

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

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.

רַבָּא אָמַר: כְּנִסְתָּ יִשְׂרָאֵל אָמְרָה לְאִידֶךָ גְּסִיָּא: רְאוּ מַה עָשָׂה לִי יְהוּדִי וּמַה שְׂוִילִים לִי יְמִינִי, מַה עָשָׂה לִי יְהוּדִי –

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 מִיְנַאי מִרְדְּכָי, דְּמִיקְנֵי בֵיהַ הֶמֶן. וּמַה שְׂוִילִים לִי יְמִינִי – דְּלֵא קְטִלִיה שְׂאוּל לְאַגָּג, דְּאִתְגַּלִּיד מִיְנַאי הֶמֶן, 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 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 לִיהַ יְהוּדִי – עַל שׁוּם שְׂכַפְרָא בְּעִבּוּדָה זָרָה. שְׂכַל הַכּוֹפֵר בְּעִבּוּדָה זָרָה נִקְרָא יְהוּדִי, כְּדָבָרֵיב "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 מִיְנַאי 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.

All of your words are one – **כָּל דְּבָרֶיךָ אֶחָד**: This is written here primarily to indicate the previously stated idea that the term *Yehudi* is assigned to one who repudiates idolatry. However, there is a secondary indication as well, related to the exegesis of the names, as stated earlier with regard to the exegesis of “the son of Jair, the son of Shimei.” In general, as the book of Chronicles provides a large amount of information, specifically with regard to what would seem to be insignificant facts about genealogy, coupled with numerous divergences from the other books of the Bible, the Sages interpreted a large amount of the verses symbolically or euphemistically. This idea goes so far with some commentaries that a number of midrashic works seem to maintain that with regard to the book of Chronicles, homiletic interpretation may take precedence over its simple meaning (see Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Chajes).

To wash herself from the idols of her father’s house – **לְרַחוֹץ מִגִּילּוּלֵי בֵּית אָבִיהָ**: The *Turei Even* explains that this was not immersion for the sake of conversion; rather, her abandoning her father’s idols is symbolically called immersion, for she purified herself from the impurity of idol worship.

Let Caleb who rebelled...come – **יָבֵא כְּלֵב שְׁמֵרָד**: The *ge’onim* understood that this midrash interprets the names of Caleb’s children as well, for the Caleb mentioned in the book of Chronicles is Caleb, the son of Hezron, while the Caleb who was one of the spies was Caleb, the son of Jephunneh.

That he went into exile on his own – **שָׁגְלָה מֵעַצְמוֹ**: The Maharsha explains that the repetitious language of the verse: “Who had been exiled... with the exiles that had been exiled” (Esther 2:6) indicates that he went into exile alone and later joined up with the other exiles (see *Tosafot*).

רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן פִּזִּי כִּי הָיָה פֹתַח בְּדַבְרֵי הַיָּמִים אָמַר הֵכִי כָּל דְּבָרֶיךָ אֶחָד הֵם, וְאֵנוּ יוֹדְעִין לְדוֹרְשָׁן. וְאִשְׁתּוֹ הִיְהוּדִיָּה יִלְדָה אֶת יֶרֶד אָבִי גְדוֹר וְאֶת חֶבֶר אָבִי שׁוֹכֹ וְאֶת יְקוּתִיאֵל אָבִי זְנוּחַ וְאֵלֶּה בְנֵי בִּתְיָהּ בַּת פְּרַעֲהָ אֲשֶׁר לָקַח מֵרֵד.”

אֲמַאי קָרִי לָהּ “יְהוּדִיָּה” – עַל שׁוֹם שְׁכַפְרָהּ בַּעֲבוּדָה זָרָה, דְּכָתוּב “וַתֵּרֶד בַּת פְּרַעֲהָ לְרַחוֹץ עַל הַיְאֹר”, וְאָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: שִׁדְרָהּ לְרַחוֹץ מִגִּילּוּלֵי בֵּית אָבִיהָ.

“יִלְדָה”? וְהָא רַבּוּנֵי רַבִּיתֶיהָ! לֹאמַר לָךְ שְׁכַל הַמְגִדֵּל יִתּוּם וְיִתּוּמָה בְּתוֹךְ בֵּיתוֹ מַעֲלָה עָלָיו הַכְּתוּב כִּאִילוּ יִלְדוּ.

“יֶרֶד” – זֶה מֹשֶׁה, וְלָמָּה נִקְרָא שְׁמוֹ יֶרֶד – שִׁדְרָה לָהֶם לְיִשְׂרָאֵל מִן בְּיָמָיו. “גְּדוֹר” – שְׁגָרָה פְּרֻצוֹתֶיהָן שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל, “חֶבֶר” – שְׁחִיבָר אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל לְאַבְיָהֶן שֶׁבְּשָׁמַיִם. “שׁוֹכֹ” – שְׁנַעֲשֵׂה לָהֶם לְיִשְׂרָאֵל כְּסוּכָה. “יְקוּתִיאֵל” – שְׁקוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְאֵל בְּיָמָיו. “זְנוּחַ” – שְׁהוֹנַח עוֹנוֹתֶיהֶן שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל.

“אָבִי אָבִי אָבִי” – אָב בְּתוֹרָה, אָב בְּחֻמְרָה, אָב בְּנְבִיאוֹת.

“וְאֵלֶּה בְנֵי בִּתְיָהּ... אֲשֶׁר לָקַח מֵרֵד” וְכִי מֵרֵד שְׁמוֹ? וְהֵלֵא כְּלֵב שְׁמוֹ! אָמַר הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: יָבֵא כְּלֵב שְׁמֵרָד בַּעֲצַת מְרַגְלִים, וַיִּשָּׂא אֶת בַּת פְּרַעֲהָ שְׁמֵרָדָה בְּגִילּוּלֵי בֵּית אָבִיהָ.

“אֲשֶׁר הִגְלָה מִירוּשָׁלַיִם”. אָמַר רַבָּא: שָׁגְלָה מֵעַצְמוֹ.

“וַיְהִי אוֹמֵן אֶת הַדָּסָה” קָרִי לָהּ הַדָּסָה, וְקָרִי לָהּ אֶסְתֵּר. תִּנְיָא, רַבִּי מֵאִיר אוֹמֵר: אֶסְתֵּר שְׁמָהּ, וְלָמָּה נִקְרָא שְׁמָהּ הַדָּסָה – עַל שֵׁם הַצְּדִיקִים שְׁנִקְרָאוּ הַדָּסִים, וְכֵן הוּא אוֹמֵר “וְהוּא עוֹמֵד בֵּין הַהַדָּסִים”.

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,ⁿ 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 *HaYehudiyya* 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 *Yehudiyya*? 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.ⁿ

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 [*sukka*] and shield. He was called “Jekuthiel” because the Jewish people trusted in God [*kivu 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 Hajehudijah 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, comeⁿ 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,ⁿ 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.

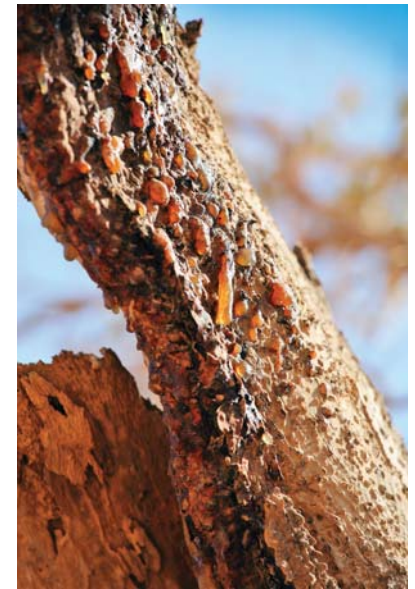
The verse states: “And he had brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther” (Esther 2:7). She is referred to as “Hadassah” and she is referred to as “Esther.” What was her real name? It is taught in a *baraita* that the Sages differed in their opinion as to which was in fact her name and which one was a description: 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 [*hahadassim*]” (Zechariah 1:8).

Istahar – אִסְתָּהַר: Possibly from the Middle Persian word *astar*, meaning star. Others explain that *Istahar* is an Aramaic word meaning moon.

Setakt – סֵטַקְתִּי: From the Greek *στακτή*, *staktē*, referring to a fragrant oil that is derived from the resin of the myrrh tree, such as the *Commiphora myrrha*.



Common myrrh trees



Resin from a myrrh tree

Anpakinson – אֲנַפְקִינוֹן: From the Greek *ὀμφάκινον*, *omphakinon*. One meanings of this word is oil from unripe olives.

NOTES

Do not read: For a daughter, but rather: For a home – אֵל תִּקְרִי לְבַת אֵלָא לְבַיְתָא. The *Ginzei HaMelekh* explains that this is derived from the words “took her,” which indicate that Mordecai took Esther for himself. The *Nezer HaKodesh* and Rabbi Yoshiya Pinto explain that it is derived from the fact that the term *took* usually indicates taking in marriage. The *Manot HaLevi* explains at length that Esther was not yet Mordecai’s actual wife. Mordecai intended to marry her, though, and took her in for her to later become his wife.

Pig [dahazirei] hinds – קְדֵלֵי דְחֻזִירֵי: The *Arukh* has a slightly different text, *dehizri*, meaning heads of radishes and lettuce.

רבי יהודה אומר: הדסה שמה, ולמה נקראת שמה אסתר – על שם שהיתה מסתרת דבריה, שנאמר “אין אסתר מגדת את עמה” וגו’.

רבי נחמיה אומר: הדסה שמה, ולמה נקראת אסתר – שהיו אומות העולם קורין אותה על שום אסתהר. בן עזאי אומר: אסתר לא ארוכה ולא קצרה היתה אלא בינונית, כהדסה. רבי יהושע בן קרחה אומר: אסתר ירקרקת היתה, וחיט של חסד משיג עליה.

“כי אין לה אב ואם” ויבמות אביה ואמה, למה לי? אומר רב אחא: עיבורתה – מת אביה, ילדתה – מתה אמה.

“ויבמות אביה ואמה לקחה מרדכי לו לבת” תנא משום רבי מאיר: אל תקרי “לבת” אלא לבית, וכן הוא אומר “ולדש אין כל כי אם כבשה אחת קטנה אשר קנה ויחיה ותגדל עמו ועם בניו יחדו מפתו תאכל ומכוסו תשתה ויבחיכו וישכבו ותהי לו כבת” משום דבחיכו ותשכבו הוות ליה (לבית) אלא (לבית) – הכי נמי לבית.

“ואת שבע הנערות” וגו’. אומר רבא: שהיתה מונה בהן ימי שבת. וישנה ואת נערותיה” וגו’. אומר רב: שהאכילה מאכל יהודי.

ושמואל אומר: שהאכילה קדלי דחזירי.

ורבי יוחנן אומר: זרעונים, וכן הוא אומר “ויהי המלצר נושא את פת בגם... ונותן להם זרעונים”.

“שישה חדשים בשמן המור”, מאי שמן המור? רבי חייא בר אבא אומר: סטפת, רב הונא אומר שמן זית שלא הביא שלישי. תנא, רבי יהודה אומר: אנפקינון – שמן זית שלא הביא שלישי, ולמה סבין אותו – שמשייר את השיער ומעדרן את הפשר.

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,¹ Venus. Ben Azzai 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].^N** 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 [kevat] to him” (II Samuel 12:3).** The Gemara questions: **Because it lay in his bosom, it “was like a daughter to him”?** Rather, the parable in II 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 hinds,^N** thinking she would view it as a delicacy, although in fact they were not kosher.

And Rabbi Yohanan 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*.¹ 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: *Anpakinson*¹ 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.

LANGUAGE

Taxes [*karga*] – כָּרְגָא: From the Middle Persian *harg*, meaning duty or tribute. In the Talmud it normally refers to a poll tax.

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

NOTES

He went and took advice from Mordecai – אֵייל שקל עצה – מְמַרְדְּכֵי: 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 (*Re’ah Duda’im*).

“בַּעֲרֵב הָיָא בָּאָה וּבְבֹקֶר הָיָא שְׁבָה” אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: מִגְּנוּתוֹ שָׁל אֹתוֹ רְשָׁע לְמַדְנֵי שְׁבָחוּ, שְׁלָא הָיָה מְשַׁמֵּשׁ מְשֻׁתָּו בְּיוֹם.

The verse states: “In the evening she went, and in the morning she returned” (Esther 2:14). Rabbi Yoḥanan 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.

“וַתְּהִי אֶסְתֵּר נֹשְׂאֵת חֵן” אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר: מְלֻמָּד שְׁלֹכַל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד נִדְמָתָהּ לוֹ בְּאוֹמְתוֹ. “וַתִּלְקַח אֶסְתֵּר אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחְשֵׁרוּשׁ אֶל בֵּית מְלִכּוּתוֹ בְּחֹדֶשׁ הָעֵשְׂרִי הוּא חֹדֶשׁ טִבְת” – יֵרַח שְׁנֵינָה גוֹף מִן הַגּוֹף.

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.

“וַיֶּאֱהָב הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת אֶסְתֵּר מִכָּל הַנְּשִׂימַי וַתִּשָּׂא חֵן וְחֶסֶד לְפָנָיו מִכָּל הַבְּתוּלוֹת.” אָמַר רַב: בִּיקֵשׁ לְטַעוֹם טַעַם בְּתוּלָה – טַעַם, טַעַם בְּעוּלָה – טַעַם.

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.

“וַיַּעַשׂ הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁתֵּה גְדוֹל” עֲבַד מִשְׁתֵּיָא – וְלֹא גְלִיָּא לִיָּהּ, דְּלִי כְּרָגָא – וְלֹא גְלִיָּא לִיָּהּ, שְׁדָר פְּרָדִישְׁנֵי – וְלֹא גְלִיָּא לִיָּהּ.

The verse states: “Then the king made a great feast for all his princes and his servants, even Esther’s feast” (Esther 2:18). The Gemara explains that this was part of an attempt to have Esther reveal her true identity. He made a great feast in her honor, but she did not reveal her identity to him. He lowered the taxes [*karga*]¹ in her name, but still she did not reveal it to him. He sent gifts [*pardishenei*]¹ to the ministers in her name, but even so she did not reveal it to him.

“וּבְהַקְבֵץ בְּתוּלוֹת שְׁנִית” וְגוֹ. אֵייל שְׁקַל יַעֲצָה מִמְּרַדְּכֵי. אָמַר: אֵין אִשָּׁה מִתְקַנָּאָה אֶלָּא בְּיֹרֵךְ חֲבִירָתָהּ – וְאֶפִּילוּ דְּכִי לֹא גְלִיָּא לִיָּהּ, דְּכִתִּיב “אֵין אֶסְתֵּר מִגְּדַת מוֹלְדָתָהּ” וְגוֹ.

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 Mordecaiⁿ 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 her origins to him, as it is written: “Esther had not yet made known her kindred nor her people” (Esther 2:20).

אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר: מַאי דְּכִתִּיב

§ Rabbi Elazar said: What is the meaning of that which is written:

Perek I

Daf 13 Amud b

NOTES

He withdraws not His eyes from the righteous – לֹא יִרְע – מַצְדִּיק עֵינָיו: Some explain that this means that the Holy One, Blessed be He, watches over not only the righteous but also their descendants (see *Sefat Emet*).

Was he her father’s brother – וְכִי אָחִי אָבִיָּהּ הוּא – The *Turei Even* explains that although the term brother is used many times in the Bible to reflect a relationship that isn’t necessarily one of a blood brother, the fact that the verse states: “That he was her father’s brother, and that he was Rebecca’s son” indicates that the term “brother” must be teaching something else here. As the verse explains the exact relationship, i.e., that he is Rebecca’s son, the mention of “her father’s brother” must be an indication that Jacob is similar to him.

“לֹא יִרְע מַצְדִּיק עֵינָיו” בְּשֹׁכֵר צְנִיעוּת שְׁהִיתָהּ בַּהּ בְּרַחֵל – זְכָתָהּ וַיֵּצֵא מִמֶּנָּה שְׂאוּל, וּבְשֹׁכֵר צְנִיעוּת שְׁהִיָּהּ בּוּ בְּשֹׁאוּל – זְכָה וַיֵּצֵאת מִמֶּנּוּ אֶסְתֵּר.

“He withdraws not His eyes from the righteous;ⁿ 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.

וּמַאי צְנִיעוּת הִיָּתָה בַּהּ בְּרַחֵל – דְּכִתִּיב “וַיַּגֵּד יַעֲקֹב לְרַחֵל כִּי אָחִי אָבִיָּהּ הוּא.” וְכִי אָחִי אָבִיָּהּ הוּא? וְהֲלֹא בֶן אָחוֹת אָבִיָּהּ הוּא!

The Gemara explains: What was the modesty shown by Rachel? It is as it is written: “And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father’s brother, and that he was Rebecca’s son” (Genesis 29:12). It may be asked: Was he, Jacob, in fact her father’s brother?ⁿ But wasn’t he the son of her father’s sister?

Now my sister will be embarrassed – **הַשְׁתָּא מִיִּכְסָפָא** – **אֲחֵתָאִי**: Many wonder where the modesty is in Rachel's actions, as it seemed that she gave Leah the signs out of a desire to prevent her sister from being embarrassed. One of the many explanations is that her modesty was expressed in her not revealing to her father that Jacob had secretly shown her signs to prevent the switch. Had she done so, Laban may not have tried to have Leah take her place (*Iyyun Ya'akov*).

For Esther adhered to the words of Mordecai – **וְאֵת – מֵאֲמַר מְרֻדְכֵי אֶסְתֵּר עוֹשָׂה**: Due to the fact that the verse states: "The words of Mordecai," rather than: The commands of Mordecai, it is understood that she followed the *halakhot* that Mordecai taught in his public lectures with regard to marriage, as well as other *halakhot* (Rabbi Yoshiya Pinto; *Iyyun Ya'akov*; see also *Targum*).

אֵלָּא אָמַר לָהּ: מִיִּנְסָבָא לִי? אָמְרָה לִיהּ: אֵינָּן. מִיָּהּ, אָבָא רְמָאָה הוּא, וְלֹא יִכְלֹת לִיהּ. אָמַר לָהּ אַחֵיו אֲנָא בְּרַמְאוֹת. אָמְרָה לִיהּ: וְמִי שְׂרִי לְצַדִּיקִי לְסַגּוּי בְּרַמְוִיתָא? אָמַר לָהּ: אֵינָּן, "עַם נִבְרַתְתְּבָר וְעַם עֲקֵשׁ תִּתְפַּל".

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 alleviated 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" (11 Samuel 22:27), indicating that one should deal with others in the manner appropriate for their personality.

אָמַר לָהּ: וּמֵאִי רַמְוִיתָא? אָמְרָה לִיהּ: אֵיתִי לִי אַחֵתָא דְקָשִׁישָׁא מִיָּנָא, וְלֹא מְנַסֵּיב לִי מִקְמָהּ. מָסַר לָהּ סִימְנִים.

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.

כִּי מָטָא לִילֵיאָא, אָמְרָה: הַשְׁתָּא מִיִּכְסָפָא אַחֵתָאִי, מְסַרְתִּינְהוּ נִיְהֵלָהּ. וְהֵינָּן דְכַתְּיב "וַיְהִי בַבֶּקֶר וְהִנֵּה הִיא לְאֵה", מְכַלֵּל דְעַד הַשְׁתָּא לֹא לְאֵה הִיא?! אֵלָּא! מִתּוֹךְ סִימְנֵי שְׂמֹסְרָה רַחֵל לְלֵאָה לֹא הָוָה יָדַע עַד הַשְׁתָּא. לְפִיכֵךְ זָכְתָהּ וַיֵּצֵא מִמֶּנָּה שְׂאוּל.

When the wedding night arrived, and Laban planned to switch the sisters, Rachel said to herself: Now my sister will be embarrassed,ⁿ for Jacob will ask her 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.

וּמָה צְנִיעוּת הִיתָה בְּשְׂאוּל – דְכַתְּיב "וְאֵת דְבַר הַמְּלוּכָה לֹא הִגִּיד לוֹ אִשְׁרָא אָמַר שְׂמֹאֵל" – זָכָה וַיֵּצֵאת מִמֶּנּוּ אֶסְתֵּר. וְאִמְרוּ רַבֵּי אֶלְעָזָר: בְּשֶׁהִקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא פוֹסֵק גְּדוּלָה לְאָדָם – פוֹסֵק לְבָנָיו וְלְבָנֵי בָנָיו עַד סוֹף כָּל הַדּוֹרוֹת, שְׂנַאֲמַר "וַיּוֹשִׁיבֵם לְנֶצַח וַיִּגְבְּהוּ" (וגו') וְאִם הִגִּים דְעֵתוֹ – הִקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְשַׁפִּילוֹ, שְׂנַאֲמַר "וְאִם אֶסְוִרִים בְּזֻקִים" וגו'.

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).

"וְאֵת מֵאֲמַר מְרֻדְכֵי אֶסְתֵּר עוֹשָׂה". אָמַר רַבֵּי יִרְמְיָהּ: שְׁהִיתָה מְרָאָה דַם נִדָּה לְחַכְמִים. כְּאִשְׁרָא הִיתָה בְּאִמְנָה אֵתוֹ. אָמַר רַבָּה בַר לִימָא (מְשֻׁמֵּיהּ דְרַב) שְׁהִיתָה עוֹמֶדֶת מִחִיקוֹ שָׁל אַחְשָׁרוּשׁ וְטוֹבְלַת וַיּוֹשְׁבַת בְּחִיקוֹ שָׁל מְרֻדְכֵי.

S The Gemara returns to its exposition of the Megilla. The verse states: "For Esther adhered to the words of Mordecai,"ⁿ 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). Rabba 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.

בְּיָמִים הָהֵם וּמְרֻדְכֵי יוֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר הַמְּלָךְ קִצְף בְּגִתָּן וְתִרְשָׁא אָמַר רַבֵּי חִיָּיא בַר אָבָא אָמַר רַבֵּי יוֹחָנָן: הִקְצִיף הַקְּדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֲדוֹן עַל עַבְדָּיו לְעִשׂוֹת רְצוֹן צַדִּיק, וּמִנּוּ – יוֹסֵף, שְׂנַאֲמַר "וְאִשָּׁם אֲתָנּוּ נַעַר עִבְרָיִי" וגו'.

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).

BACKGROUND

Tarsians and the Tarsian language – טַרְסַיִם וְלָשׁוֹן טַרְסִי: It is not known what language was spoken in Tarsus in that period. However, since it was previously Hittite territory it can be assumed that the Tarsian language was a dialect of the Hittite language. As the Tarsian language is not similar to most of the other languages spoken in the Persian Empire, speakers of Tarsian were able to assume that no one would understand their conversation.

NOTES

My post and your post – משמרתִי ומשמרתֶךָ: Rabbeinu Ḥananel explains simply that they were not at watch at the same hour, as each one took a shift for a different part of the night. Some write that each wanted to assure himself that the other would not betray him, so they changed their shifts in order to cause both to be punished if they were caught (Rannu LeYa'akov; see Rashi and Rav Ya'akov Emden).

The Holy One, Blessed be He, created a remedy for the blow – בָּרָא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא רְפוּאָה לְמַכָּה: Although this decree came about only due to the sins of the Jewish people, and God doesn't usually show favoritism by providing unfair benefits for the undeserving, He still prepared a remedy for the Jewish people, as He knows that when the Jews are faced with calamity they repent and return to Him. Therefore, the decree was in fact only a warning and a test to see their reaction, and God took care that they would not be hurt from it by preparing a remedy for the blow (Gevul Binyamin).

He did not know that... he was also born on the seventh of Adar – לֹא הָיָה יוֹדֵעַ שֶׁבִּשְׁבַעַת בְּאָדָר... נוֹלַד: Apparently, Haman was aware of the date of Moses' death, as it can be clearly calculated from the Torah. The Torah states that there were thirty days of mourning for Moses (Deuteronomy 34:8), followed by three days of preparation for the journey into the land of Israel (Joshua 1:13), whereupon the people crossed the Jordan, on the tenth of Nisan (Joshua 4:19). The death of Moses was consequently on the seventh of Adar. Although it is not explicit in the Torah that Moses was born on the same date as he died, it is known through the tradition that the Holy One, Blessed be He, completes the years of the righteous. Therefore, Haman was aware of the date of Moses' death, but not of his birth (Maharsha).

עֲבָדִים עַל אֲדוֹמֵהוֹן לַעֲשׂוֹת נֶס לְצַדִּיק, וּמִנּוּ – מֵרַדְכֵי, דְּכָתִיב "וַיִּוְדַע הַדָּבָר לְמֵרַדְכֵי" וְגו'.

אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: בְּגִתָּן וְתֵרֶשׁ שְׁנֵי טַרְסַיִם הָיוּ, וְהָיוּ מְסַפְּרִין בְּלָשׁוֹן טַרְסִי, וְאוֹמְרִים מִיּוֹם שֶׁבָּאָתָּה זֶה לֹא רָאִינוּ שִׁינָה בְּעֵינֵינוּ, בֵּא וְנִטִּיל אֶרֶס בְּסִפְלֵךְ כְּדֵי שְׂיָמוּת. וְהֵן לֹא הָיוּ יוֹדְעִין כִּי מֵרַדְכֵי מִיּוֹשִׁבֵי הַשְּׂפָת הַגְּזִיזִת הָיָה וְהָיָה יוֹדֵעַ בְּשִׁבְעִים לָשׁוֹן.

אָמַר לוֹ: וְהֲלֹא אֵין מִשְׁמֶרְתִּי וּמִשְׁמֶרְתֶּךָ שְׂוָה? אָמַר לוֹ: אֲנִי אֶשְׁמֹר מִשְׁמֶרְתִּי וּמִשְׁמֶרְתֶּךָ. וְהֵינִי דְּכָתִיב "וַיִּבְקֶשׁ הַדָּבָר וַיִּמְצָא" – שֶׁלֹּא נִמְצָאוּ בְּמִשְׁמֶרְתָּן.

"אַחַר הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה", (אַחַר מַאי) אָמַר רַבָּא: אַחַר שֶׁבָּרָא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא רְפוּאָה לְמַכָּה.

דְּאָמַר רֵישׁ לְקִישׁ: אֵין הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מַכָּה אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲלָא אִם בֵּן בּוֹרָא לְהֵם רְפוּאָה תַּחֲיִלָּה, שְׁנֵאֲמַר "כִּרְפְּאֵי לְיִשְׂרָאֵל וְנִגְלָה עֵזוֹן אֶפְרַיִם" – אֲבָל אוֹמוֹת הָעוֹלָם אֵינוּ בְּנֵי מַכָּה אוֹתָן וְאַחַר כֵּן בּוֹרָא לְהֵם רְפוּאָה, שְׁנֵאֲמַר "וְנִגַּף ה' אֶת מִצְרַיִם נִגְוָף וְרְפוּאָה".

"וַיִּבּוּ בְּעֵינָיו לְשַׁלּוֹחַ יָד בְּמֵרַדְכֵי לְבַדּוֹ, אָמַר רַבָּא בְּתַחֲיִלָּה בְּמֵרַדְכֵי לְבַדּוֹ, וְלִבְסוּף בְּעַם מֵרַדְכֵי, וּמִנּוּ – רַבְּנָן, וְלִבְסוּף בְּכָל הַיְהוּדִים.

"הַפִּיל פּוֹר הוּא הַגּוֹרֵל" תָּנָא: כִּיּוֹן שֶׁנִּפְלַ פּוֹר בְּחוֹדֵשׁ אָדָר שְׂמַח שְׂמַחָה גְדוֹלָה, אָמַר: נִפְל לִי פּוֹר בְּיָרַח שְׂמִית בּו מִשָּׁה. וְלֹא הָיָה יוֹדֵעַ שֶׁבִּשְׁבַעַת בְּאָדָר מֵת וּבִשְׁבַעַת בְּאָדָר נוֹלַד.

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.^B They said: From the day that Esther arrived we have not slept, as Ahasuerus has been with Esther all night, and he has been busying 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 then can one of us leave our position to succeed in our plot to poison the king? The other one said to him: I will guard both my post and your post.^N 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 Ahasuerus 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^N 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 Ahasuerus, 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,^N and therefore it is also a time of rejoicing for the Jewish people.

They have been asleep [*yashnu*] with respect to the mitzvot – ישנו מן המצוות: The fact that the unusual term *yeshno* is used in place of the common form *yesh* is interpreted to indicate *yashnu*, meaning: They have been asleep with respect to their observance (Maharsha).

They are one people – עם אחד הן: Some write that although the Sages were performing the mitzvot, nevertheless, they were faulted for others' non-observance, as Jews are one people and are responsible for one another (*Manot HaLevi*).

It is Shabbat today, it is Passover today – בשבת ה"י פה: Most of the commentaries explain this as initials indicating: Today is Shabbat, or *Shavuot*; today is Passover. There is also a secondary meaning in the words themselves, which refer literally to waiting and idleness.

He arranged that the Jewish people's shekels preceded – הקדים שקליהן: The shekels are needed for the communal offerings of the upcoming year, which begins on the first of Nisan, and therefore it would be sufficient to begin collecting at the end of the month of Adar. However, the Sages decreed that the collection begin from the beginning of Adar, and in this merit they were saved from Haman's decree that was to be established with shekels (Maharsha).

Half-shekels – שקלים: The half-shekel was an annual contribution to the Temple. All male Jews were required to annually contribute a half-shekel to the Temple before the first day of the month of Nisan, which was the first day of the new Temple year. This money was used to cover the expenses of the Temple, which included buying communal offerings and paying for repairs, and to maintain and repair the walls of Jerusalem. From the beginning of the month of Adar, notice was served to the public that the half-shekel contributions would soon be due. The exact value of the half-shekel changed several times over the course of the generations. Nowadays, toward the end of the Fast of Esther on the thirteenth of Adar, before the beginning of the holiday of Purim, people contribute to charity in commemoration of the half-shekel. The *halakhot* of the half-shekel contributions made to the Temple are discussed in tractate *Shekalim*.

BACKGROUND

Like this barren mule that cannot bear offspring – כפרדה זו: שאינה עושה פירות: The offspring of a female horse and a male donkey is a mule, or *Equus mulus*. Horses and donkeys are different species with different numbers of chromosomes. A mule can be either male or female, but even though externally it appears to have fully formed sexual organs, it is infertile because it has sixty-three chromosomes, a mixture of the horse's sixty-four and the donkey's sixty-two. The different structure and number usually prevents the chromosomes from pairing up properly and creating viable embryos, rendering most mules infertile.

ישנו עם אחד" אמר רבא: ליקא דידע לישנא בישא כהמן. אמר ליה: תא ניקלינהו! אמר ליה: מסתפינא מאלהיו, דלא ליעביד בי בדעבד בקמא. אמר ליה ישנו מן המצוות.

Haman said to Ahasuerus: "There is [*yeshno*] one people scattered abroad [*mefuzar*] 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 to 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,^N having ceased to observe the mitzvot, and, therefore there is no reason to fear.

אמר ליה: אית בהו רבנן. אמר ליה: עם אחד הן.

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

שמא תאמר קרחה אני עושה במלכותך – מפורזין הם בין העמים, שמא תאמר אית הנאה מיניהו "מפורד", כפרידה זו שאינה עושה פירות. ושמא תאמר איכא מדינתא מיניהו – תלמוד לומר "בכל מדינות מלכותך".

Haman continued with his next response as expressed in the verse: Perhaps you will say that I am making a bald spot in your kingdom, i.e., you fear that if an entire nation is wiped out there will be a desolate area within the kingdom. There is no need to worry, though, as they are scattered [*mefuzarin*] 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 [*pereida*] that cannot bear offspring,^B 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.

ידתיהם שונות מכל עם" – דלא אכלי מינן, ולא נסבי מינן, ולא מנסבי לן. "ואת דתי המלך אינם עושים" – דמפקי לבולא שתא בשעה פה"י. "ולמלך אין שנה להניחם" – דאכלו ושתו ומבזו ליה למלכות. ואפילו נופל זבוב בכוסו של אחד מהן – זרקו ושותהו. ואם אדוני המלך נוגע בכוסו של אחד מהן – חובטו בקרקע ואינו שותהו.

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 [*Pesah hayom*].^N 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 gentile.

אם על המלך טוב יכתב לאבדם ועשרת אלפים ככר כסף" וגו'. אמר ריש לקיש: גלוי וידוע לפני מי שאמר והיה העולם שעתיד המן לשקול שקלים על ישראל, לפיכך הקדים שקליהן לשקליו.

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^N Haman's shekels.

והיינו דתנן: באחד באדר משמיעין על השקלים ועל הכלאים.

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^N 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.

”וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהִמָּן הַכֹּסֶף נָתַן לְךָ
וְהָעָם לַעֲשׂוֹת בּוֹ כְּטוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ”, אָמַר
רַבִּי אֲבָא:

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:

מִשָּׁל דְּאִתְשׁוּרוּשׁ וְהִמָּן לְמַה הִדְבָּר
דּוּמָה? לְשֵׁנֵי בְּנֵי אָדָם, לְאֶחָד הָיָה לוֹ
תֵּל בְּתוֹךְ שָׂדֵהוּ, וְלְאֶחָד הָיָה לוֹ חֲרוּץ
בְּתוֹךְ שָׂדֵהוּ. בַּעַל חֲרוּץ אָמַר: מִי יִתֵּן לִי
תֵּל זֶה בְּדָמַי! בַּעַל הַתֵּל אָמַר: מִי יִתֵּן
לִי חֲרוּץ זֶה בְּדָמַי!

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,^N 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?

לְיָמִים נִדְוָגוּ זֶה אַצֵּל זֶה, אָמַר לוֹ בַּעַל
חֲרוּץ לְבַעַל הַתֵּל: מְכֹר לִי תֵּלְךָ! אָמַר
לוֹ: טוֹל אוֹתָהּ בְּחִנָּם, וְהִלְוִיאִי!

At a later point, one day, they happened to have met one another. The owner of the ditch 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.

”וַיִּסֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת טַבַּעְתּוֹ”. אָמַר רַבִּי
אֲבָא בַר כְּהֵנָא: גְּדוּלָּה הִסְרַת טַבַּעַת
יֹתֵר מֵאַרְבָּעִים וְשִׁמוֹנֶה נְבִיאִים וְשִׁבְעַת
נְבִיאֹת שְׁנַתְּנַבְּאוּ לָהֶן לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, שְׂבוּלוֹן
לֹא הִחְזִירוּם לְמוֹטֵב, וְאֵילוּ הִסְרַת
טַבַּעַת הִחְזִירוּם לְמוֹטֵב.

§ 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^N 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.

תָּנּוּ רַבָּנָן: אַרְבָּעִים וְשִׁמוֹנֶה נְבִיאִים
וְשִׁבְעַת נְבִיאֹת נִתְּנַבְּאוּ לָהֶם לְיִשְׂרָאֵל,
וְלֹא פָּחַתּוּ וְלֹא הוֹתִירוּ עַל מַה שְּׁכָתוּב
בְּתוֹרָה, חוּץ מִמִּקְרָא מְגִלָּה.

The Sages taught in a *baraita*: Forty-eight prophets^N and seven prophetesses prophesied on behalf of the Jewish people, and they neither subtracted from nor added^N 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.

NOTES

The parable of a mound and a ditch – משל לתל ולחרוץ – Some commentaries 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 Lettim; Gevul Binyamin; Hatam Sofer*).

גדולה – הוסרת טבעת יותר – 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 – ארבעים ושימונה נביאים – 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; Assir, Elkana, and Abiasaph, who were sons of Korah; Joshua; Pinehas; Samuel; Elkanah, his father; Gad; Nathan; Asaph; Heman; Jeduthun; David; Ahijah the Shilonite; Shemaiah; Iddo the seer; Azariah, the son of Oded; Hanani; Jehu, the son of Hanani; Elijah; Micaiah, the son of Zephaniah; Jeremiah; Isaiah; Ezekiel; Daniel; Baruch, the son of Neriah; Seraiah; Mordecai; Bilshan; 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 Ma’amarot*); Eldad and Medad (*Ramat Shmuel*); Elazar the son of Aaron, and Elihu the son of Barachel (*Turei 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 Igdaliah (Rav Ya’akov 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 – ולא הותירו ולא פחתו – 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 HaMadda, 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 (*Zikhron Terua*). Conversely, the Rid simply explains that the prophets did not add public readings, other than reading the Megilla.