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.

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 11, when indeed the Temple was built.

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.

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.

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 [efkid], 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.

Rava said in response: The seventy years that “are accomplished for Babylonia” were only for being remembered [efkida], 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 seventh 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 [pekad] me to build Him a house in Jerusalem” (Ezra 1:2). The verse makes use of the same root, peh-kaf-dalet, heralding the return to Jerusalem to build the Temple, but not its actual completion.
Apropos its mention of Cyrus, the Gemara states that Rav Nahman bar Rav Hisda 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 complainting to you about Cyrus, who is not acting in accordance with what I intended to do. I had said: “He shall build My House and gather My exiles” (see Isaiah 45:13), 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 Jerusalem, 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, 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 10:3). 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 the ministers, 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 [keved] 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 [keved] 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.

Clever or foolish king – אַתְנוּ וּלְתִפְאָרֶת: 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 (1b). He quelled severe rebellions in Egypt and Babylonia and proved his martialic 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 – מִפְנֵי הַקָּדוֹשׁ. 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 (5a) 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 – כַּרְפַּס. Apparently, the Jewish people ate forbidden foods. Secondly, the Gemara mentions earlier that Ahasuerus held the feast as an act of disbelief in Jerusalem’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 – בִּחָצֵר. 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 freedom, and it indicated that the partygoers wore clothes worthy of free men (Avukah).

There are interesting sifrei Kabbala stating that the students of Rabbi Shimon bar Yehuda were one of the greatest tanna'im and the generation prior to the redaction of the Mishna. Rabbi Shimon was the peerless 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 Yehuda’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 halakha conclusions from the Bible based on the spirit and purpose of the law.

The students of Rabbi Shimon bar Yehudah 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. They said to him: It is because they partook of the feast of that wicked one, 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 your 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, 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 entertainments 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 (barei harei), 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 Hanina said: Cushions (karim) of velvet (pasin).

Rabbi Shimon bar Yehuda – רבי שמעון בר יוחנן. Rabbi Shimon bar Yehuda was one of the greatest tanna'im and the generation prior to the redaction of the Mishna. Rabbi Shimon was the peerless 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.

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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 Nehemya 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. Either, 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 themselves 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 soharot” (Esther 1:6). Rav said: Dar means many rows [darei darei] around. Similarly, soharot is derived from sehor sehor, 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 soharot 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 soharot from sehor, 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 meshanim. 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 [raw]” (Esther 1:7). Rav said: This teaches that each and every guest at the feast was poured well-aged wine that was older [raw] 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.8 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).
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 with zucchinis,” indicating that often a man and his wife engage in similar actions.

The verse states: “On the seventh day,” 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.

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, for we wish to see her without any additional adornments.

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.

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.”
Drunk wine against a thousand men – הַקָּרוֹב נִיטְלָה מִבְּחַמְרֵיהּ

This verse, 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, alpā, 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 Halakhah).

Go to Ammon and Moab – נְבַטְתָּה מִזְבֵּח
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).

Prepared to bring calamity – בֶּן מְזַלְזָל

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.

Drunk wine against a thousand men – 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 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 [paredashekh] – מָסָּבָא. The exact etymology of the word is unclear. An alternative form reflected in some manuscripts is pardaška, which may point to the Middle Persian parda-kaš, meaning one who draws the curtain.

Crowned with honorary names – מַפְרַדַּשְׁכָא. 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.

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.

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 [paredashekh] in his house. If so, why then did the king find it necessary to make such a proclamation?

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”; this is an expression in all serious matters.

The verse initially describes Mordecai states: “There was a certain Jew in Shushan the castle, whose name was Mordecai the son of Jair the son of Shimay 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?

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 Shimay” 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.

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” [Yemin], which indicates that he came from the tribe of Benjamin. Rav Nahman said: Mordecai was crowned with honorary names. 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.
Rabba bar bar Ḥanina 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 Yomni, a Benjamite, and a Yehudi, from the tribe of Benjamin. And the Rabbis say that the dual lineage is due to a dispute: The families competed with each other as to who could be credited with 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 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, 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.

Rabbi Yohanan 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 is called Yehudi. It is understood here in the sense of yehudi, one who declares the oneness of God, as it is written: “There are certain Jews [Yehuda’im] whom thou hast appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylonia, Shadrach, Mesach, 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’im because they repudiated idol worship.

That Mordecai was born from him – אֲנָה יְהוּדִי מִשְׁפָּחוֹת. 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 – כְּדִכְתִיב. This interpretation is derived from the resemblance of the word Yehudi, Jew, with yehudi, 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 – תְּפָאִיךְוִי אֲנָה. According to the text recorded in Ein Yolokv, 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.