

NOTES

The son of Harhas – בן חרחס: Although the description of Huldah as being married to “the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas” is really a description of her husband Shallum’s lineage, nevertheless the Gemara interprets it to be describing Huldah. The reason for this exposition is that nowhere else does the Bible mention the lineage of a woman who is referred to by the name of her husband. Therefore, mentioning an unknown person like Harhas as a point of lineage for Huldah’s husband does not add to the understanding of her husband’s background, and the information must be understood as teaching something else, in this case about Huldah’s deeds (Maharsha).

Descended from Rahab – יצאו מרחב: The fact that priests and prophets descended from Rahab is a matter of interest because it is prohibited for a priest to marry a convert, especially one who was a harlot. A number of commentaries also discuss how Rahab, a member of the Canaanite people, was permitted to marry a Jewish man, albeit a non-priest, after her conversion (see *Tosafot* and *ge'onim*). The *Petaḥ Einayim* and others explain that Joshua married her due to heavenly instruction.

אָמַר רַב נַחֲמָן: חוּלְדָה מִבְּנֵי בְנוֹ שֶׁל יְהוֹשֻׁעַ הִיְתָה. כְּתִיב הֵכָא “בֶּן חֲרָחָס” וְכִתְיב הֵתָם “בְּתַמְנַת חָרָס”.

אֵי תִיבִיָּה רַב עֵינָא סְבָא לְרַב נַחֲמָן: שְׂמוּנָה נְבִיאִים וְהֵם כְּהֻנִּים יֵצְאוּ מִרַחֵב הַזֹּנָה, וְאֵלּוּ הֵן: נְרִיָּה, בְּרוּךְ, וְשֶׁרִיָּה, מַחֲסִיָּה, יִרְמְיָה, חִלְקִיָּה, חַנְמָאֵל, וְשְׁלוּם. רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אָמַר: אִף חוּלְדָה הִנְבִּיאָה מִבְּנֵי בְנוֹ שֶׁל רַחֵב הַזֹּנָה הִיְתָה. כְּתִיב הֵכָא “בֶּן תִּקְוָה” וְכִתְיב הֵתָם “אֶת תִּקְוֹת חוּט הַשָּׁנִי”!

אָמַר לִיה: עֵינָא סְבָא! וְאָמַרִי לָהּ: פְּתִיָּא אוּבְמָא! מִינִי וּמִינְךָ הַסְתִּיִּים שְׂמַעְתָּא; דְּאִינְיָרָא וְנִסְבָּה יְהוֹשֻׁעַ. וּמִי הוּוּ לִיה יִרְעָא לִיהוֹשֻׁעַ? וְהַכְּתִיב “נֹן בְּנֵי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בְּנֵי!” בְּנֵי – לֹא הוּוּ לִיה, בְּנֵינָן – הוּוּ לִיה.

Furthermore, Rav Nahman said: Huldah was a descendant of Joshua. An allusion to this is written here: “Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum, the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas [harhas]” (II Kings 22:14),^N and it says elsewhere with regard to Joshua: “And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-heres [heres]” (Judges 2:9), therefore intimating that there is a certain connection between them.

Rav Eina the Elder raised an objection from a *baraita* to Rav Nahman’s teaching. The *baraita* indicates that Huldah was in fact a descendant of Rahab, and seemingly not of Joshua: **Eight prophets, who were also priests, descended from Rahab^N the prostitute, and they are: Neriah; his son Baruch; Seraiah; Mahseiah; Jeremiah; his father, Hilkiah; Jeremiah’s cousin Hanamel; and Hanamel’s father, Shallum. Rabbi Yehuda said: So too, Huldah the prophetess was a descendant of Rahab the prostitute, as it is written here with regard to Huldah: “The son of Tikvah,” and it is written elsewhere in reference to Rahab’s escape from the destruction of Jericho: “This cord of [tikvat] scarlet thread” (Joshua 2:18).**

Rav Nahman responded to Eina the Elder and said to him: **Eina the Elder, and some say that he said to him: Blackened pot, i.e., my colleague in Torah, who has toiled and blackened his face in Torah study, from me and from you the matter may be concluded, i.e., the explanation lies in a combination of our two statements. For Rahab converted and married Joshua, and therefore Huldah descended from both Joshua and Rahab. The Gemara raises a difficulty: But did Joshua have any descendants? But isn’t it written in the genealogical list of the tribe of Ephraim: “Nun his son, Joshua his son” (1 Chronicles 7:27)? The listing does not continue any further, implying that Joshua had no sons. The Gemara answers: Indeed, he did not have sons, but he did have daughters.**

Perek I
Daf 15 Amud a

NOTES

שְׂמוֹ וְשֵׁם אָבִיו – One’s name and his father’s name: As prophets were well known in their own right, there is no reason to mention a prophet’s father other than to indicate that the latter was also a prophet (Maharsha).

בְּיָדוֹעַ – It is known that he was from Jerusalem: The Maharsha explains that there is an indication to this from a psalm, as it speaks of the praise of Jerusalem: “And of Zion it shall be said: This man and that man was born in her” (Psalms 87:5), signifying that famous people were born there.

בְּשִׁלְמָא אֵינְהוּ – מִיפְרָשֵׁי, אֵלָּא אֲבָהֵיהוֹ מְנַלְךָ?

כְּדַעוּלָא. דְּאָמַר עוּלָא: כָּל מְקוּם שְׂשֻׁמוֹ וְשֵׁם אָבִיו בְּבִיאוֹת – בְּיָדוֹעַ שְׂהוּא נְבִיא בֶּן נְבִיא. שְׂמוֹ וְלֹא שֵׁם אָבִיו – בְּיָדוֹעַ שְׂהוּא נְבִיא וְלֹא בֶּן נְבִיא. שְׂמוֹ וְשֵׁם עִירוֹ מְפוּרָשׁ – בְּיָדוֹעַ שְׂהוּא מְאוּתָה הָעִיר, שְׂמוֹ וְלֹא שֵׁם עִירוֹ – בְּיָדוֹעַ שְׂהוּא מִירוּשָׁלַיִם.

בְּמַתְנֵיתָא תְּנָא: כָּל שְׂמַעְשׂוֹ וּמַעֲשָׂה אֲבֹתָיו סְתוּמִין, וּפִרְט לְךָ הַכְּתוּב בְּאֶחָד מֵהֶן לְשִׁבְתָּ, כְּגוֹן “דְּבַר ה’ אֲשֶׁר הָיָה אֶל צְפַנְיָה בֶּן בּוּשִׁי בֶּן גְּדַלְיָה” – בְּיָדוֹעַ שְׂהוּא צַדִּיק בֶּן צַדִּיק. וְכָל שְׂפִרְט לְךָ הַכְּתוּב בְּאֶחָד מֵהֶן לְגַנְאִי, כְּגוֹן “וַיְהִי בְּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בָּא וַיִּשְׁמַעֲאֵל בֶּן נֶתַנְיָה בֶּן אֱלִישָׁמַע” – בְּיָדוֹעַ שְׂהוּא רָשָׁע בֶּן רָשָׁע.

The Gemara asks in reference to the eight prophets descended from Rahab: **Granted, with regard to them, it is explicit, i.e., the four sons recorded in the list were certainly prophets, as the Bible states this explicitly: Jeremiah was a prophet, his student Baruch was one of the sons of the prophets, his cousin Hanamel came to him at the word of God (see Jeremiah, chapter 32), and Seraiah was his student. But as for their fathers, Hilkiah, Neriah, Shallum, and Mahseiah, from where do we derive that they were prophets?**

The Gemara answers: **As taught by Ulla, as Ulla said: Wherever one’s name and his father’s name^N are mentioned with regard to prophecy, it is known that he was a prophet the son of a prophet, and therefore his father’s name is also mentioned. And wherever his name is mentioned but not his father’s name, it is known that he was a prophet but not the son of a prophet. Similarly, wherever his name and the name of his city are specified, it is known that he was from that particular city, and wherever his name is mentioned but not the name of his city, it is known that he was from Jerusalem.^N**

It was taught in a *baraita*: **With regard to anyone whose actions and the actions of his ancestors are obscured and not explained, and the verse mentioned one of them favorably, for example, the way in which Zephaniah the prophet is introduced: “The word of the Lord which came to Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah” (Zephaniah 1:1), it is known that not only was he a righteous man, he was also the son of a righteous man. And conversely, whenever the verse mentioned one of them unfavorably, for example, in the verse that introduces Ishmael as the one who killed Gedaliah, which states: “And it came to pass in the seventh month that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama” (Jeremiah 41:1), it is known that not only was he a wicked man, he was also the son of a wicked man.**

There were four woman of extraordinary beauty – אַרְבַּע נָשִׁים יִפְיאוֹת: Some explain that this is mentioned to indicate how dangerous their beauty was for others, as all who were enticed by their beauty experienced calamity (see *Iyyun Ya'akov* and *Maharsha*).

Rahab aroused impure thoughts by her name – רַחַב בְּשֵׁמָהּ זִינְתָה: The verses that mention these various women refer to their enticing characteristic. With regard to Rahab, whose name aroused others, it states: “Whose name was Rahab” (Joshua 2:1). With regard to Yael, the verse refers to her speech: “And she said to him, turn in, my lord, turn in to me, fear not” (Judges 4:18). With regard to Abigail, the memory of her was enticing, it states: “Then remember your handmaid” (I Samuel 25:31). With regard to Michal, whose appearance was arousing, it states: “Michal the daughter of Saul appeared through the window” (II Samuel 6:16; see *Maharsha*). The *Noda Bihuda* explains that this talmudic statement was mentioned in order to teach that each one of these characteristics carries with it potential for arousal, and one must therefore be cautious with regard to them.

All that was done – כָּל אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשָׂה: According to some interpretations, Mordecai cried out because he was aware of aspects of the decree that others were not. Rashi, in his commentary on the Megilla, explains that Mordecai cried out because it was revealed to him that even Heaven had agreed to this decree (see *Arugat HaBosem*).

BACKGROUND

That she began to menstruate – שִׁפְרוֹסָה נָדָה: It is not uncommon for psychological trauma to cause an irregular flow of menstrual blood, even in women with a relatively regular cycle.

אָמַר רַב נַחֲמָן: מְלָאכִי זֶה מְרַדְּכִי וְלָמָּה נִקְרָא שְׁמוֹ מְלָאכִי – שְׁהָיָה מְשֻׁנָּה לְמַלְכֵי. מִיִּתְיָבִי: בְּרוּךְ בֶּן נְרִיָּה, וְשֶׁרְיָה בֶּן מַעֲשִׂיָּה, וְדַנְיָאֵל, וְמְרַדְּכִי בְלָשׁוֹן, וְחַגִּי זְכַרְיָה וּמְלָאכִי – כּוֹלֵן נִתְנַבְּאוּ בְּשֵׁנַת שָׁתַיִם לְדַרְיוֹשׁ! תִּיבְתָא.

תִּנְיָא, אָמַר רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן קַרְחָה: מְלָאכִי זֶה עֶזְרָא, וְחַכְמַי אֲמַרְיָם: מְלָאכִי שְׁמוֹ. אָמַר רַב נַחֲמָן: מִסְתַּבְּרָא כִּמְאֵן דְּאָמַר מְלָאכִי זֶה עֶזְרָא, דְּכְתִיב בְּנִבְיאוֹת מְלָאכִי: “בְּגֵדֵי יְהוּדָה וְתוֹעֵבָה נַעֲשִׂתָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וּבִירוּשָׁלַם כִּי חָלַל יְהוּדָה קֹדֶשׁ ה’ אֲשֶׁר אָהַב וּבַעַל בַּת אֵל נָכַר.”

וּמֵאֵן אֲפִרִישׁ נָשִׁים גּוֹיֹת – עֶזְרָא, דְּכְתִיב “וַיַּעַן שְׁכַנְיָה בֶּן יַחֲזִיאֵל מִבְּנֵי עֵילָם וַיֹּאמֶר לְעֶזְרָא אֲנַחְנוּ מַעֲלָנוּ בְּאַלְהֵינוּ וְנוֹשַׁב נָשִׁים נְכָרִיֹּת.”

תָּנוּ רַבָּנָן: אַרְבַּע נָשִׁים יִפְיאוֹת הֵיוּ בְּעוֹלָם: שָׂרָה (וְאַבְיגַיִל, רַחַב) וְאַסְתֵּר. וְלִמָּן דְּאָמַר אֲסֵתֵר יִרְקוּקַת הָיְתָה – מִפִּיק אֲסֵתֵר וּמַעֲיִיל וְשָׂתָּה.

תָּנוּ רַבָּנָן: רַחַב בְּשֵׁמָהּ זִינְתָה, יַעֲלֵ בְקוֹלָהּ, אַבְיגַיִל בְּזִכְרוֹתָהּ, מִיכַל בַּת שְׂאוּל בְּרֵאִיִּתָּהּ. אָמַר רַבִּי יִצְחָק: כָּל הָאֹמֵר רַחַב רַחַב – מִיָּד נִקְרִי. אָמַר לִיָּה רַב נַחֲמָן: אֲנָא אֲמִינָא רַחַב רַחַב – וְלֹא אִיכְפַת לִי! אָמַר לִיָּה: כִּי קְאָמִינָא – בְּיֹדְעָה וּבְמַכְיָרָה.

“וּמְרַדְּכִי יָדַע אֵת כָּל אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשָׂה,” מֵאֵי אָמַר? רַב אָמַר: גָּבַהּ הָמֶן מֵאַחַשְׁוֵרוּשׁ. וְשְׂמוֹ אֵל אָמַר: גָּבַר מְלָכָא עֵילָאָה מִמְלָכָא תַתָּאָה.

“וְתַתְּחַלְחַל הַמְּלָכָה,” מֵאֵי “וְתַתְּחַלְחַל”? אָמַר רַב: שִׁפְרוֹסָה נָדָה, וְרַבִּי יִרְמְיָה אָמַר: שְׁהוֹצְרָכָה לְנִקְבֵיהָ.

Rav Nahman said: Malachi the prophet is in fact Mordecai, and why was he called Malachi? To indicate that he was second to the king [melekh], as Mordecai was appointed such, as is recorded at the end of the Megilla. The Gemara raises an objection from the following *baraita*: Baruch, the son of Neriah; Seraiah, the son of Mahseiah; Daniel; Mordecai; Bilshan; Haggai; Zechariah; and Malachi; all prophesied in the second year of the reign of Darius. The fact that the *baraita* mentions Mordecai and Malachi separately indicates that they were two different people. The Gemara concludes: This is indeed a conclusive refutation.

It is taught in a *baraita*: Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korha said: Malachi is in fact Ezra. And the Rabbis say otherwise: Malachi was his real name, and it was not merely another name for Ezra or another prophet. Rav Nahman said: It stands to reason that indeed, they are one and the same person, like the opinion of the one who said that Malachi is Ezra, since there is a similarity between them, as it is stated in Malachi’s prophecy: “Judah has dealt treacherously, and a disgusting thing has been done in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah has profaned the sanctity of the Lord which he loved, and has married the daughter of a strange god” (Malachi 2:11).

And who was the one that removed the foreign women who were married to Jews? It was Ezra, as it is written: “And Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra: We have broken faith with our God, and have married foreign women of the peoples of the land” (Ezra 10:2). It therefore appears that Malachi was one of Ezra’s names, as the Bible describes them both as confronting an intermarriage epidemic.

To complete the discussion about the prophetesses, the Gemara cites a *baraita* in which the Sages taught: There were four women of extraordinary beautyⁿ in the world: Sarah, and Abigail, Rahab, and Esther. And according to the one who said that Esther was greenish in color, lacking natural beauty, only that a cord of divine grace was strung around her, remove Esther from the list and insert Vashti in her place, for she was indeed beautiful.

The Sages taught in a *baraita*: Rahab aroused impure thoughts by her name,ⁿ i.e., the mere mention of her name would inspire lust for her; Yael, by her voice; Abigail, by remembering her; Michal, the daughter of Saul, by her appearance. Similarly, Rabbi Yitzhak said: Anyone who says Rahab, Rahab, immediately experiences a seminal emission due to the arousal of desire caused by Rahab’s great beauty. Rav Nahman said to him: I say: Rahab, Rahab, and it does not affect me. Rabbi Yitzhak said to Rav Nahman: When I said this, I was specifically referring to one who knows her personally and recognizes her beauty. Only for one who has met Rahab in person is the mere mention of her name capable of arousing lust.

§ The Gemara returns to its explanation of the verses of the book of Esther. The verse states: “When Mordecai perceived all that was done,ⁿ Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and bitter cry” (Esther 4:1). The Gemara asks: What did Mordecai say when he cried out? Rav said: He said that Haman has risen above Ahasuerus, for he saw that Haman had become even stronger than Ahasuerus himself, and that he controlled all affairs of the empire. And Shmuel said: The upper King has prevailed over the lower king, saying this euphemistically and insinuating just the opposite. In other words, it would appear that Ahasuerus, the lower king, has prevailed over the higher King, God in Heaven, Who desires good for the Jewish people.

The verse states: “Then the queen was exceedingly distressed” [vatithalhal] (Esther 4:4). The Gemara asks: What is the meaning of vatithalhal? Rav said: This means that she began to menstruate^b out of fear, as the cavities, halalim, of her body opened. And Rabbi Yirmeya said: Her bowels were loosened, also understanding the verse as referring to her bodily cavities.

NOTES

Hathach is Daniel – הַתַּחַךְ זֶה דָּנְיָאֵל – The Maharsa explains that this is derived from the fact that Hathach appears to be trusted by both Esther and Mordecai, seemingly indicating that he was a Jew. In the book of Daniel (1:18–21), Daniel is mentioned as one of the king’s Jewish chamberlains during the time of the Persian Empire.

One does not bring back a sad report – אֵין מְשִׁיבִין – על הקלקלה: It is generally viewed as proper conduct not to hasten to be the bearer of bad news. Esther’s rejection of Mordecai’s request to take immediate action was an unfavorable piece of information, and therefore, Hathach did not deliver the news personally (*Manot HaLevi*).

LANGUAGE

An ordinary person [*hedyot*] – הֶדְיוֹט: From the Greek ἰδιώτης, *idiotès*, meaning a simple man who lacks any official position. Here it is used in the context of an ordinary man without any specific spiritual achievement, one not known for his righteousness.

וַתִּקְרָא אֶסְתֵּר לְהַתַּחַךְ אָמַר רַב־הַתַּחַךְ זֶה דָּנְיָאֵל, וְלָמָּה נִקְרָא שְׁמוֹ הַתַּחַךְ – שְׁחַתְכוּהוּ מְגִדּוֹלוֹתָיו. וְשְׂמוּאֵל אָמַר: שְׂכַל דְּבָרֵי מַלְכוּת נְחֻתְכִין עַל פְּוִי.

לְדַעַת מַה זֶה וְעַל מַה זֶה” אָמַר רַב־יִצְחָק: שְׁלַחָה לּוֹ: שְׂמָא עֲבָרוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל חֲמִשָּׁה חוּמְשֵׁי תוֹרָה, דְּכָתִיב בְּהֵן “מִזֶּה וּמִזֶּה הֵם כְּתוּבִים.”

וַיַּגִּידוּ לְמֶרְדֵּכַי אֵת דְּבָרֵי אֶסְתֵּר, וְאֵילוּ אִיהוּ לֹא אֶזְל לְגַבִּיָּה – מִכָּאֵן שְׂאִין מְשִׁיבִין עַל הַקְּלָקְלָה.

לְךָ בְּנוֹס אֵת כָּל הַיְּהוּדִים” וְגוֹ’ עַד “אֲשֶׁר לֹא כְדַת”, אָמַר רַב־אֲבָא: שְׁלֵא כְדַת הִיָּה, שְׂבַכְל יוֹם וְיוֹם עַד עֲכָשִׁיו – בְּאוֹנֵס, וְעֲכָשִׁיו – בְּרַצּוֹן. “וְכֹאֲשֶׁר אֲבָדְתִי אֲבָדְתִי” – כְּשֵׁם שְׂאֲבָדְתִי מִבֵּית אֲבָא כִּן אוֹבַד מִמֶּנָּה.

וַיַּעֲבֹר מֶרְדֵּכַי” אָמַר רַב־שְׁהַעֲבִיר יוֹם רִאשׁוֹן שֶׁל פֶּסַח בְּתַעֲנִית. וְשְׂמוּאֵל אָמַר: דְּעֵבֵר עֲרֻקוּמָא דְּמֵיָא.

וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וַתִּלְבַּשׁ אֶסְתֵּר מַלְכוּת, בְּגָדֵי מַלְכוּת מִיבְעֵי לִיָּה! אָמַר רַב־אֶלְעָזָר אָמַר רַב־חֲנִינָא: מִלְּמַד שְׁלִבְשָׁתָה רוּחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ, כְּתִיב הֲכֹא “וַתִּלְבַּשׁ” וְכִתִּיב הֵתָם “וְרוּחַ לְבָשָׁה אֵת עַמְשִׁי.”

וְאָמַר רַב־אֶלְעָזָר אָמַר רַב־חֲנִינָא: לְעוֹלָם אֵל תְּהִי בְרַבְתַּי הַדְּיוֹט קְלָה בְּעֵינֶיךָ, שְׁהִרִי שְׁנֵי גְדוּלֵי הַדּוֹר בְּרַכּוֹם שְׁנֵי הַדְּיוֹטוֹת וְנִתְקַיְּמָה בְּהֵן, וְאֵלוּ הֵן: דָּוִד וְדָנְיָאֵל. דָּוִד – דְּבִרְכִיָּה אַרְוֵנָה, דְּכָתִיב “וַיֹּאמֶר אַרְוֵנָה אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ” וְגוֹ. דָּנְיָאֵל – דְּבִרְכִיָּה דְּרִישׁ, דְּכָתִיב “אֵלֶיךָ דִּי אֲנִת פְּלַח לִיָּה בְּתַדִּירָא הוּא יִשְׁוִיבִינְךָ.”

The verse states: “Then Esther called for Hathach, one of the king’s chamberlains, whom he had appointed to attend upon her” (Esther 4:5). Rav said: Hathach is in fact the prophet Daniel.^N And why was he called Hathach? Because he was cut down [*hatakh*] from his greatness during Ahasuerus’s reign, as he was demoted from his high position. Previously he had served as a senior minister, and now he had become Esther’s steward. And Shmuel expounded the name Hathach as derived from *hatakh* in the opposite sense, as he said: Daniel was called Hathach because all the affairs of the kingdom were decided [*nehtakhin*] by his word.

The verse continues to relate that Esther sent Hathach to Mordecai after hearing about the decree: “To know what this [*zeh*] was, and why it [*zeh*] was” (Esther 4:5). Rabbi Yitzhak said that Esther sent a message to Mordecai, saying: Perhaps the Jews have transgressed the five books of the Torah, as it is written with regard to the two tablets: “On this [*zeh*] side and on the other [*zeh*] side were they written” (Exodus 32:15).

The verse states: “And they told Esther’s words to Mordecai” (Esther 4:12), but he, Hathach himself, did not go to tell him directly. The Gemara explains: From here we see that one does not bring back a sad report.^N If one has nothing positive to say, it is best for him to remain silent. This explains why Hathach himself did not report the information to Mordecai, and Esther’s words had to be delivered by other messengers.

Esther sent a message to Mordecai: “Go, gather together all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me, and neither eat nor drink for three days, night and day; I also and my maidens will fast likewise, and so will I go in to the king, not according to the custom” (Esther 4:16). Rabbi Abba said: It will not be according to my usual custom, for every day until now when I submitted myself to Ahasuerus it was under compulsion, but now I will be submitting myself to him of my own free will. And Esther further said: “And if I perish, I perish” (Esther 4:16). What she meant was: Just as I was lost to my father’s house ever since I was brought here, so too, shall I be lost to you, for after voluntarily having relations with Ahasuerus, I shall be forever forbidden to you.

There is a dispute with regard to the meaning of the verse: “So Mordecai passed [*vaya’avor*]” (Esther 4:17). Rav said: This means that he passed the first day of Passover as a fast day, understanding the word *vaya’avor* in the sense of sin [*aveira*], as by doing so he transgressed the obligation to rejoice on the Festival. And Shmuel said: It means that he crossed over [*avar*] a stream in order to bring the message to all.

The verse states: “And it came to pass on the third day, that Esther clothed herself in royalty” (Esther 5:1). The Gemara asks: It should have said: Esther clothed herself in royal garments. Rabbi Elazar said that Rabbi Hanina said: This teaches that she clothed herself with a divine spirit of inspiration, as it is written here: “And she clothed herself,” and it is written elsewhere: “And the spirit clothed Amasai” (1 Chronicles 12:19). Just as there the reference is to the spirit of divine inspiration, so too here, the term royalty is referring to the spirit of divine inspiration.

Apropos a statement that Rabbi Elazar said that Rabbi Hanina said, the Gemara records other such statements: And Rabbi Elazar further said that Rabbi Hanina said: One should never regard the blessing of an ordinary person [*hedyot*]¹ as light in your eyes, as two of the great men of their generations received blessings from ordinary people and those blessings were fulfilled in them. And they were David and Daniel. David, for Araunah blessed him, as it is written: “And Araunah said to the king, May the Lord your God accept you” (II Samuel 24:23), and it was fulfilled. Daniel, for Darius blessed him, as it is written: “Your God Whom you serve continually, He will rescue you” (Daniel 6:17), and this too was fulfilled when Daniel was saved from the lions’ den.

ואמר רבי אלעזר אמר רבי חנינא: אל תהי קללת הדיוט קלה בעיניך, שהרי אבימלך קלל את שרה "הנה הוא לך כסות עינים" ונתקיים בזרעה "ויהי כי יקו יצחק ותבהין עיניו".

ואמר רבי אלעזר אמר רבי חנינא: בא וראה שלא כמדת הקדוש ברוך הוא מדת בשר ודם; מדת בשר ודם אדם שופת קדרה ואחר כך נותן לתוכה מים, אבל הקדוש ברוך הוא – נותן מים ואחר כך שופת הקדרה, לקיים מה שנאמר "לקול תתו המון מים בשמים".

ואמר רבי אלעזר אמר רבי חנינא: כל האומר דבר בשם אומרו מביא גאולה לעולם, שנאמר: "ותאמר אסתר למלך בשם מרדכי".

ואמר רבי אלעזר אמר רבי חנינא: צדיק אבד – לדורו אבד. משל לאדם שאבדה לו מרגלית, כל מקום שהיא – מרגלית שמה, לא אבדה אלא לבעלה.

"וכל זה איננו שוה לי", אמר רבי אלעזר אמר רבי חנינא: בשעה שראה הקמן את מרדכי יושב בשער המלך אמר: כל זה אינו שוה לי כדבר חסדא. דאמר רב חסדא: זה בא בפרוזבולי וזה בא

And Rabbi Elazar further said that Rabbi Hanina said: One should not regard the curse of an ordinary person as light in your eyes, for Abimelech cursed Sarah, saying: "Behold, it is to you a covering of the eyesⁿ to all that are with you" (Genesis 20:16), and indeed this was fulfilled in her descendant, as it is stated: "And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see" (Genesis 27:1). Abimelech's curse of covered eyes was fulfilled through her son Isaac's blindness.

And Rabbi Elazar further said that Rabbi Hanina said: Come and see that the attribute of the Holy One, Blessed be He, is unlike the attribute of a man of flesh and blood; for it is the attribute of flesh and blood that a man places the pot on the fire and then puts in the water. However, the Holy One, Blessed be He, first puts in the water and then places the pot on the fire, to fulfill that which is stated: "At the sound of His giving a multitude of waters in the heavens" (Jeremiah 10:13), which he explains as follows: First God set the multitudes of water in place, and afterward He created the heavens to hold the water.

And Rabbi Elazar further said that Rabbi Hanina said: Who ever reports a saying in the name of he who said it brings redemption to the world. As it is stated with respect to the incident of Bigthan and Teresh: "And Esther reported it to the king in the name of Mordecai" (Esther 2:22), and this eventually brought redemption, as Mordecai was later rewarded for saving the king's life, paving the way for the miraculous salvation.

And Rabbi Elazar further said that Rabbi Hanina said: When a righteous man passes from this earth and is lost,ⁿ he is lost only for the rest of his generation, who is now deprived of him, not for the righteous individual himself. This is similar to a man who has lost a pearl.⁸ The pearl does not care if it is lost, as wherever it is found, it is still a pearl; it is lost only to its owner.

Haman said: "Yet all this avails me nothing" (Esther 5:13). Rabbi Elazar said that Rabbi Hanina said: When Haman saw Mordecai sitting at the king's gate he said: Yet all this avails me nothing. This may be understood as was suggested by Rav Hisda, for Rav Hisda said: This one, Mordecai, came as one with the heritage of a rich man [perozebuli],^l whereas that one, Haman, came

NOTES

Covering of the eyes – כסות עינים: Some explain Abimelech's curse symbolically. Abimelech was angry at Sarah for tricking him, and therefore cursed her that the same should also happen to her descendants. Abimelech's curse came true when Isaac was tricked by his family when blessing his sons (Yefe Toar).

When a righteous man is lost – צדיק אבד: The *Iyyun Ya'akov* explains that this remark was said at Isaac's eulogy, as the essence of the eulogy was not over the death of Isaac, since his soul, like a diamond impervious to damage, was not lost. The purpose of the eulogy was to make known what his loss meant for that generation.

BACKGROUND

Pearl – מרגלית: A pearl is a hard object produced within the soft tissue of a living shelled mollusk. Just like the shell of a clam, a pearl is made up of calcium carbonate that has been deposited in concentric layers. The ideal pearl is perfectly round and smooth, but many other shapes of pearls occur. The finest-quality natural pearls have been highly valued as gemstones and objects of beauty since antiquity, and because of this the word pearl has become a metaphor for something fine and valuable.



Pearl in oyster

LANGUAGE

A rich man [perozebuli] – פרוזבולי: The Aramaic usage of this word is a matter of dispute, though it is possibly based on the Greek term used in Egypt, *προβολη*, *probolh*, meaning producer or originator of a document of indebtedness. However, this explanation does not adequately explain the letter *zayin* in this word.

LANGUAGE

Poor man [perozeboti] – פרוזבוטי: From the Greek *πρεσβευτής*, *presbeutēs*, indicating a petitioner. This definition would lead to the opposite understanding of the Gemara, as Haman is the one who has come with his *perozebuli*, his bill of sale, and Mordecai is the petitioner, the one who comes with the claims of the *perozeboti*.

Perek I
Daf 15 Amud b

בפרוזבוטי. אמר רב פפא: וקר ליה עבדא דמדובב בטלמי.

as one with the heritage of a poor man [perozeboti],^l as Mordecai had been Haman's slave master and was aware of Haman's lowly lineage. Rav Pappa said: And he was called: The slave who was sold for a loaf of bread.ⁿ

NOTES

The slave who was sold for bread – עבדא דמדובב בטלמי: Both here as well as subsequently (16a), the Talmud makes reference to an aggadic midrash that is not found in the Talmud but appears in several works of *midrashim*. The *aggada* relates that Haman was initially a barber and a bathhouse attendant who later rose to become one of Ahasuerus's ministers. Ahasuerus

sent him and Mordecai as army officers to the battlefield. Haman enjoyed himself while away and squandered all of his money. Unable to support himself, and hungry for bread, he was compelled to sell himself as a slave to Mordecai. Although Haman rose to greatness upon his return, he wanted to destroy Mordecai, who held his bill of servitude (see *Manot HaLevi*).

To the gate, this is referring to the Torah scholars who arrive early – אלו תלמידי חכמים שמשיבין – The Maharsha in tractate *Sanhedrin* explains that Torah scholars are like gatekeepers for the synagogues and study halls, as they open and lock the gates.

These also reel through wine – גם אלה ביין שגו: It appears from Rashi that even the Torah scholars had unduly partaken of wine. Others explain that although the Torah scholars did not partake of the wine, the majority of the people did. Nevertheless, the Torah scholars bear communal responsibility and are held responsible for the community's actions (see Rabbi Yoshiya Pinto).

An action done due to circumstances beyond one's control as one done willingly – אוּם פְּרָצוּן: The commentaries discuss the various ramifications that stem from this Gemara; see, among others, Responsa *Shevut Ya'akov* and *Noda Bihuda* in their discussion of this issue. They suggest that even though Esther willingly went to Ahasuerus, nevertheless, her actions should still be viewed as having been done under duress, since she did so without any desire other than to save the Jews (see *Iyyun Ya'akov*).

“וְכָל זֶה אֵינְנו שׁוֹה לִי” – מְלַמֵּד שְׁבֵל גִּטְוִי שֶׁל אוֹתוֹ רָשָׁע חֲקוּקִין עַל לְבוֹ, וּבְשַׁעָה שְׂרוּאָה אֶת מְרַדְכֵי יוֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ אָמַר: “כָּל זֶה אֵינְנו שׁוֹה לִי”.

וְאָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר אָמַר רַבִּי חֲנִינָא: עֲתִיד הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְהִיטֵב עֲטָרָה בְּרֹאשׁ כָּל צַדִּיק וְצַדִּיק, שְׁנֵאמַר: “בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִהְיֶה ה' צְבָאוֹת לְעֲטָרַת צְבִי” [וגו']. מֵאִי “לְעֲטָרַת צְבִי וְלְצִפְרֵי תַפְאֵרָה” – לְעוֹשֵׂי צְבִי וְלְמַצְפִּין תַפְאֵרָתוֹ. יָכוֹל לְכָל – תְּלַמּוּד לְזֶמֶן “לְשֹׂאֵר עַמּוֹ” – לְמִי שְׁמֹשִׁים עֲצָמוֹ בְּשִׁירִים.

“וְלִירוּחַ מִשְׁפָּט” – זֶה הַדִּין אֶת יִצְרוֹ, וְלִיוֹשֵׁב עַל הַמִּשְׁפָּט” – זֶה הַדִּין דִּין אָמֶת לְאִמְתּוֹ. “וְלִגְבוּרָה” – זֶה הַמִּתְגַּבֵּר עַל יִצְרוֹ. “מְשִׁיבֵי מַלְחָמָה” – שְׂנוֹשְׂאֵין וְנוֹתְנֵין בְּמַלְחָמָתָה שֶׁל תּוֹרָה. “שְׁעָרָה” [אלו תלמידי חכמים] שְׂמִשְׁבִּימִין וּמַעֲרִיבִין בְּבֵתֵי כְּנִסְיוֹת וּבְבֵתֵי מְדֻרָּוֹת.

אָמַרָה מִדַּת הַדִּין לְפָנֵי הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: רְבוּנוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם! מַה נִּשְׁתַּנּוּ אֵילוּ מֵאֵלֵינוּ? אָמַר לָהּ הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲסָקוּ בַתּוֹרָה, אוֹמוֹת הָעוֹלָם לֹא עֲסָקוּ בַתּוֹרָה.

אָמַר לֵיה: “גַּם אֵלֶּה בֵּינָן שְׂגוּ וּבִשְׂכָר תַּעֲוִי... פָּקוּ פְּלִילִיָּהּ”, אֵינִן “פָּקוּ” אֵלֶּה גֵּיהֶנֶם, שְׁנֵאמַר “וְלֹא תִהְיֶה זֹאת לְךָ לְפִיּוֹקָה”, וְאֵינִן “פְּלִילִיָּהּ” אֵלֶּה דֵּינֵינוּ, שְׁנֵאמַר “וְנָתַן בְּפִלְיִים”.

“וְתַעֲמֹד בַּחֲצַר בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ הַפְּנִימִית”: אָמַר רַבִּי לִוִי: בֵּינָן שְׂהִיגְעָה לְבַיִת הַצְּלָמִים – נִסְתַּלְקָה הַיְמִנָה שְׂכִינָה, אָמַרָה: “אֵלֵי אֵלֵי לָמָּה עֹזְבֵתֵנִי” שְׂמָא אַתָּה דָן עַל שׁוֹגְג כְּמִזִּיד וְעַל אוּם פְּרָצוּן?

Haman's previously quoted statement: “Yet all this avails me nothing” (Esther 5:13), teaches that all the treasures of that wicked one were engraved on his heart, and when he saw Mordecai sitting at the king's gate, he said: As long as Mordecai is around, all this that I wear on my heart avails me nothing.

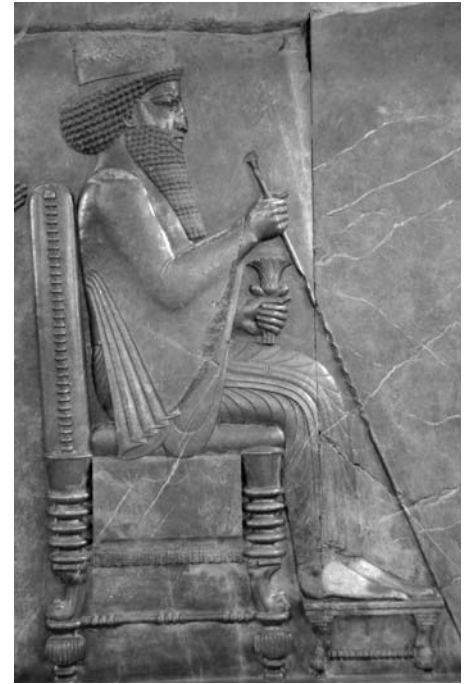
And Rabbi Elazar further said that Rabbi Hanina said: In the future, the Holy One, Blessed be He, will be a crown on the head of each and every righteous man. As it is stated: “In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, to the residue of His people” (Isaiah 28:5). What is the meaning of “for a crown of glory [tzevi], and for a diadem [velitzefirat] of beauty”? A crown for those that do His will [tziviyono] and a diadem for those that await [velamtzapin] His glory. One might have thought that this extends to all such individuals. Therefore, the verse states: “To the residue of his people,” to whoever regards himself as a remainder, i.e., small and unimportant like residue. But whoever holds himself in high esteem will not merit this.

Apropos the quotation from Isaiah, the Gemara explains the following verse, which states: “And for a spirit of justice to him that sits in judgment and for strength to them that turn back the battle to the gate” (Isaiah 28:6). “And for a spirit of justice”; this is referring to one who brings his evil inclination to trial and forces himself to repent. “To him that sits in judgment”; this is referring to one who judges an absolutely true judgment. “And for strength”; this is referring to one who triumphs over his evil inclination. “Them that turn back the battle”; this is referring to those that give and take in their discussion of *halakha* in the battle of understanding the Torah. “To the gate”; this is referring to the Torah scholars who arrive earlyⁿ and stay late at the darkened gates of the synagogues and study halls.

The Gemara continues with an episode associated with a verse in Isaiah. The Attribute of Justice said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, how are these, referring to the Jewish people, different from those, the other nations of the world, such that God performs miracles only on behalf of the Jewish people? The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to it: The Jewish people occupied themselves with Torah, whereas the other nations of the world did not occupy themselves with Torah.

The Attribute of Justice said to Him: “These also reel through wine,ⁿ and stagger through strong drink; the priest and the prophet reel through strong drink, they are confused because of wine, they stagger because of strong drink; they reel in vision, they stumble [paku] in judgment [peliliyya]” (Isaiah 28:7). The word *paku* in this context is referring only to Gehenna, as it is stated: “That this shall not be a cause of stumbling [puka] to you” (1 Samuel 25:31), and the word *peliliyya* here is referring only to judges, as it is stated: “And he shall pay as the judges determine [bifelim]” (Exodus 21:22). The response of the Attribute of Justice was essentially that the Jewish people have also sinned and are consequently liable to receive punishment.

§ The Gemara returns to its explanation of the verses of the Megilla. The verse states with regard to Esther: “And she stood in the inner court of the king's house” (Esther 5:1). Rabbi Levi said: Once she reached the chamber of the idols, which was in the inner court, the Divine Presence left her. She immediately said: “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” (Psalms 22:2). Perhaps it is because You judge an unintentional sin as one performed intentionally, and an action done due to circumstances beyond one's control as one done willingly.ⁿ



Relief from Persepolis of a Persian king holding his scepter

או שְׂמָא עַל שְׁקִרְאָתוֹ כְּלָב, שְׂנָאֲמֹר
“הַצִּילָהּ מִחַבְרַת נֶפְשִׁי מִיַּד כְּלָב יְהִידְתִּי.”
חֲזָרָה וּקְרָאתוֹ אֲרִיָּה, שְׂנָאֲמֹר “הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי
מִפִּי אֲרִיָּה.”

Or perhaps You have left me because in my prayers I called Haman a dog,ⁿ as it is stated: “Deliver my soul from the sword; my only one from the hand of the dog” (Psalms 22:21). She at once retracted and called him in her prayers a lion, as it is stated in the following verse: “Save me from the lion’s mouth” (Psalms 22:22).

וַיְהִי כִּרְאוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה
אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: שְׁלֹשָׁה מַלְאָכֵי הַשְּׁרָת
נִדְמְנוּ לָהּ בְּאוֹתָהּ שְׂעָה: אֶחָד שְׁהַגְבִּיחַ
אֶת צְוֹאָרָהּ, וְאֶחָד שִׁמְשֵׁךְ חוּט שֶׁל חֶסֶד
עָלֶיהָ, וְאֶחָד שִׁמְתַּח אֶת הַשְּׂרִיבֵיט.

The verse states: “And so it was, that when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favor in his sight; and the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand” (Esther 5:2). Rabbi Yohanan said: Three ministering angelsⁿ happened to join her at that time: One that raised up her neck, so that she could stand erect, free of shame; one that strung a cord of divine grace around her, endowing her with charm and beauty; and one that stretched the king’s scepter.⁸

וְכַמּוֹה? אָמַר רַבִּי יִרְמְיָה: שְׁתֵּי אֲמוֹת הָיָה
וְהִעֲמִידוּ עַל שְׁתֵּים עָשָׂרָה, וְאָמְרֵי לָהּ:
עַל שֵׁשׁ עָשָׂרָה, וְאָמְרֵי לָהּ: עַל עֶשְׂרִים
וְאַרְבַּע. בְּמִתְנִיתָא תַּנְא: עַל שְׁשִׁים. וְכֵן
אִתָּהּ מוֹצֵא בְּאִמְתָּהּ שֶׁל בֵּית פְּרָעָה, וְכֵן
אִתָּהּ מוֹצֵא בְּשִׁינֵי רְשָׁעִים. דְּכַתִּיב “שִׁינֵי
רְשָׁעִים שִׁבְרֵתָ,” וְאָמַר רִישׁ לְקִישׁ: אֵל
תִּקְרִי שִׁבְרֵת אֶלָּא שְׂרִיבְבַת. רַבָּה בַר
עוֹפְרָן אָמַר מִשּׁוּם רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר, שִׁשְׁמַע
מִרְבּוֹ, וְרַבּוֹ מִרְבּוֹ: מֵאֲתָמִים.

How much was it stretched? Rabbi Yirmeya said: The scepter was two cubits, and he made it twelve cubits. And some say that he made it sixteenⁿ cubits, and yet others say twenty-four cubits. It was taught in a *baraita*: He made it sixty cubits. And similarly you find with the arm of Pharaoh’s daughter, which she stretched out to take Moshe. And so too, you find with the teeth of the wicked, as it is written: “You have broken the teeth of the wicked” (Psalms 3:8), with regard to which Reish Lakish said: Do not read it as “You have broken [*shibbarta*],” but as: You have enlarged [*sheribavta*].ⁿ Rabba bar Oferan said in the name of Rabbi Elazar, who heard it from his teacher, who in turn heard it from his teacher: The scepter was stretched two hundred cubits.

וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ הַמֶּלֶךְ “לְאֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה מָה
בְּקִשְׁתְּךָ עַד חֲצֵי הַמַּלְכוּת, וְתַעֲשֵׂ” חֲצֵי
הַמַּלְכוּת וְלֹא כָּל הַמַּלְכוּת, וְלֹא דָבָר
שְׂחוֹצֵץ לְמַלְכוּת, וַיֵּמָּא גֵּהוּ – בְּגִן בֵּית
הַמִּקְדָּשׁ.

The verse states: “Then the king said to her” (Esther 5:3), to Esther the queen, “What is your wish, even to half the kingdom, it shall be performed” (Esther 5:6). The Gemara comments that Ahasuerus intended only a limited offer: Only half the kingdom, but not the whole kingdom, and not something that would serve as a barrier to the kingdom, as there is one thing to which the kingdom will never agree. And what is that? The building of the Temple; if that shall be your wish, realize that it will not be fulfilled.

“וַיָּבֵא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּן... אֵל הַמִּשְׁתֶּה.” תַּנּוּ
רַבְּנָן: מָה רָאָתָה אֶסְתֵּר שְׂזִימְנָה אֶת
הַמֶּן? רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר אוֹמֵר: פְּחִים טְמֻנָּה
לוֹ, שְׂנָאֲמֹר “יְהִי שְׁלֹחֲנָם לְפָנֶיהֶם לְפֹחִ”

The verse states that Esther requested: “If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day to the banquet that I have prepared for him” (Esther 5:4). The Sages taught in a *baraita*: What did Esther see to invite Haman to the banquet? Rabbi Elazar says: She hid a snare for him,ⁿ as it is stated: “Let their table become a snare before them” (Psalms 69:23), as she assumed that she would be able to trip up Haman during the banquet.

NOTES

Because I called Haman a dog – עַל שְׁקִרְאָתוֹ כְּלָב – The Maharsha explains that Esther at first prayed to be saved from Haman, who is a dog, and afterward she understood that she should also pray for Ahasuerus, the lion, to have a change of heart, as he also hated the Jewish people. Others explain that her whole prayer related to Ahasuerus. At first she referred to him in her heart by the dishonorable title of a dog, but then she realized afterward that she should also refer to his position, and therefore prayed again to be saved from the lion (see *Ya’arot Devash*).

Three ministering angels – שְׁלֹשָׁה מַלְאָכֵי הַשְּׁרָת – It has already been pointed out that, as the *Targum* notes, Esther had been fasting for three days and should have been weak and bent over, disheveled, certainly not radiating beauty. The fact that this did not happen was due to a divine miracle that showered her with grace and straightened her posture (see *Gal Naul* and Maharsha).

Twelve... sixteen, etc. – שְׁשֵׁ עָשָׂרָה גו’ – The *Ramat Shmuel* explains that each one of these numbers carries with

it a certain symbolism (see *Or Hadash*). The Maharsha writes that there is a hint to these numbers in the verses, as there are twelve words in this verse from “and the king held out” until the end, there are sixteen words from the beginning of the verse until “the golden scepter,” and there are twenty-four words in the entire verse.

You have enlarged the teeth of the wicked – שִׁינֵי רְשָׁעִים שְׂרִיבְבַת – Some explain that immediately prior to the downfall of the wicked they have a sudden, unexpected ascent, from the word *shirbu*, meaning extension, and it is from there that they fall (*Melo HaRo’im*).

She hid a snare for him – פְּחִים טְמֻנָּה לוֹ – Some explain that she intended to flatter Haman at the party, in order that he would speak her praises in return. She did this so that the disparaging remarks that she would later say about him would not be interpreted as a personal vendetta against him and would provide a greater chance that the king would accept her words (*Manot HaLevi*).

אם – If your enemy be hungry give him bread to eat – רָעַב שׁוֹנֵאֵךְ הָאֲכִילָהוּ לָחֶם: One explanation understands this statement based on the conclusion of the verse, which is interpreted by some as describing the proper means of coming to peace with one's enemies by choosing to help them rather than mistreat them (see Malbim on Proverbs 25:21). Esther thought that if all else failed, perhaps she would be able to persuade Haman himself to change the decree (see *Manot HaLevi*).

And how many are referred to as the multitude of his sons – וְכַמָּה רוֹב בְּנָיו: The Gemara asks how many sons were in Haman's multitude of sons because ten is not a great number of sons, as several other individuals in the Bible had more. Therefore, the Gemara explains that in fact Haman had more sons but only ten of them were hanged (Maharsha).

רבי יהושע אומר: מבית אביה למדה, שנאמר "אם רעב שונאך האכילהו לחם וגו', רבי מאיר אומר: כדי שלא ישול יצעה וימרוד,

רבי יהודה אומר: כדי שלא יבירו בה שהיא יהודית, רבי נחמיה אומר: כדי שלא יאמרו ישראל אחות יש לנו בבית המלך ויסיחו דעתן מן הרחמים. רבי יוסי אומר: כדי שיהא מצוי לה בכל עת. רבי שמעון בן מנסיא אומר: אולי ירגיש המקום ויעשה לנו נס.

רבי יהושע בן קרחה אומר: אסביר לו פנים כדי שיהרג הוא והיא. רבן גמליאל אומר: מלך הפכפכן היה. אמר רבי גמליאל: עדיון צריכין אנו למודעי. דתניא, רבי אליעזר המודעי אומר: קנאתו במלך, קנאתו בשרים.

רבה אומר: "לפני שבר גאון", אבני ורבה דאמרי תרויהו: "בחומם אשית את משתייהם" וגו', אשכחיה רבה בר אבוה לאלהו, אמר ליה: כמאן חזינא אסתרו ועבדא הכי? אמר ליה: ככולהו תנאי וככולהו אמוראי.

"ויספר להם המן את כבוד עשרו ורוב בניו" וכמה רוב בניו? אמר רב שלשים, עשרה מתו, ועשרה נתלו, ועשרה מחזרין על הפתחים.

Rabbi Yehoshua says: She learned to do this from the Jewish teachings of her father's house, as it is stated: "If your enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat" (Proverbs 25:21).ⁿ Rabbi Meir says: She invited him in order that he be near her at all times, so that he would not take counsel and rebel against Ahasuerus when he discovered that the king was angry with him.

Rabbi Yehuda says: She invited Haman so that it not be found out that she was a Jew, as had she distanced him, he would have become suspicious. Rabbi Nehemya says: She did this so that the Jewish people would not say: We have a sister in the king's house, and consequently neglect their prayers for divine mercy. Rabbi Yosei says: She acted in this manner, so that Haman would always be on hand for her, as that would enable her to find an opportunity to cause him to stumble before the king. Rabbi Shimon ben Menasya said that Esther said to herself: Perhaps the Omnipresent will take notice that all are supporting Haman and nobody is supporting the Jewish people, and He will perform for us a miracle.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korḥa says: She said to herself: I will act kindly toward him and thereby bring the king to suspect that we are having an affair; she did so in order that both he and she would be killed. Essentially, Esther was willing to be killed with Haman in order that the decree would be annulled. Rabban Gamliel says: Ahasuerus was a fickle king, and Esther hoped that if he saw Haman on multiple occasions, eventually he would change his opinion of him. Rabban Gamliel said: We still need the words of Rabbi Eliezer HaModa'i to understand why Esther invited Haman to her banquet. As it is taught in a *baraita*: Rabbi Eliezer HaModa'i says: She made the king jealous of him and she made the other ministers jealous of him, and in this way she brought about his downfall.

Rabba says: Esther invited Haman to her banquet in order to fulfill that which is stated: "Pride goes before destruction" (Proverbs 16:18), which indicates that in order to destroy the wicked, one must first bring them to pride. It can be understood according to Abaye and Rava, who both say that she invited Haman in order to fulfill the verse: "When they are heated, I will make feasts for them, and I will make them drunk, that they may rejoice, and sleep a perpetual sleep" (Jeremiah 51:39). The Gemara relates that Rabba bar Avuh^p once happened upon Elijah^p the Prophet and said to him: In accordance with whose understanding did Esther see fit to act in this manner? What was the true reason behind her invitation? He, Elijah, said to him: Esther was motivated by all the reasons previously mentioned and did so for all the reasons previously stated by the *tanna'im* and all the reasons stated by the *amora'im*.

The verse states: "And Haman recounted to them the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his sons" (Esther 5:11). The Gemara asks: And how many sons did he in fact have that are referred to as "the multitude of his sons"?ⁿ Rav said: There were thirty sons; ten of them died in childhood, ten of them were hanged as recorded in the book of Esther, and ten survived and were forced to beg at other people's doors.

PERSONALITIES

Rabba bar Avuh – רבה בר אבוה: Rabba bar Avuh, a second-generation Babylonian *amora*, was a close student of Rav, whose teachings he often quotes. He lived and taught in the city of Meḥoza. His student, Rav Nahman, became his son-in-law and continued to teach much of what he learned from his father-in-law. Although Rabba bar Avuh was a member of the Exilarch's family, he remained poor throughout his life, as he did not want to profit from his Torah knowledge. We find a number of stories in the Talmud that describe his interactions with the Elijah the Prophet, to whom he posed various questions. Rabba bar Avuh's

son, Rav Ḥama, was also a Sage, and two of his descendants were the great *ge'onim* of Babylonia, Rav Sherira Gaon and Rav Hai Gaon.

Elijah – אֱלִיָּהוּ: In many places in the Talmud and the Midrash, Elijah the Prophet appears to people, especially to Sages, and resolves their dilemmas. As it is stated in the Prophets (II Kings 2:11), Elijah did not die, and he continues to serve as an emissary of God. On the one hand, he is the angel of the covenant. On the other hand, he is an individual who alleviates problems in the world.

Numerical value [gimatriyya] – גִּמְטְרִיָּא: Many efforts have been made to find the precise source for this word. It is probably derived from the Greek γεωμετρία, *geometria*, which was understood in the general sense as referring to calculations, and is used in that sense in rabbinic literature. From this it was applied more specifically to calculating the numerical value of the letters of the alphabet.

NOTES

The sleep of the king was disturbed – נִדְּדָה שְׁנַת הַמֶּלֶךְ: It has been explained that since no reason is provided for why the king's sleep was disturbed, it must certainly have been brought about by the prayers of the higher ones, i.e., the angels, and the lower ones, i.e., the Jewish people. Similarly, it is understood that anywhere in the Megilla where the word king appears alone, without mentioning Ahasuerus, it refers to the King of all kings, the Holy One, Blessed be He, which would indicate that God's so-called slumber was disturbed due to the decree against the Jewish people. Others explain that the statement: The sleep of the higher ones was disturbed and the sleep of the lower ones was disturbed, indicates that the sleep of both Mordecai, who is known as the higher one, and Haman, who is known as the lower one, were disturbed on that night, each one for a different reason (*lyyun Ya'akov*).

וּרְבִנְיָא אָמְרִי: אוֹתָן שְׂמַחְרוּזִין עַל הַפְּתָחִים שְׁבַעִים הָיוּ, דְּכָתִיב "שְׁבַעִים בְּלָחֶם נִשְׁכְּרוּ" אֶל תִּקְרִי שְׁבַעִים אֶלָּא שְׁבַעִים.

וְרַמִּי בַר אֲבָא אָמַר: כּוּלֵּן מֵאַתִּים וְשִׂמוּנָה הָיוּ, שְׁנֵאמַר "וְרוּב בְּנֵיו", "וְרוּב" בְּגִמְטְרִיא מֵאַתָּן וְאַרְבֵּיסַר הָיוּ! אָמַר רַב נַחֲמָן בַּר יִצְחָק: "וְרוּב" כְּתִיב.

"בְּלֵילָהּ הַהוּא נִדְּדָה שְׁנַת הַמֶּלֶךְ". אָמַר רַבִּי תַנְחֻם: נִדְּדָה שְׁנַת מַלְכוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, וּרְבִנְיָא אָמְרִי: נִדְּדוּ עֲלוּנִים, נִדְּדוּ תַחְתּוֹנִים. רַבָּא אָמַר: שְׁנַת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶתְשׁוּרוּשׁ מִמֶּשׁ.

נִפְלָה לִיָּה מִיִּלְתָּא בְּדַעְתֵּיהּ, אָמַר: מֵאִי דְקָמֵן דְּזִמְיִנְתֵּיהּ אֶסְתֵּר לְהֶמֶן? דְּלָמָא עֵצָה קָא שְׁקִילִי עִילוּיָה דְהָהוּא גְבַרָא לְמִקְטִלֵּיהּ. הֲדַר אָמַר: אִי הָבִי לָא הָוֵה גְבַרָא דְרַחֲמִים לִי, דְהָוֵה מוֹדַע לִי? הֲדַר אָמַר: דְּלָמָא אִיכָּא אִינְשֵׁי דְעֵבַד בֵּי טִיבוּתָא וְלֹא פְרַעְתֵּיהּ, מִשּׁוּם הָכִי מִימְנַעֵי אִינְשֵׁי וְלֹא מְגַלוּ לִי. מִיָּד "וַיֹּאמֶר לְהַבִּיא אֶת סֵפֶר הַזְּכוֹרוֹת דְּבַרֵּי הַיָּמִים".

"וַיְהִי וְנִקְרְאוּם" – מִלְּמַד שְׁנִקְרְאוּם מֵאִילֵיהֶן. "וַיִּמְצָא כְּתוּב", "כְּתָב" מִבְּעֵי לִיָּה! מִלְּמַד

And the Rabbis say: Those that begged at other people's doors numbered seventy, as it is written: "Those that were full, have hired themselves out for bread" (1 Samuel 2:5). Do not read it as: "Those that were full" [seve'im]; rather, read it as seventy [shivim], indicating that there were seventy who "hired themselves out for bread."

And Rami bar Abba said: All of Haman's sons together numbered two hundred and eight, as it is stated: "And the multitude [verov] of his sons." The numerical value of the word *verov* equals two hundred and eight, alluding to the number of his sons. The Gemara comments: But in fact, the numerical value [gimatriyya]¹ of the word *verov* equals two hundred and fourteen, not two hundred and eight. Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak said: The word *verov* is written in the Bible without the second *vav*, and therefore its numerical value equals two hundred and eight.

The verse states: "On that night the sleep of the king was disturbed" (Esther 6:1).^N Rabbi Tanḥum said: The verse alludes to another king who could not sleep; the sleep of the King of the universe, the Holy One, Blessed be He, was disturbed. And the Sages say: The sleep of the higher ones, the angels, was disturbed, and the sleep of the lower ones, the Jewish people, was disturbed. Rava said: This should be understood literally: The sleep of King Ahasuerus was disturbed.

And this was the reason Ahasuerus could not sleep: A thought occurred to him and he said to himself: What is this before us that Esther has invited Haman? Perhaps they are conspiring against that man, i.e., against me, to kill him. He then said again to himself: If this is so, is there no man who loves me and would inform me of this conspiracy? He then said again to himself: Perhaps there is some man who has done a favor for me and I have not properly rewarded him, and due to that reason people refrain from revealing to me information regarding such plots, as they see no benefit for themselves. Immediately afterward, the verse states: "And he commanded the book of remembrances of the chronicles to be brought" (Esther 6:1).

The verse states: "And they were read before the king" (Esther 6:1). The Gemara explains that this passive form: "And they were read," teaches that they were read miraculously by themselves. It further says: "And it was found written [katuv]" (Esther 6:2). The Gemara asks: Why does the Megilla use the word *katuv*, which indicates that it was newly written? It should have said: A writing [ketav] was found, which would indicate that it had been written in the past. The Gemara explains: This teaches

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שְׂשֻׁמְשֵׁי מוֹחֵק וְגַבְרִיאֵל כּוֹתֵב. אָמַר רַבִּי אֲסִי: דְּרִשׁ רַבִּי שִׁילָא אִישׁ כְּפַר תְּמַרְתָּא: וּמָה כְּתָב שְׁלִמְטָה שְׁלִזְכוּתָן שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵינוֹ נִמְחָק – כְּתָב שְׁלִמְעֵלָה לֹא כָּל שְׁבוּן?

that Shimshai, the king's scribe who hated the Jews (see Ezra 4:17), was erasing^N the description of Mordecai's saving the king, and the angel Gavriel was writing it again. Therefore, it was indeed being written in the present. Rabbi Asi said: Rabbi Sheila, a man of the village of Timarta, taught: If something written down below in this world that is for the benefit of the Jewish people cannot be erased, is it not all the more so the case that something written up above in Heaven cannot be erased?

NOTES

That Shimshai was erasing – שְׂשֻׁמְשֵׁי מוֹחֵק: The book of Ezra states that Shimshai was the scribe who slandered the Jews in order to prevent them from building the Temple. The *Targum* relates that he was Haman's son. The Midrash understands that

the account of Mordecai's saving the king was erased because of the language of the verse: "And it was found written," which indicates that the description needed to be found, as it was lost beforehand, having been erased (*Yalkut Shimoni*).