכָל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד הַשְּׁקָהוּ וַיִּזְנוּ שְׁדוּל הֵימְנוּ בְּשָׁנִים.

"וְהַשְּׁתִיָּה בְּדַת (אֵין אוֹנִים) מֵאֵי בְּדַת"? אָמַר רַבִּי חֲנַן מִשׁוֹם רַבִּי מֵאֵיר: בְּדַת שְׁל תוֹרָה, מֵה דַת שְׁל תוֹרָה – אֲכִילָה מְרוּבָה מִשְׁתִּיָּה, אִף סְעוּדָתוֹ שְׁל אוֹתוֹ רְשָׁע – אֲכִילָה מְרוּבָה מִשְׁתִּיָּה.

"אֵין אוֹנִים", אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר: מְלִמְד שְׁכָל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד הַשְּׁקָהוּ מִיִּין מְדִינָתוֹ. "לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּרָצוֹן אִישׁ וְאִישׁ", אָמַר רַבָּא: לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּרָצוֹן מְרַדְּכֵי וְהֶמֶן, מְרַדְּכֵי – דְכַתִּיב "אִישׁ יְהוּדִי", הֶמֶן "אִישׁ צַר וְאוֹיֵב".

The verse states: "On silver rods and pillars of marble; the couches were of gold and silver" (Esther 1:6). It is taught in a *baraita*: Rabbi Yehuda says: Some couches were of gold and others of silver. One who, according to his stature, was fit for silver sat on a couch of silver, and one who was fit for gold sat on one of gold. Rabbi Neḥemya said to him: This was not done. If so, you would cast jealousy into the feast, for the guests would be envious of each other. Rather, the couches themselves were made of silver, and their feet were made of gold.

The verse continues: "Upon a pavement of *bahat* and marble" (Esther 1:6). Rabbi Asi said with regard to the definition of *bahat*: These are stones that ingratiate themselvesⁿ with their owners, as they are precious stones that people are willing to spend large amounts of money to acquire. And similarly, it states elsewhere that the Jewish people will be likened to precious stones: "And the Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of His people; for they shall be as "the stones of a crown, glittering over His land" (Zechariah 9:16).

The verse concludes: "And *dar* and *soharet*" (Esther 1:6). Rav said: *Dar* means many rows [*darei darei*] around. Similarly, *soharet* is derived from *sehōr sehōr*, around and around, meaning that the floor was surrounded with numerous rows of *bahat* and marble stones. And Shmuel said: There is a precious stone in the seaports, and its name is *dara*, and Ahasuerus placed it in the center of the feast, and it illuminated the festivities for them as the sun illuminates the world at midday. He explains that the word *soharet* is derived from *tzohar*, a light. A scholar from the school of Rabbi Yishmael taught a *baraita*: This means that he proclaimed a remission for all the merchants, absolving them from paying their taxes, understanding that the word *dar* derives from *deror*, freedom, and *soharet* from *soher*, merchant.

The verse states: "And they gave them drink in vessels of gold, the vessels being diverse [*shonim*] from one another" (Esther 1:7). The Gemara asks: Why does the verse use the term *shonim* to express that they are different? It should have said the more proper term *meshunim*. Rava said: A Divine Voice issued forth and said to them: The early ones, referring to Belshazzar and his people, were destroyed because they used these vessels, the vessels of the Temple, and yet you use them again [*shonim*]? The verse continues: "And royal wine in abundance [*rav*]" (Esther 1:7). Rav said: This teaches that each and every guest at the feast was poured well-aged wine that was older [*rav*] than himself in years.

The verse states: "And the drinking was according to the law; none did compel" (Esther 1:8). The Gemara asks: What is the meaning of "according to the law"? Rabbi Hanan said in the name of Rabbi Meir: The drinking was according to the law of the Torah. Just as, according to the law of the Torah, with regard to offerings, the food sacrificed on the altar is greater in quantity than the drink, for the wine libation is quantitatively much smaller than the sacrificial offerings it accompanies, so too, at the feast of that wicked man, the food was greater in quantity than the drink.

The verse states: "None did compel" (Esther 1:8). Rabbi Elazar said: This teaches that each and every guest at the feast was poured a drink from wine of his own country, so that he would feel entirely free, as if he were in his home country. The verse continues: "That they should do according to every man's pleasure" (Esther 1:8). Rava commented on the literal meaning of the verse, which is referring to two men, a man and a man [*ish va'ish*], and said: The man and man whom they should follow indicates that they should do according to the wishes of Mordecai and Haman.ⁿ The two of them served as butlers at the feast, and they were in charge of distributing the wine. Why is the verse interpreted in this way? Mordecai is called "man," as it is written: "There was a certain Jewish man [*ish*] in Shushan the castle, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair" (Esther 2:5). And Haman is also called man, as it states: "A man [*ish*] who is an adversary and an enemy, this evil Haman" (Esther 7:6).

That ingratiate themselves [*shemithotetot*] – שְׁמִיתְחוּטוּת: This expression is explained in various ways. Some maintain that the Hebrew phrase *shemithotetot* connotes pleasure (*Arukh*). Others explain that it means that a man lowers himself before the stones, in that he will do anything to procure them (Rabbeinu Gershom *Maor HaGola*). Perhaps this phrase indicates sin, in the sense that it is prohibited for a private individual to have such precious stones in his possession. He must relinquish them to the monarchy, and if he does not relinquish them, he is executed (Rabbeinu Hananel).

According to the wishes of Mordecai and Haman – כְּרָצוֹן מְרַדְּכֵי וְהֶמֶן: The simple meaning is that the feast was according to everyone's wishes, even two enemies, e.g. Mordecai and Haman. The Maharsha explains that Mordecai intended that all of the feast be in accordance with *halakha*, and Haman wanted the opposite (see Rabbi Yoshiya Pinto and *Ein Ya'akov*).

”גם ושתי המלכה עשתה משתה נשים
בית המלכות, בית הנשים מיפיעי
ליה! אמר רבא: שניהן לדבר עבירה
נתכוונו. היינו דאמרי אינשי: איהו בקרי
ואתתיה

The verse states: “Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women, in the royal house, which belonged to King Ahasuerus” (Esther 1:9). The Gemara questions why she held the feast in the royal house, a place of men, rather than in the women’s house, where it should have been. Rava said in response: **The two of them had sinful intentions.** Ahasuerus wished to fornicate with the women, and Vashti wished to fornicate with the men. This explains the folk saying that people say: **He with pumpkins and his wife**

Perek I
Daf 12 Amud b

NOTES

איהו – He with pumpkins and his wife with zucchinis – בבקרי ואתתיה בבוציני: The central point is that a man and his wife usually act in the same fashion. Rashi explains that just as Ahasuerus wished to exhibit his wife’s beauty to everyone, she similarly intended to show off her beauty. Others explain the particulars of this idiom, that if a man will have immoral relations under the wide pumpkin leaves, his wife will act similarly, but under zucchinis, in a more observable and public fashion (*HaKotev*; see *Arukh*).

On the seventh day – ביום השביעי: There is nothing distinctive about the seventh day of the feast to make it worthy of special mention, therefore the verse must be discussing the seventh day of the week, Shabbat. On Shabbat, the difference between the feasting of the Jews and the other nations was most apparent (see *Maharsha*).

Provided that she be naked – ובלבד שתהא ערומה: This interpretation is hinted to in the verse, as it states that Vashti should be brought “wearing the royal crown” (Esther 1:11), which is understood to mean that she should be wearing nothing else (*Re’ah Duda’im*).

And fashioned her a tail – ועשה לה זנב: A number of commentaries explain that the term tail doesn’t necessarily indicate an actual tail, as the term is used to refer to numerous forms of abnormal growth. This additional growth was sufficient to convince Vashti that she did not wish to go and expose herself publicly (*Arukh*; *Hiddushei Aggadot LaRashba*).

בבוציני.

with zucchinis,^N indicating that often a man and his wife engage in similar actions.

”ביום השביעי כטוב לב המלך בין אטו
עד השתא לא טב לביה בחמרא? אמר
רבא: יום השביעי שבת היה, שישראל
אוכלין ושותין, מתחילין בדברי תורה
ובדברי תשובות. אבל אומות העולם
שאוכלין ושותין – אין מתחילין אלא
בדברי תיפלות.

The verse states: “On the seventh day,^N when the heart of the king was merry with wine” (Esther 1:10). The Gemara asks: **Is that to say that until now his heart was not merry with wine?** Did it take seven days for him to achieve merriment? **Rava said: The seventh day was Shabbat,** when the difference between the Jewish people and the gentiles is most apparent. **On Shabbat, when the Jewish people eat and drink, they begin** by occupying themselves with words of Torah and words of praise for God. **But the nations of the world, when they eat and drink, they begin only with words of licentiousness.**

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.

The Gemara continues to detail what occurred at the feast. **So too, at the feast of that wicked man, Ahasuerus, when the men began to converse, some said: The Median women are the most beautiful, while others said: The Persian women are the most beautiful.** Ahasuerus said to them: **The vessel that I use, i.e., my wife, is neither Median nor Persian, but rather Chaldean. Do you wish to see her? They said to him: Yes, provided that she be naked,^N for we wish to see her without any additional adornments.**

שבמדה שאדם מודד בה מודדין לו.
מלמד שהיה ושתיה הרשעה מביאה
בנות ישראל ומפשיטן ערומות ועושה
בהן מלאכה בשבת, היינו דכתיב “אחר
הדברים האלה כשוך חמת המלך
אחשוורוש זכר את ושתי ואת אשר
עשתה ואת אשר נגזר עליה” כשם
שעשתה – כך נגזר עליה.

The Gemara comments: Vashti was punished in this humiliating way **for it is with the measure that a man measures to others that he himself is measured.** In other words, God punishes individuals in line with their transgressions, measure for measure. **This teaches that the wicked Vashti would take the daughters of Israel, and strip them naked, and make them work on Shabbat.** Therefore, it was decreed that she be brought before the king naked, on Shabbat. This is as it is written: “After these things, when the wrath of King Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her” (Esther 2:1). That is to say, just as she had done with the young Jewish women, so it was decreed upon her.

”ותמאן המלכה ושתי, מכדי פריצתא
הוא, דאמר מר: שניהן לדבר עבירה
נתכוונו, מאי טעמא לא אתאי? אמר
רבי יוסי בר חנינא: מלמד שפרחה בה
צרעת. במתניתא תנא: [בא גבריאל
ועשה לה זנב].

The verse states: “**But the queen Vashti refused to come**” (Esther 1:12). The Gemara asks: **Since she was immodest, as the Master said above: The two of them had sinful intentions, what is the reason that she did not come?** Rabbi Yosei bar Hanina said: **This teaches that she broke out in leprosy, and therefore she was embarrassed to expose herself publicly.** An alternative reason for her embarrassment was **taught in a baraita: The angel Gabriel came and fashioned her a tail.^N**

Stableman [ahuriyyarei] – בַּר אֶהוּיָרִיָּה: From the Middle Persian āxwaryār, as āxwarr means stable, and the suffix -ār acts as an agent, indicating a stableman. It is obvious that Ahasuerus was not actually the stableman of Vashti's father. However, since Vashti belonged to the royal Babylonian family, and Ahasuerus descended from the royal Aḥmanidat dynasty, which was subservient to them, he is referred to as a stableman of the Babylonian king.

NOTES

Drank wine against a thousand men – לְקַבֵּל אֶלְפָּא: This phrase, which also appears in Daniel 5:1, is difficult to understand literally. It is interpreted to mean that Belshazzar would drink against the greatest of a thousand drinkers. Another interpretation is that the word thousand, *alpa*, being similar to the word *aluf*, an ox, is used here to imply that he would drink large quantities of wine in the way that an ox drinks water (*Tosefot HaRosh*).

Go to Ammon and Moab – וְיָלֵךְ לְגַבֵּי עַמּוֹן וּמוֹאָב: The Sages knew that Ahasuerus was an unstable king and therefore feared giving him advice. Consequently, they decided to avoid doing so. Furthermore, they advised him to seek the counsel of Ammon and Moab, who hated the Jews, so that they bear the responsibility for the king's actions (see Rabbi Yoshiya Pinto).

This entire verse – כָּל פְּסוּקֵהָ: It was not necessary for the text to list the names of the officers and wise men, as it would have been sufficient to mention that Ahasuerus listened to the advice of his counsel. Therefore, the names are interpreted as referring to both the greatness of the Jewish people and their future troubles (see *Gevul Binyamin and Re'ah Dudd'im*).

Prepared to bring calamity – מְכֻּבָּד לְפָנֵי עֲנִיָּה: Rashi explains that it means prepared to be hung. The Maharsha explains that he was ready to cause calamity for all, first for Vashti and later for the Jews.

וַיִּקְצֹף הַמֶּלֶךְ מְאֹד אִמְאֵי דְלִקְהָ בֵּיהּ כּוּלֵי הַאֵי? אִמְרֵי רַבָּא: שְׁלֵחָה לִיהּ: בַּר אֶהוּיָרִיָּה דְאֶבְאָא אֶבְאָא לְקַבֵּל אֶלְפָּא חֲמַרָא שְׁתֵּי וְלֹא רוּי וְהָהוּא גְבַרָא אֲשֶׁתֵּי בַחְמַרְיָהּ. מִיָּד וַחֲמַתּוּ בְעַרְהָ בּוּ.

The verse continues: “Therefore the king was very wrathful, and his anger burned in him” (Esther 1:12). The Gemara asks: **Why did his anger burn in him so greatly** merely because she did not wish to come? **Rava said:** Vashti not only refused to come, but she also sent him a message by way of a messenger: You, son of my father’s stableman [ahuriyyarei].¹ Belshazzar, my father, drank wine against a thousand men^N and did not become inebriated, as the verse in Daniel (5:1) testifies about him: “Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand”; and that man, referring euphemistically to Ahasuerus himself, has become senseless from his wine. Due to her audacity, immediately “his anger burned in him” (Esther 1:12).

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לַחֲכָמִים מֵאַן חֲכָמִים – רַבָּנָן, וְיֹדְעֵי הַעֲתִים – שְׂוִידְעִין לְעַבְרַת שְׁנִים וְלִקְבוּעַת חֲדָשִׁים. אִמְרֵי לָהּ: דֵּינִינָה לִּי! אִמְרוּ: הֵיכִי נַעֲבִיד? נִמְאָ לִיהּ: קִטְלָהּ – לְמַחַר פְּסִיק לִיהּ חֲמַרְיָהּ וּבִעֵי לָהּ מִיָּנָן. נִמְאָ לִיהּ: שְׂבַקְהָ – קָא מוֹלִילָהּ בְּמַלְכוּתָא. אִמְרוּ לָהּ: מִיָּסִים שְׂחָרְבֵי בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ וְגַלְיָנָא מְאַרְצָנָא נִטְלָהּ עֲצָה מִמֶּנָּה, וַאֲיָן אֲנִי יוֹדְעִין לְדוּן דֵּינִי נְפֻשׁוֹת. זִיל לְגַבֵּי עַמּוֹן וּמוֹאָב, דִּיתְבִּי בְּדוּכְתֵיהוּ בַחְמַרָא דִּיתְיָב עַל דִּירְיָהּ.

The following verse states: “Then the king said to the wise men, who knew the times” (Esther 1:13). The Gemara asks: **Who are these wise men?** These wise men are the Sages of the Jewish people, who are referred to as those “who knew the times,” for they know how to intercalate years and fix the months of the Jewish calendar. Ahasuerus said to them: Judge her for me. The Sages said in their hearts: What should we do? If we say to him: Kill her, tomorrow he will become sober and then come and demand her from us. If we say to him: Let her be, she has scorned royalty, and that cannot be tolerated. Consequently, they decided not to judge the matter, and they said to him as follows: From the day that the Temple was destroyed and we have been exiled from our land, counsel and insight have been removed from us, and we do not know how to judge capital cases, as they are exceptionally difficult. Go to the people of Ammon and Moab,^N who have remained permanently settled in their places like wine that is settled on its lees, and so their minds are settled as well.

וְטַעֲמָא אִמְרוּ לִיהּ: דְּכַתִּיב “שְׂאֵן מוֹאָב מְנַעוּרָיו וְשׁוֹקֵט הוּא אֶל שְׂמֵרָיו וְלֹא הוֹרֵק מִכְּלֵי אֶל כְּלֵי וּבְגוּלָהּ לֹא הִלָּךְ עַל בֶּן עַמֵּד טַעֲמוֹ בּוּ וְרִחוֹ לֹא נָמַר.” מִיָּד “וְהִקְרֹב אֵלָיו בְּרִשְׁנָא שְׂחָרְבֵי אֲדַמְתָּא תְרִשִׁישׁ.”

And they provided a good reason when they spoke to him, as they proved that one who is settled retains his reasoning: For it is written: “Moab has been at ease from his youth, and he has settled on his lees, and has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither has he gone into exile; therefore his taste has remained in him, and his scent is not changed” (Jeremiah 48:11). Ahasuerus immediately acted on their advice and asked his advisors, as it is written: “And next to him was Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan” (Esther 1:14).

אִמְרֵי רַבֵּי לֵוִי: כָּל פְּסוּקֵהָ זֶה עַל שׁוּם קְרִבְנוֹת נְאֻמָּה:

Rabbi Levi said: This entire verse^N listing the names of the king’s advisors is stated on account of offerings. Each name alludes to an aspect of the sacrificial service that was unique to the Jewish people, which the ministering angels mentioned as merit for the Jewish people.

כְּרִשְׁנָא” אִמְרוּ מַלְאֲכֵי הַשְּׂרָת לְפָנֵי הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: רַבּוֹנוּ שְׁל עוֹלָם, כְּלוּם הִקְרִיבוּ לְפָנֶיךָ כְּרִים בְּנֵי שָׁנָה כְּדָרְךְ שֶׁהִקְרִיבוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְפָנֶיךָ? “שֶׁתָּר”, כְּלוּם הִקְרִיבוּ לְפָנֶיךָ שְׁתֵּי תוֹרִין? “אֲדַמְתָּא”, כְּלוּם בְּנֵי לְפָנֶיךָ מִזְבֵּחַ אֲדַמְתָּה? “תְרִשִׁישׁ”, כְּלוּם שִׁימְשׁוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּבִגְדֵי כְהוֹנָה, דְּכַתִּיב בְּהוּ “תְרִשִׁישׁ וְשָׂהֵם וְיִשְׁפָּה”. “מֵרֶס”, כְּלוּם מִירְסוּ בְּדָם לְפָנֶיךָ? “מֵרְסָנָא”, כְּלוּם מִירְסוּ בְּמִנְחוֹת לְפָנֶיךָ? “מֵרְסוֹן”, כְּלוּם הִכִּינוּ שְׁלֵחַן לְפָנֶיךָ?

“Carshena”; the ministering angels said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, did the gentiles ever offer before You lambs [karim] of the first year [shana], as the Jewish people have offered before You? “Shethar”; have they ever offered before You two turtledoves [shetei torim]? “Admatha”; have they ever built before You an altar of earth [adama]? “Tarshish”; have they ever ministered before You in the priestly vestments, as it is written that on the fourth of the four rows of precious stones contained on the breastplate were: “A beryl [tarshish], an onyx, and a jasper” (Exodus 28:20). “Meres”; have they ever stirred [meirsu] the blood of the offerings before You? “Marsena”; have they ever stirred [meirsu] the meal-offering before You? “Memucan”; have they ever prepared [hekhinu] the table before You, on which the shewbread was placed?

וַיֹּאמֶר מְמוּכָן, תְּנָא: מְמוּכָן זֶה הָמָן. וְלָמָּה נִקְרָא שְׁמוֹ מְמוּכָן – שְׂמוּכָן לְפָנֵי עֲנִיָּה. אִמְרֵי רַב כְּהֵנָּא: מִכָּאן שֶׁהִדְרִיט קוֹפֵץ בְּרִאשׁוֹ.

The verse states: “And Memucan said” (Esther 1:16). A Sage taught in a baraita: Memucan is Haman. And why is Haman referred to as Memucan? Because he was prepared [mukhan] to bring calamity^N upon the Jewish people. Rav Kahana said: From here we see that the common man jumps to the front and speaks first, for Memucan was mentioned last of the king’s seven advisors, and nevertheless he expressed his opinion first.

Commander [*paredashekha*] – פֶּרְדָּשְׁכָּא: The exact etymology of the word is unclear. An alternative form reflected in some manuscripts is *pardakhsha*, which may point to the Middle Persian *parda-kaš*, meaning one who draws the curtain.

NOTES

Crowned with honorary names – מוֹכְתָר בְּנִמוּסוֹ: Alternative texts, including those of the early authorities, state that he was crowned with his names like an ornament, as he was adorned with numerous titles. The Vilna Gaon explains that Mordecai was called *Yehudi*, although he originated from the tribe of Benjamin, as the small tribe of Benjamin was part of the larger Judean empire, and they were exiled with the tribe of Judah. Mordecai's leadership over both tribes of the exiled Judean empire earned him the title *Yehudi*.

לְהִיּוֹת כָּל אִישׁ שׁוֹרֵר בְּבֵיתוֹ” אָמַר רַבָּא:
אֶלְמָלָא אֲגָרוֹת הָרָאשׁוֹנוֹת לֹא נִשְׁתַּיֵּיר
מִשׁוֹנְיָאֵיהֶן שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׂרִיד וּפְלִיט.

The king sent out letters to the people of all his provinces, in which it was written: “That every man shall wield authority in his own house and speak according to the language of his people” (Esther 1:22). Rava said: Were it not for the first letters sent by Ahasuerus, which everybody discounted, there would not have been left among the enemies of the Jewish people, a euphemism for the Jewish people themselves, a remnant or a refugee. Since these first letters were the subject of ridicule, people didn't take the king seriously and did not immediately act upon the directive of the later letters, calling for the Jewish people's destruction.

אָמְרִי: מֵאֵי הָאֵי דְשְׂדִיר לֵן לְהִיּוֹת כָּל
אִישׁ שׁוֹרֵר בְּבֵיתוֹ? פְּשִׁיטָא! אֶפִּילֹשׁ
קַרְחָה בְּבֵיתָהּ פְּרְדָּשְׁכָּא לִיהוּי!

The Gemara continues. The reason that the first letters were not taken seriously is that they who received them would say: What is this that he has sent us: “That every man shall wield authority in his own house”? This is obvious; even a lowly weaver is commander [*paredashekha*]¹ in his house. If so, why then did the king find it necessary to make such a proclamation?

”וַיִּפְקֵד הַמֶּלֶךְ פְּקִידִים” אָמַר רַבִּי: מֵאֵי
דְכֹתִיב “כָּל עָרוֹם יַעֲשֶׂה בְדַעַת וְכַסִּיל
יִפְרֹשׁ אֹלֶת”.

The verse describes Ahasuerus's search for a new wife by stating: “And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the castle” (Esther 2:3). Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi said: What is the meaning of that which is written: “In everything a prudent man acts with knowledge, but a fool unfolds his folly” (Proverbs 13:16)? The verse highlights the difference between two kings' approaches to finding a wife.

”כָּל עָרוֹם יַעֲשֶׂה בְדַעַת” – זֶה דָּוִד,
דְּכֹתִיב “וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ עַבְדָּיו יִבְקֹשׁוּ לְאֹדְנִי
הַמֶּלֶךְ נַעֲרָה בְתוּלָה” כָּל מֵאֵן דְּהוּהָ לִיהָ
בְּרֵתָא – אֵייתָהּ נִהְלִיָּה. “וְכַסִּיל יִפְרֹשׁ
אֹלֶת” – זֶה אַחַשְׁוֵרֶשׁ, דְּכֹתִיב “וַיִּפְקֵד
הַמֶּלֶךְ פְּקִידִים”. כָּל מֵאֵן דְּהוּהָ לִיהָ
בְּרֵתָא – אֵיטְמָרָה מִינָהּ.

“In everything a prudent man acts with knowledge”; this statement is referring to David, who also sought a wife for himself, as it is written: “And his servants said to him, Let there be sought for my lord the king a young virgin” (1 Kings 1:2). Since he sought one maiden, whoever had a daughter brought her to him, for everyone wanted his daughter to be the king's wife. With regard to the continuation of the verse: “But a fool unfolds his folly” (Proverbs 13:16), this statement is referring to Ahasuerus, as it is written: “And let the king appoint officers” to seek out many maidens. Since it became clear that the king would have relations with all of them, but in the end he would choose only one as his bride, whoever had a daughter hid her from him.

”אִישׁ יְהוּדִי הָיָה בְּשׁוֹשַׁן הַבִּירָה” וְגו'
”אִישׁ יְמִינִי”. מֵאֵי קָאָמַר? אֵי לִיחֻסָּא
קָאָתִי – לִיחֻסִּיָּהּ וְאֹיִל עַד בְּנִמְיִן! אֶלָּא
מֵאֵי שְׁנָא הֵנִי?

The verse that initially describes Mordecai states: “There was a certain Jew in Shushan the castle, whose name was Mordecai the son of Jair the son of Shimei the son of Kish, a Benjamite” (Esther 2:5). The Gemara asks: What is it conveying in the verse by saying the names of Mordecai's ancestors? If the verse in fact comes to trace his ancestry, it should continue tracing his lineage back all the way to Benjamin, the founder of his tribe. Rather, what is different about these names that they deserve special mention?

תֵּנָא: כּוֹלֵן עַל שְׁמוֹ נִקְרָאוּ; “בֶּן יְאִיר” –
בֶּן שְׁהַאִיר עֵינֵיהֶם שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתַפְלָתוֹ,
”בֶּן שִׁמְעִי” – בֶּן שְׁשִׁמְעַע אֵל תַּפְלָתוֹ,
”בֶּן קִישׁ” – שְׁהַקִּישׁ עַל שַׁעֲרֵי רַחֲמִים
וְנִפְתְּחוּ לוֹ.

The Gemara answers: A Sage taught the following *baraita*: All of them are names by which Mordecai was called. He was called “the son of Jair” because he was the son who enlightened [*heir*] the eyes of all of the Jewish people with his prayers; “the son of Shimei” because he was the son whom God heard [*shama*] his prayers; “the son of Kish” because he knocked [*hikish*] on the gates of mercy and they were opened to him.

קָרִי לִיהָ יְהוּדִי – אֶלְמָא מִיהוּדָה קָאָתִי,
וְקָרִי לִיהָ יְמִינִי – אֶלְמָא מִבְּנִמְיִן קָאָתִי!
אָמַר רַב נַחְמָן: מְרֻדְכִי מוֹכְתָר בְּנִמוּסוֹ
הָיָה.

The Gemara points out a contradiction: Mordecai is referred to as a “Jew [*Yehudi*],” apparently indicating that he came from the tribe of Judah, but in the continuation of the verse he is called “Benjamite” [*Yemini*], which indicates that he came from the tribe of Benjamin. Rav Nahman said: Mordecai was crowned with honorary names.^N *Yehudi* is one such honorary epithet, due to its allusion to the royal tribe of Judah, but it is not referring to Mordecai's tribal affiliation.

אָמַר רַבָּה בַּר בַּר חַנָּה אָמַר רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן לֹוִי: אָבִיו מִבְּנֵימִן וְאִמּוֹ מִיְהוּדָה. וְרַבְּנָן אָמְרִי: מִשְׁפַּחַת מִתְגַּרְוֹת זֶה בִּזְוִי, מִשְׁפַּחַת יְהוּדָה אֹמְרִי: אֲנֵא גְרִים דְּמִתְגַּלִּיד מִרְדְּכָי, דְּלֵא קְטִלִיה דְּדוּד לְשִׁמְעֵי בֶן גֵּרָא, וּמִשְׁפַּחַת בְּנֵימִן אָמְרִי: מִיְנַאי קָאֲתִי.

רַבָּא אָמַר: כְּנֶסֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל אָמְרָה לְאִידִךְ גִּיסָא: רְאוּ מַה עָשָׂה לִי יְהוּדִי וּמַה שְׂוִלָם לִי יְמִינִי, מַה עָשָׂה לִי יְהוּדִי –

Rabba bar bar Ḥana said that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said an alternative explanation: Mordecai's father was from the tribe of Benjamin, and his mother was from the tribe of Judah. Therefore, he was both a *Yemini*, a Benjamite, and a *Yehudi*, from the tribe of Judah. And the Rabbis say that the dual lineage is due to a dispute: The families competed with each other over which tribe could take credit for Mordecai. The family of Judah would say: I caused the birth of Mordecai, as only because David did not kill Shimei, the son of Gera, when he cursed him (see 11 Samuel, chapter 16) was it possible for Mordecai to be born later from his descendants. And the family of Benjamin said in response: In the end he came from me, as he in fact was from Benjamin's tribe.

Rava said: The Congregation of Israel at the time said this from the opposite perspective, not as a boast, but as a complaint, remarking: See what a Judean has done to me and how a Benjamite has repaid me. What a Judean has done to me is referring to

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דְּלֵא קְטִלִיה דְּדוּד לְשִׁמְעֵי, דְּאִתְגַּלִּיד מִיְנֵיהּ מִרְדְּכָי, דְּמִיקְנֵי בֵיהּ הַמֶּן. וּמַה שְׂוִלָם לִי יְמִינִי – דְּלֵא קְטִלִיה שְׂאוּל לְאַגָּג, דְּאִתְגַּלִּיד מִיְנֵיהּ הַמֶּן, דְּמַצְעֵר לְיִשְׂרָאֵל.

the responsibility of Judah, as David did not kill Shimei, although he was liable to the death penalty. The grave consequences of this failure included that Mordecai was born from him,^N and it was he against whom Haman was jealous, leading Haman to issue a decree against all of the Jewish people. And how a Benjamite has repaid me is referring to the fact that Saul, who was from the tribe of Benjamin, did not kill the Amalekite king Agag immediately, from whom Haman was later born, and he caused suffering to the Jewish people.

רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן אָמַר: לְעוֹלָם מִבְּנֵימִן קָאֲתִי, וְאִמַּאי קָרִי לֵיהּ יְהוּדִי – עַל שׁוּם שְׂכַפְרָא בְּעִבּוּדָה זָרָה. שְׂכַל הַכּוֹפֵר בְּעִבּוּדָה זָרָה נִקְרָא יְהוּדִי, כְּדָכְתִּיב "אִיתִי גּוֹבְרִין יְהוּדָאִין" וְגו'.

Rabbi Yoḥanan said a different explanation of the verse: Actually, Mordecai came from the tribe of Benjamin. Why, then, was he referred to as *Yehudi*? On account of the fact that he repudiated idol worship, for anyone who repudiates idolatry^N is called *Yehudi*. It is understood here in the sense of *yihudi*, one who declares the oneness of God, as it is written: "There are certain Jews [*Yehuda'in*]"^N whom thou hast appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylonia, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not regarded you: They serve not your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up" (Daniel 3:12). These three individuals were in fact Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, who were not all from the tribe of Judah but are referred to as *Yehuda'in* because they repudiated idol worship.

NOTES

That Mordecai was born from him – דְּאִתְגַּלִּיד מִיְנֵיהּ מִרְדְּכָי: The *Rosh Yosef* explains that both the positive and the negative associations concerning Mordecai's lineage were indeed correct. Initially, as the Jewish people were in danger partly due to the actions of Mordecai, they blamed him for their troubles and fought over which tribe should be blamed for Mordecai. After the salvation, the families competed with each other as to who could be credited with Mordecai.

For anyone who repudiates idolatry – שְׂכַל הַכּוֹפֵר בְּעִבּוּדָה זָרָה: This interpretation is derived from the resemblance of the word *Yehudi*, Jew, with *yihudi*, one who has complete faith in the unity and singularity of God. For this reason, the midrash calls one who repudiates idolatry a *Yehudi*. The Maharsha adds that the name

Yehuda, Judah, contains all the letters of God's explicit, ineffable name, and it is therefore used as a term indicating one's belief in God. The Meiri states further that one who repudiates idolatry acts as a complete Jew and is thereby referred to as a *Yehudi*, based on the established principle that if one repudiates idolatry it is considered as if he accepted the entire Torah.

There are certain Jews – גּוֹבְרִין יְהוּדָאִין: According to the text recorded in *Ein Ya'akov*, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azarya were not from the tribe of Judah, as this is a matter of dispute in the Talmud (see *Tosafot*). The Maharsha writes that according to all opinions, the phrase "there are certain Jews" stated here is not meant to associate them with the tribe of Judah, but rather to indicate their commitment to the Jewish faith.