Rabbah bar bar Hanah 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 Yeminite, 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 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, 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’im because they repudiated idol worship.

That Mordecai was born from him – 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 – This interpretation is derived from the resonance 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 – The Tosefta: Jerusalem Talmud, Gittin 59b. According to the text recorded in Ein Yohanan, 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.
Incidental to the exposition of the word Yehudi as one who repudiates idolatry, the Gemara relates that when Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi introduced his exposition of the book of Chronicles, he addressed the book of Chronicles and said as follows: All of your words are one, and we know how to expound them. This introduction made reference to the fact that the book of Chronicles cannot always be interpreted literally but requires exposition, as the same individual might be called by various different names, as in the following verse: “And his wife HaciYehudiya bore Jered the father of Gedor, and Heber the father of Soco, and Jekuthiel the father of Zanoah. And these are the sons of Bithiah the daughter of Pharaoh, whom Mered took” (1 Chronicles 4:18).

Why is she, who we are told at the end of the verse was Pharaoh's daughter Bithiah, referred to as Yehudiya? Because she repudiated idol worship, as it is written: “And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself in the river” (Exodus 2:5), and Rabbi Yoḥanan said: She went down to wash and purify herself from the idols of her father’s house.

The Gemara understands that all the names referred to in the verse as children of Pharaoh's daughter refer to Moses, as it will soon explain. The Gemara asks: Pharaoh's daughter bore Moses? But didn't she merely raise him? Rather, it is telling you that with regard to anyone who raises an orphan boy or girl in his house, the verse ascribes him credit as if he gave birth to him.

The Gemara explains how all the names in fact are referring to Moses: “Jered”; this is Moses, and why was he called Jered? Because manna came down [yarad] for the Jewish people in his days. He was also called “Gedor” because he fenced in [gadar] the breaches of the Jewish people. He was called “Heber” because he connected [hibber] the Jewish people to their Father in Heaven. He was called “Soco” because he was for the Jewish people like a shelter [sukkah] and shield. He was called “Jekuthiel” because the Jewish people trusted in God [kiu laEl] in his days. Lastly, he was called “Zanoah” because he caused the iniquities of the Jewish people to be disregarded [hizniyah].

The Gemara notes that the words “father of” appear three times in that same verse: “And his wife Hajejudahia bore Jered the father of Gedor, and Heber the father of Soco, and Jekuthiel the father of Zanoah.” This teaches that Moses was a father to all of the Jewish people in three respects: A father in Torah, a father in wisdom, and a father in prophecy.

The aforementioned verse stated: “And these are the sons of Bithiah the daughter of Pharaoh, whom Mered took.” The Gemara asks: Was Bithiah's husband's name Mered? Wasn’t his name Caleb? Rather, the verse alludes to the reason that Caleb married Bithiah. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said: Let Caleb, who rebelled [marad] against the advice of the spies, come and marry the daughter of Pharaoh, who rebelled against the idols of her father’s home.

The Gemara resumes its explanation of the book of Esther. The verse states with regard to Mordecai: “Who had been exiled from Jerusalem” (Esther 2:6). Rava said: This language indicates that he went into exile on his own, not because he was forced to leave Jerusalem. He knew that he would be needed by those in exile, and therefore he consciously left Jerusalem to attend to the needs of his people.

The verse states: “And he had brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther” (Esther 2:7). She is referred to as “Hadassah” and she is referred to as “Esther.” What was her real name? It is taught in a baraita that the Sages differed in their opinion as to which was in fact her name and which one was a description. Rabbi Meir says: Esther was her real name. Why then was she called Hadassah? On account of the righteous, who are called myrtles [hadassim], and so it states: “And he stood among the myrtles [hahaddassim]” (Zechariah 1:8).
Rabbi Yehuda differs and says: Hadassah was her real name. Why then was she called Esther? Because she concealed [masteret] the truth about herself, as it is stated: “Esther had not yet made known her kindred nor her people” ( Esther 2:20).

Rabbi Nehemya concurs and says: Hadassah was her real name. Why then was she called Esther? This was her non-Hebrew name, for owing to her beauty the nations of the world called her after Istahar, Venus. Ben Azzaï says: Esther was neither tall nor short, but of average size like a myrtle tree, and therefore she was called Hadassah, the Hebrew name resembling that myrtle tree. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korha said: Esther was called Hadassah because she was greenish, having a pale complexion like a myrtle, but a cord of Divine grace was strung around her, endowing her with a beautiful appearance.

The verse initially states with regard to Esther: “For she had neither father nor mother” ( Esther 2:7). Why do I need to be told in the continuation of the verse: “And when her father and mother were dead, Mordecai took her for his own daughter”? Rav Aha said: This repetition indicates that when her mother became pregnant with her, her father died, and when she gave birth to her, her mother died, so that she did not have a mother or a father for even a single day.

The verse states: “And when her father and mother were dead, Mordecai took her for his own daughter” ( Esther 2:7). A tanna taught a baraita in the name of Rabbi Meir: Do not read the verse literally as for a daughter [bat], but rather read it as for a home [bayit]. This indicates that Mordecai took Esther to be his wife. And so it states: “But the poor man had nothing, except one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and reared: And it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his bread, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was like a daughter [kena’at] to him” (t Samuel 12:3). The Gemara questions: Because it lay in his bosom, it “was like a daughter to him”? Rather, the parable in t Samuel referenced the illicit taking of another’s wife, and the phrase should be read: Like a home [ bayit] to him, i.e., a wife. So too, here, Mordecai took her for a home, i.e., a wife.

The verse states: “And the seven maids chosen to be given her out of the king’s house” ( Esther 2:9). Rava said: She would have a separate maid attend her each day, and she would count the days of the week by them, so she was always aware when Shabbat was. The verse continues: “And he advanced her and her maids to the best place in the house of the women.” Rav said: The advancement in the verse signals that he fed her food of Jews, i.e., kosher food.

And Shmuel said an alternative understanding: The advancement was a well-intentioned act in that he fed her pig bounds, thinking she would view it as a delicacy, although in fact they were not kosher.

And Rabbi Yoḥanan said a third understanding: He gave her vegetables, which did not pose a problem with regard to the kosher laws. And so it states with regard to the kindness done for Daniel and his associates: “So the steward took away their food and the wine that they should drink; and gave them vegetables” (Daniel 1:16).

The verse states: “Six months with oil of myrrh” ( Esther 2:12). The Gemara asks: What is “oil of myrrh”? Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba said: It is the aromatic oil called setakt. Rav Huna said: It is a cosmetic oil derived from olives that have not yet reached one-third of their growth. It is similarly taught in a baraita: Rabbi Yehuda says: Anpakim is the oil of olives that have not reached one-third of their growth. And why is it smeared on the body? Because it removes the hair and softens the skin.
Taxes [karga] – מְשַׁמֵּשׁ. From the Middle Persian harg, meaning duty or tribute. In the Talmud it normally refers to a poll tax.

Gifts [pardishenei] – פַּרְדִישְׁנֵי. Apparently from the Middle Iranian paš-dān. It literally means a gift that is given in exchange for a gift, but it can refer to any type of gift.

He went and took advice from Mordecai – מִזְכָּרָי. This is derived from the verse “And when the virgins were gathered together the second time and Mordecai sat in the king’s gate” (Esther 2:19), indicating that the gathering was done due to Mordecai’s advice, as he sat in the king’s gate as one of the king’s advisors (Tha/Duda’im).

The verse states: “In the evening she went, and in the morning she returned” (Esther 2:14). Rabbi Yohanan said: From the implicit criticism of that wicked man, Ahasuerus, who cohabited with many women, we have incidentally learned his praise as well, that he would not engage in sexual relations during the day, but in a more modest fashion at night.

The verse states: “And Esther obtained favor in the sight of all those who looked upon her” (Esther 2:15). Rabbi Elazar said: This teaches that she appeared to each and every one as if she were a member of his own nation, and therefore she obtained favor in the eyes of all. The next verse states: “So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus into his royal house in the tenth month, which is the month Tevet” (Esther 2:16). It was by act of divine providence that Esther was taken to Ahasuerus in a cold winter month, in which the body takes pleasure in the warmth of another body, and therefore she found favor in his eyes.

The verse states: “And the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins” (Esther 2:17). Rav said: This double language indicates that if he wanted to taste in her the taste of a virgin during intercourse, he tasted it, and if he wanted to experience the taste of a non-virgin, he tasted it, and therefore he loved her more than all the other women.

The verse states: “And when the virgins were gathered together the second time and Mordecai sat in the king’s gate” (Esther 2:19). The Gemara explains: The reason Ahasuerus gathered the women together was that he went and took advice from Mordecai as to what he should do to get Esther to reveal her identity. Mordecai said to him: As a rule, a woman is jealous only of the thigh of another woman. Therefore, you should take for yourself additional women. But even so she did not reveal it to him.

The verse states: “And Jacob told Rachel that his brother loved Rachel more than his sister Leah and would not reveal his sister to him” (Genesis 29:23). Mordecai sat in the king’s gate, that he obtained favor with the king, that he was given the honor of sitting there, that he was chosen to act as a minister in the kingdom, that he had been given the title “King’s advisor” (Tha/Duda’im).

The verse states: “He withdraws not His eyes from the righteous” (Psalm 34:17). He withdraws not His eyes from the righteous but with kings upon the throne He establishes them forever, and they are exalted” (Job 36:7)? This teaches that in reward for the modesty shown by Rachel she merited that Saul, who was also modest, should descend from her, and in reward for the modesty shown by Saul, he merited that Esther should descend from him.

The verse states: “And Jacob told Rachel that his brother loved Rachel more than his sister Leah and would not reveal his sister to him” (Genesis 29:23). Mordecai sat in the king’s gate, that he obtained favor with the king, that he was given the honor of sitting there, that he was chosen to act as a minister in the kingdom, that he had been given the title “King’s advisor” (Tha/Duda’im).

The verse states: “And Jacob told Rachel that his brother loved Rachel more than his sister Leah and would not reveal his sister to him” (Genesis 29:23). Mordecai sat in the king’s gate, that he obtained favor with the king, that he was given the honor of sitting there, that he was chosen to act as a minister in the kingdom, that he had been given the title “King’s advisor” (Tha/Duda’im).
Rather, it must be understood that when Jacob met Rachel, he said to her: Will you marry me? She said to him: Yes, but my father, Laban, is a swindler, and you will not be able to outwit him. Jacob allayed her fears, as he said to her that he is her father’s brother, referring not to their familial affiliation but rather to his ability to deal with her father on his level, as if to say: I am his brother in deception. She said to him: But is it really permitted for the righteous to be involved in deception? He said to her: Yes, it is permitted when dealing with deceptive individuals, as the verse states: “With the pure you will show yourself pure, and with the perverse you will show yourself subtle” (1 Samuel 22:27), indicating that one should deal with others in the manner appropriate for their personality.

Jacob then said to her: What is the deception that he will plan to carry out and I should be prepared for? Rachel said to him: I have a sister who is older than I, and he will not marry me off before her, and will try to give you her in my place. So Jacob gave her certain distinguishing signs that she should use to indicate to him that she was actually Rachel and not her sister.

When the wedding night arrived, and Laban planned to switch the sisters, Rachel said to herself: Now my sister will be embarrassed,7 for Jacob will ask for the signs and she will not know them. So she gave them to her. And this is as it is written: “And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it was Leah” (Genesis 29:25). Does this imply by inference that until now she was not Leah? Rather, due to the distinguishing signs that Rachel had given to Leah, he did not know until now, when it was light outside, that she was Leah. Therefore, Rachel merited that Saul should descend from her, due to her act of modesty in not revealing to Jacob that she had shown the signs to Leah.

And what was the modesty shown by Saul? As it is written: “But of the matter of the kingdom, of which Samuel spoke, he did not tell him” (1 Samuel 10:16). Saul expressed his modesty by not revealing Samuel’s promise that he would be king, and thereby merited that Esther would descend from him. Similarly, Rabbi Elazar said: When the Holy One, Blessed be He, assigns greatness to a person, He assigns it to his sons and to his son’s sons for all generations, as it is stated: “He withdraws not his eyes from the righteous; but with kings upon the throne He establishes them forever, and they are exalted” (Job 36:7). And if he becomes arrogant due to this, the Holy One, Blessed be He, lowers him in order to humble him, as it is stated in the next verse: “And if they are bound in chains, and are held in cords of affliction, then He declares unto them their work, and their transgressions, that they have behaved proudly” (Job 36:8-9).

§ The Gemara returns to its exposition of the Megilla. The verse states: “For Esther adhered to the words of Mordecai,” as she did when she was brought up with him” (Esther 2:20). Rabbi Yirmeya said: This teaches that she would show discharges of her menstrual blood to the Sages to inquire whether she was pure or impure. The verse continues: “As she did when she was brought up with him” (Esther 2:20). Rabbah bar Lima said in the name of Rav: This means that she maintained a relationship with Mordecai, as she would arise from the lap of Ahasuerus, immerse herself in a ritual bath, and sit in the lap of Mordecai.

The Megilla continues: “In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king’s gate, two of the king’s chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those that guarded the doors, became angry, and sought to lay hands on the king Ahasuerus” (Esther 2:21). Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: The Holy One, Blessed be He, caused a master to become angry with his servants in order to fulfill the will of a righteous man. And who is this? It is Joseph, as it is stated in the chief butler’s account of how Pharaoh had become angry with him and with the chief baker and sent them to jail: “And there was with us there a young man, a Hebrew” (Genesis 41:12).
Similarly, the Holy One, Blessed be He, also caused servants to become angry with their master in order to perform a miracle for another righteous man. And who is he? It is Mordecai, as with regard to the plot to kill the king it is written: “And the matter became known to Mordecai” (Esther 2:22).

The Gemara explains how the matter became known to him. Rabbi Yohanan said: Bigthan and Teresh were two Tarsians, and they would talk with one another in the Tarsian language. They said: From the day that Esther arrived we have not slept, as Ahaseurus has been with Esther all night, and he has been amusing us with his demands. Come, let us cast poison in the goblet from which he drinks so that he will die. But they did not know that Mordecai was one of those who sat on the Sanhedrin, which convened in the Chamber of Hewn Stone, and that he knew seventy languages, a necessity for members of the Sanhedrin.

While planning their plot, one of them said to the other: But my post and your post are not identical. How can one of us leave our post to succeed in our plot to poison the king? The other one said to him: I will guard both my post and your post. And this is as it is written with regard to the king’s verifying Mordecai’s revelation of the plan to kill the king: “And when inquiry was made of the matter, it was found to be so” (Esther 2:23); it was discovered that they were not both found at their posts.

The verse describes when the rest of the events of the Megilla occurred: “After these events did King Ahaseurus promote Haman” (Esther 3:1). The Gemara asks: After what particular events? Rava said: Only after the Holy One, Blessed be He, created a remedy for the blow and set in place the chain of events that would lead to the miraculous salvation was Haman appointed, setting the stage for the decree against the Jews to be issued.

Rava explains: As Reish Lakish said: The Holy One, Blessed be He, does not strike at the Jewish people unless He has already created a remedy for them beforehand, as it is stated: “When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was uncovered” (Hosea 7:1). But this is not so with regard to the nations of the world. With them, God first strikes them and only afterward does He create a remedy, as it is stated: “And the Lord shall smite Egypt, smiting and healing” (Isaiah 19:22).

The verse states: “But it seemed contemptible in his eyes to lay his hand on Mordecai alone; for they had made known to him the people of Mordecai; wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahaseurus, even the people of Mordecai” (Esther 3:6). Rava said: At first he wanted to lay his hands on Mordecai alone, and in the end on the people of Mordecai. And who were the people of Mordecai? They were the Sages, i.e., Mordecai’s special people. And ultimately he sought to bring harm on all the Jews.

The verse states: “They cast pur, that is, the lot” (Esther 3:7). A Sage taught the following baraita: Once the lot fell on the month of Adar, he, Haman, greatly rejoiced, for he saw this as a favorable omen for the execution of his plans. He said: The lot has fallen for me in the month that Moses died, which is consequently a time of calamity for the Jewish people. But he did not know that not only did Moses die on the seventh of Adar, but he was also born on the seventh of Adar; and therefore it is also a time of rejoicing for the Jewish people.
Haman said to Ahasuerus: “There is [yashnu] one people scattered abroad [mezufar] and dispersed [meforad] among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom; and their laws are diverse from those of every people; nor do they keep the king’s laws; therefore it does not profit the king to tolerate them” (Esther 3:8). Rava said: there was none who knew how to slander like Haman, as in his request to the king he included responses to all the reasons Ahasuerus might be reluctant to destroy the Jewish people. He said to Ahasuerus: Let us destroy them. Ahasuerus said to him: I am afraid of their God, lest He do me as He did to those who stood against them before me. Haman said to him: They have been asleep [yashnu] with respect to the mitzvot, having ceased to observe the mitzvot, and, therefore there is no reason to fear.

Ahasuerus said to him: There are the Sages among them who observe the mitzvot. Haman said to him: They are one people, i.e., they are all the same; nobody observes the mitzvot.

Haman continued with his next response as expressed in the verse: Perhaps you will say that I am making a bold step in your kingdom, i.e., you fear that if an entire nation is wiped out there will be a desolate area in the kingdom. There is no need to worry, though, as they are scattered [mezufar] among the peoples, and eradicating them will not result in the creation of an unpopulated zone in the area where they had once lived. Furthermore, perhaps you will say that there is benefit from them; but this nation is meforad, like this barren mule [preida] that cannot bear offspring, and there is no benefit to be gained from them. And perhaps you will say that there is at least a province that is filled with them. Therefore the verse states that they are scattered “in all the provinces of your kingdom” (Esther 3:8), and they do not inhabit one place.

Haman continued: “And their laws are diverse from those of every people” (Esther 3:8), as they do not eat from our food, nor do they marry from our women, nor do they marry off their women to us. “Nor do they keep the king’s laws” (Esther 3:8). They spend the entire year in idleness, as they are constantly saying: Shehi pehi, an acronym for: It is Shabbat today [Shabbat hayom]; it is Passover today [Pessah hayom].” The verse continues: “Therefore it does not profit the king to tolerate them,” as they eat and drink and scorn the throne. And a proof of this is that even if a fly falls into the cup of one of them, he will throw the fly out and drink the wine it fell into, but if my master the king were to touch the glass of one of them, he would throw it to the ground, and would not drink it, since it is prohibited to drink wine that was touched by a gentle.

Therefore, Haman concluded: “If it please the king, let it be written that they be destroyed, and I will weigh out ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king’s treasuries” (Esther 3:9). Reish Lakish said: It is revealed and known in advance to the One Who spoke and the world came into being, that in the future Haman was going to weigh out shekels against the Jewish people; therefore, He arranged that the Jewish people’s shekels that were given to the Temple preceded Haman’s shekels.

And this is as we learned in a mishna (Shekalim 2a): On the first of Adar the court makes a public announcement about the contribution to the ‘temple of half-shekels’ that will soon be due, and about the need to uproot forbidden mixtures of diverse kinds of seeds from the fields now that they have begun to sprout. Therefore, it turns out that the Jewish people give the shekels on the first of Adar, preceding the date of Haman’s planned destruction of the Jewish people and his own collecting of shekels.
Ahasuerus responded to Haman’s request: “And the king said to Haman: ‘The silver is given to you; the people also, to do with them as it seems good to you’” (Esther 3:11). Rabbi Abba said:

The actions of Ahasuerus and Haman can be understood with a parable; to what may they be compared? To two individuals, one of whom had a mound in the middle of his field and the other of whom had a ditch in the middle of his field, a each one suffering from his own predicament. The owner of the ditch, noticing the other’s mound of dirt, said to himself: Who will give me this mound of dirt suitable for filling in my ditch? I would even be willing to pay for it with money, and the owner of the mound, noticing the other’s ditch, said to himself: Who will give me this ditch for money, so that I may use it to remove the mound of earth from my property?

At a later point, one day, they happened to have met one another. The owner of the mound said to the owner of the mound: Sell me your mound so I can fill in my ditch. The mound’s owner, anxious to rid himself of the excess dirt on his property, said to him: Take it for free; if only you had done so sooner. Similarly, Ahasuerus himself wanted to destroy the Jews. As he was delighted that Haman had similar aspirations and was willing to do the job for him, he demanded no money from him.

The verse states: “And the king removed his ring from his hand” (Esther 3:10). Rabbi Abba bar Kahana said: The removal of Ahasuerus’s ring for the sealing of Haman’s decree was more effective than the forty-eight prophets and the seven prophetesses who prophesied on behalf of the Jewish people. As, they were all unable to return the Jewish people to the right way, but the removal of Ahasuerus’s ring returned them to the right way, since it brought them to repentance.

The Sages taught in a baraita: Forty-eight prophets and seven prophetesses prophesied on behalf of the Jewish people, and they neither subtracted from nor added onto what is written in the Torah, introducing no changes or additions to the mitzvot except for the reading of the Megilla, which they added as an obligation for all future generations.

The parable of a mound and a ditch – Some commentators explain the deep meaning of the parable, that it indicates that although both Ahasuerus and Haman hated the Jews, they did so for different reasons. Ahasuerus saw them as a mound, viewing them as too large and successful, and therefore he wanted to destroy them. Haman, however, saw them as inferior, as a ditch that was lower than the other nations. In this way the parable excellently explains their two approaches (Bina LeIttim; Gvul Binyamin; Hatam Sofen).

The removal of Ahasuerus’s ring was more effective – Haman’s decree alone did not overly concern the Jews, as they were already aware that they had enemies. However, when the king agreed to give Haman his full backing and allowed him to do as he saw fit, the removal of the ring proved to the Jews that they were facing a grave calamity (Maharsha).

Forty-eight prophets – Rashi provides a different list of the prophets from that of Rabbeinu Hananel, whose opinion is accepted by the Sefer Halakhot Gedolot and most later authorities. According to Rabbeinu Hananel, the list includes, among others: Moses; Aaron; Asir; Eldana, and Abibaasha, who were sons of Korah; Joanah; Pinhas; Samuel; Eldana, his father; Gad; Nathan; Asaph; Heman; Jeduthun; David; Ahiah the Shilonite; Shemaiah; Iddo the seer; Azariah, the son of Oded; Hanani; Jehu, the son of Hanani; Eliahu; Micahia, the son of Zephaniah; Jeremia; Isaiah; Ezekiel; Daniel; Baruch, the son of Neriah; Seraiah; Mordecai; Bizhan; Hosea; Amos; Micah; Joel; Nahum; Haggai; Zechariah; and Malachi.

Furthermore, there are a number of disputes in connection with the actual lists, as Rashi himself mentions that he is certain about only forty-six of the prophets, and is unsure who the last two prophets are. Although Rashi mentions David and Solomon in the list, the Sefer Halakhot Gedolot does not. There is also a discussion about Daniel, as the Gemara says that he is not counted among the prophets. Others remove Mordecai and Seraiah from the list and in their place some list Shem and Eber (Asara Molamonot); Eldad and Medad (Ramat Shmuel); Elazar the son of Aaron, and Elihu the son of Barachel (Ture Even); Chenaniah, chief of the Levites; the elder prophet from Bethel; Zechariah, who had understanding in the vision of God; and Hanan the son of Igidalah (Rav Yaakov Emden). In the work Zikkaron BaSefer it is suggested to include Bari, the father of Hosea, to whom a prophecy is attributed in the book of Hosea.

Neither subtracted from nor added – Rashi explains that although there were other rabbinically ordained positive mitzvot, such as the obligation to light Hanukkah candles, they were enacted after prophecy ceased, while Purim was established toward the end of the prophetic era. See the Rambam’s discussion with regard to the prohibition against a prophet establishing halakha based on prophecy (Sefer HaM adda, Hilkhot Yesodei HaTorah 9:1–2). The Ran elaborates on Rashi’s comment, explaining that although there are numerous other rabbinic enactments, both positive mitzvot and prohibitions, they are all intended to safeguard Torah law, unlike reading the Megilla, which was enacted as an independent mitzva by rabbinic law. Some note that the Sefer Halakhot Gedolot lists reading the Megilla as one of the 613 mitzvot, seemingly viewing it as an actual addition to the Torah (Zikron Terua). Conversely, the Rambam simply explains that the prophets did not add public readings, other than reading the Megilla.