

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*).

וּרְבַנְיָא אָמְרִי: אוֹתָן שְׂמַחְרוּזִין עַל הַפְּתָחִים שְׁבַעִים הָיוּ, דְּכָתִיב "שְׁבַעִים בְּלֶחֶם נִשְׁכְּרוּ" אֶל תִּקְרִי שְׁבַעִים אֲלֵא שְׁבַעִים.

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."

וְרַמִּי בַר אַבָּא אָמַר: כּוּלֵּן מֵאֲתִים וְשִׁמּוּנָה הָיוּ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "וְרוּב בְּנָיו," וְרוּב בְּגִמְטְרִיא מֵאֲתָן וְאַרְבֵּיסֵר הָיוּ! אָמַר רַב נַחֲמָן בַּר יִצְחָק: "רוּב" כְּתִיב.

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.

"בְּלַיְלָה הָיְוָא נִדְּדָה שְׁנַת הַמֶּלֶךְ." אָמַר רַבִּי תַנְחֻם: נִדְּדָה שְׁנַת מַלְכוּתוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, וּרְבַנְיָא אָמְרִי: נִדְּדוּ עַלְיוֹנִים, נִדְּדוּ תַחְתּוֹנִים. רַבָּא אָמַר: שְׁנַת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁרוּשׁ מִמֶּשׁ.

The verse states: "On that night the sleep of the king was disturbed" (Esther 6:1).^N Rabbi Tanhūm 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.

נִפְלָה לִיָּה מִלֵּתָא בְּדַעְתֵּיהּ, אָמַר: מֵאֵי דְקָמֵן דְּזִמְיִנְתִּיהּ אֶסְתֵּר לְהַמְּן? דְּלֵמָא עֵצָה קָא שְׁקִילִי עִילּוּיָה דֵהָהוּא גְבַרָא לְמַקְטִלִּיהּ. הֲדַר אָמַר: אֵי הָבִי לָא הוּא גְבַרָא דְרַחֲמִים לִי, דֵהָהוּ מוֹדַע לִי? הֲדַר אָמַר: דְּלֵמָא אֵיבָא אֵינְשִׁי דְעֵבַד בֵּי טִיבוּתָא וְלֹא פְרַעְתִּיהּ, מִשּׁוּם הָכִי מִימְנַעֵי אֵינְשִׁי וְלֹא מְגַלּוּ לִי. מִיָּד "וַיֹּאמֶר לְהֵבִיא אֶת סֵפֶר הַזְּכוֹרוֹת דְּבִרֵי הַיָּמִים".

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).

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

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

Perek I

Daf 16 Amud a

שְׁשִׁמְשֵׁי מוֹחֵק וְגַבְרִיאֵל כּוֹתֵב. אָמַר רַבִּי אֲסִי: דְּרֵשׁ רַבִּי שִׁילָא אִישׁ כְּפָר תְּמַרְתָּא: וּמָה בְּתָב שְׁלִמְטָה שְׁלִזְכוּתָן שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵינוֹ נִמְחָק – בְּתָב שְׁלִמְעֵלָה לֹא כָּל שְׁבִין?

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 – שְׁשִׁמְשֵׁי 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*).

NOTES

לֹא מִפְּנֵי שְׂאוּהֵבִין אֶת מֶרְדֵּכַי – Not because they love Mordecai – The idea that they were not fond of Mordecai is indicated in the verse because they did not answer: Nothing of value and greatness was done with him, but rather: “Nothing has been done for him.” Essentially they were saying that it is fitting to do something for him, but not necessarily something of value and greatness (Maharsha). Some emphasize that the fact that they refer to Mordecai in that verse as “him” rather than mentioning his name indicates their lack of love for him (*Kol Yehuda*).

That he had prepared for himself – לוֹ הֵכִין: This exposition is derived primarily through the presence of the apparently superfluous term “for him,” which is understood to refer to Haman himself, as in the end it was he who was hanged on the tree that he prepared for Mordecai (see Rashi). Similarly, the *midrashim* and the *Targum* explain that from the moment Haman prepared the tree, it was already destined from Heaven to be used to hang Haman (see *Turei Even*).

He was demonstrating to them the *halakhot* of the handful – מִחֲוֵי לְהוֹ הֵלְכוֹת קְמִיצָה: The Midrash explains that as that day was the sixteenth of Nisan, on which the *omer* is offered, they were discussing the *halakhot* of the handful of the *omer* offering, which were pertinent to that day.

LANGUAGE

Village [*disekarta*] – דִּי־סֶקֶרְתָּא: From the Middle Persian *dastakard*, meaning an inherited plot of land.

“לֹא נַעֲשָׂה עִמּוֹ דְּבַר”, אָמַר רַבָּא: לֹא מִפְּנֵי שְׂאוּהֵבִין אֶת מֶרְדֵּכַי, אֲלֵא מִפְּנֵי שְׂשׂוּאִים אֶת הָמָן.

“הֵכִין לוֹ”, תָּנָא: לוֹ הֵכִין.

“וַיַּעֲשֶׂה כֵן לְמֶרְדֵּכַי”, אָמַר לִיָּהּ: מִנּוּ מֶרְדֵּכַי? אָמַר לִיָּהּ: “הִיהוּדִי”, אָמַר לִיָּהּ: טוֹבֵא מֶרְדֵּכַי אִיכָא בֵּיהוּדָאִי. אָמַר לִיָּהּ: “הַיּוֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ”.

אָמַר לִיָּהּ סִגֵּי לִיָּהּ בְּחֵד דִּי־סֶקֶרְתָּא. אִי נִמְי בְּחֵד נְהָרָא! אָמַר לִיָּהּ: הָא נִמְי הַב לִיָּהּ, “אֵל תִּפֵּל דְּבַר מְכַל אֲשֶׁר דְּבַרְתָּ”.

“וַיִּקַּח הָמָן אֶת הַלְּבוּשׁ וְאֶת הַסּוּס” אֵיל אֲשַׁפְחִיָּה דִּיתְבִּי רַבְּנָן קַמֵּיהּ, וּמַחֲוֵי לְהוֹ הֵלְכוֹת קְמִיצָה לְרַבְּנָן. כִּיּוֹן דְּחֻזִּיָּה מֶרְדֵּכַי דְּאִפִּיק לְקַבְּלִיהּ, וְסוּסִיהּ מִיחֵד בִּידִיָּהּ, מִירְתָּתָּהּ. אָמַר לְהוֹ לְרַבְּנָן: הַאי רְשִׁיעָא לְמִיקְטֵל נַפְשֵׁי קָא אֲתֵי, זִילוּ מִקַּמֵּיהּ דִּי לֹא תִכּוּוּ בְּגַחְלָתוֹ. בְּהֵהִיא שַׁעְתָּא נִתְעַשְׂתָּ מֶרְדֵּכַי וְקָם לִיָּהּ לְצִלוֹתָא, אֲתָא הָמָן וַיִּתֵּיב לִיָּהּ קַמֵּיהּ וְאוּרִיךְ עַד דְּסָלִיק מֶרְדֵּכַי לְצִלוֹתֵיהּ.

The verse states that Ahasuerus was told with regard to Mordecai: “Nothing has been done for him” (Esther 6:3). Rava said: It is not because they love Mordecai^N that the king’s servants said this, but rather because they hate Haman.

The verse states: “Now Haman had come into the outer court of the king’s house, to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him” (Esther 6:4). A Sage taught in a *baraita*: This should be understood to mean: On the gallows that he had prepared for himself.^N

The verse relates that Ahasuerus ordered Haman to fulfill his idea of the proper way to honor one who the king desires to glorify by parading him around on the king’s horse while wearing the royal garments: “And do so to Mordecai the Jew who sits at the king’s gate, let nothing fail of all that you have spoken” (Esther 6:10). The Gemara explains that when Ahasuerus said to Haman: “And do so to Mordecai,” Haman said to him in an attempt to evade the order: Who is Mordecai? Ahasuerus said to him: “The Jew.” Haman then said to him: There are several men named Mordecai among the Jews. Ahasuerus then said to him: I refer to the one “who sits at the king’s gate.”

Haman said to him: Why award him such a great honor? It would certainly be enough for him to receive one village [*disekarta*]^l as an estate, or one river for the levy of taxes. Ahasuerus said to him: This too you must give him. “Let nothing fail of all that you have spoken,” i.e., provide him with all that you proposed and spoke about in addition to what I had said.

The Gemara describes what occurred as Haman went to follow the king’s orders, as the verse states: “Then Haman took the apparel and the horse” (Esther 6:11). When he went, he found Mordecai as the Sages were sitting before him, and he was demonstrating to them the *halakhot* of the handful,^{NB} i.e., the scooping out of a handful of flour from the meal-offering in order to burn it on the altar. Once Mordecai saw him coming toward him with his horse’s reins held in his hands, he became frightened, and he said to the Sages: This evil man has come to kill me. Go away from him so that you should not get burnt from his coals, i.e., that you should not suffer harm as well. At that moment Mordecai wrapped himself in his prayer shawl and stood up to pray. Haman came over to where they were and sat down before them and waited until Mordecai finished his prayer.

BACKGROUND

Handful – קְמִיצָה: This refers to the scooping out of a handful of flour from the meal-offering in order to burn it on the altar. Most meal-offerings require a handful (see, e.g., Leviticus 2:2). This rite, which paralleled the slaughtering of an animal offering, was performed only by a priest. According to many authorities, the priest would scoop out the flour with the three middle fingers of his right hand, using his thumb and little finger to remove any surplus flour. He would then place the flour in a sacred vessel used in the Temple service in order to consecrate it. Since the priest had to scoop out an exact handful of flour, no more and no less, the scooping of the handful was one of the more difficult rites in the Temple.



Position of priest’s hand after removing surplus flour

Bathroom [*bei vanei*] – בֵּי בַּנֵּי: Apparently from the Greek βαλανεῖον, *balaneyon*, meaning bathroom. The letter *lamed* was subsequently dropped from the word.

Scissors [*zuzā*] – זֻזָּא: From the Greek ζυγόν, *zugon*, meaning yoke or couple. It is similar to *zuga*, and its usage was expanded to other meanings that are connected to pairs, primarily scissors.

Bathroom attendant [*balanei*] – בַּלְּאֵנִי: From the Greek βαλανεύς, *balaneus*, meaning bathroom attendant.

NOTES

As he was ascending Mordecai gave Haman a kick – כִּי סָלַק בָּעַט בֵּיהּ: It is explained that Mordecai tried every possible way to anger Haman, as he hoped that Haman would become angry and hit him, and thereby lose favor in the eyes of the king for failing to fulfill his command of honoring Mordecai (*Yefe Anaf*).

אָמַר לְהוֹ: בְּמַאי עָסְקִיתוּ? אָמְרוּ לֵיהּ: בְּזִמְנָן שְׁבִית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ קַיָּים, מֵאַן דְּמִנְדָּב מִנְחָה מִיַּתֵּי מְלִי קוֹמְצִיָּה דְסוּלְתָא וּמִתְכַּפֵּר לֵיהּ. אָמַר לְהוֹ: אֲתָא מְלִי קוֹמְצִי קִמְחָא דִּידְכּוֹ, וְדַחֵי עֲשָׂה אֲלֵפִי כְּכַרֵּי כֶּסֶף דִּידִי. אָמַר לֵיהּ: רְשָׁע! עֲבַד שְׁקָנָה נְכָסִים – עֲבַד לְמִי, וּנְכָסִים לְמִי?

אָמַר לֵיהּ: קוּם לְבוֹשׁ הַגָּזִי מֵאַנִּי, וּרְכֹב הָאִי סוּסָא, דְּבַעֵי לְךָ מִלְכָּא. אָמַר לֵיהּ: לֹא יְכִילְנָא עַד דְּעֵיילְנָא לְבִי בִּנְי וְאַשְׁקוּל לְמוּזִיא, דְּלֹא אִוְרַח אֲרַעָא לְאַשְׁתְּמוּשֵׁי בְּמֵאַנִּי דְּמִלְכָּא הַכִּי.

שְׁדַרְה אֶסְתֵּר וְאַסְרְתִּינְהוּ לְכוּלְהוּ בֵּי בְּנֵי, וְלְכוּלְהוּ אוּמְנֵי. עֵיילִיה אִיהוּ לְבִי בִּנְי, וְאַסְחִיָּה, וְאַזִּיל וְאַיִתִּי זוּזָא מִבֵּיתִיהּ, וְקָא שְׁקִיל בֵּיהּ מוּזִיָּה. בְּהַדֵּי דְקָא שְׁקִיל לֵיהּ אִינְגַד וְאַתְנַח. אָמַר לֵיהּ: אֲמַאי קָא מִיתְנַחַח? אָמַר לֵיהּ: גְּבִרָא דְהָהוּ חָשִׁיב לֵיהּ לְמִלְכָּא מְכוּלְהוּ רְבִרְבּוּנְהוּ, הַשְׁתָּא לִישׁוּיָהּ בְּלֵאנִי וְסִפְרָא? אָמַר לֵיהּ: רְשָׁע! וְלֹא סִפְרָא שְׁל כְּפַר קְרָצוּם הָיִיתָ? תְּנָא: הַמֶּן סִפְרָא שְׁל כְּפַר קְרָצוּם הָיָה עֲשָׂרִים וּשְׁתַּיִם שָׁנָה.

בְּתַר דְּשְׁקִילְנְהוּ לְמוּזִיָּה לְבִישׁוּנְהוּ לְמֵאַנִּיָּה, אָמַר לֵיהּ: סַק וּרְכֹב. אָמַר לֵיהּ: לֹא יְכִילְנָא, דְּכַחֲשִׂא חֵילָאִי מִימֵי תַעֲנִיתָא. גָּזִין וְסָלִיק. בִּי סָלִיק בָּעַט בֵּיהּ. אָמַר לֵיהּ: לֹא כְּתִיב לְכוּ בְּנִפְלָא אוּיְבָךְ אֶל תִּשְׁמַח? אָמַר לֵיהּ: הַגִּי מִלִּי – בִּישְׂרָאֵל, אֲבָל בְּדִידְכּוֹ כְּתִיב: "וְאַתָּה עַל בְּמוֹתֵימוּ תִדְרוֹךְ".

"וַיִּקְרָא לְפָנָיו בְּכָה יַעֲשֶׂה לְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בְּיָקָרוֹ." כִּי הָיָה נֶקִיט וְאַזִּיל בְּשִׁבְלָא דְבִי הַמֶּן חוּזִיָּה בְּרַתִּיהּ דְּקִימָא אֲאִיגְרָא. סְבָרָה: הָאִי דְרָכִיב – אַבּוּהָ, וְהָאִי דְמִסְגֵי קַמִּיָּה – מְרַדְכִי. שְׁקִלָּה עֲצִיצָא דְבֵיתִי הַכֶּסֶס וְשִׁדְיָתִיהּ אֲרִישָׁא דְאַבּוּהָ. דְלִי עֵינִיָּה וְחוּזִת דְאַבּוּהָ הוּא, נִפְלָה מֵאַיְגְרָא לְאַרְעָא וּמִתָּהּ.

וְהֵינּוּ דְכְּתִיב: "וַיֹּשֶׁב מִרְדְּכִי אֶל שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ" אָמַר רַב שֶׁשֶׁת: שָׁשֶׁב לְשַׁקוּ וּלְתַעֲנִיתוּ. "וְהֵמָּן נִדְחָף אֶל בֵּיתוֹ אֲבָל וְחָפּוּי רֹאשׁ", "אֲבָל" – עַל בֵּיתוֹ, "וְחָפּוּי רֹאשׁ" – עַל שְׂאִירַע לּוֹ.

In the interim, as he waited, Haman said to the other Sages: With what were you occupied? They said to him: When the Temple is standing, one who pledges a meal-offering would bring a handful of fine flour and achieve atonement with it. He said to them: Your handful of fine flour has come and cast aside my ten thousand pieces of silver, which I had pledged toward the destruction of the Jewish people. When Mordecai finished praying, he said to Haman: Wicked man, when a slave buys property, to whom belongs the slave and to whom belongs the property? As I once bought you as a slave, what silver can be yours?

Haman said to him: Stand up, put on these garments and ride on this horse, for the king wants you to do so. Mordecai said to him: I cannot do so until I enter the bathroom [*bei vanei*]¹ and trim my hair, for it is not proper conduct to use the king's garments in this state that I am in now.

In the meantime, Esther sent messengers and closed all the bathhouses and all the shops of the craftsmen, including the bloodletters and barbers. When Haman saw that there was nobody else to do the work, he himself took Mordecai into the bathroom and washed him, and then he went and brought scissors [*zuzā*]¹ from his house and trimmed his hair. While he was trimming his hair he injured himself and sighed. Mordecai said to him: Why do you sigh? Haman said to him: The man whom the king had once regarded above all his other ministers is now made a bathroom attendant [*balanei*]¹ and a barber. Mordecai said to him: Wicked man, were you not once the barber of the village of Kartzum? If so, why do you sigh? You have merely returned to the occupation of your youth. It was taught in a *baraita*: Haman was the barber of the village of Kartzum for twenty-two years.

After Haman trimmed his hair, Haman dressed Mordecai in the royal garments. Haman then said to him: Mount the horse and ride. Mordecai said to him: I am unable, as my strength has waned from the days of fasting that I observed. Haman then stooped down before him and Mordecai ascended on him. As he was ascending the horse, Mordecai gave Haman a kick.^N Haman said to him: Is it not written for you: "Do not rejoice when your enemy falls" (Proverbs 24:17)? Mordecai said to him: This statement applies only to Jews, but with regard to you it is written: "And you shall tread upon their high places" (Deuteronomy 33:29).

The verse states: "And he proclaimed before him: Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor" (Esther 6:11). As Haman was taking Mordecai along the street of Haman's house, Haman's daughter was standing on the roof and saw the spectacle. She thought to herself that the one who is riding on the horse must be her father, and the one walking before him must be Mordecai. She then took a chamber pot full of feces and cast its contents onto the head of her father, whom she mistakenly took as Mordecai. When Haman raised his eyes in disgust afterward, and looked up at his daughter, she saw that he was her father. In her distress, she fell from the roof to the ground and died.

And this is as it is written: "And Mordecai returned to the king's gate" (Esther 6:12). Rav Sheshet said: This means that he returned to his sackcloth and his fasting over the troubles of the Jewish people. Simultaneously, "but Haman hastened to his house, mourning, and having his head covered" (Esther 6:12). "Mourning"; over the death of his daughter. "And having his head covered"; due to what had happened to him, as his head was full of filth.

Whoever says something wise – כָּל הָאוֹמֵר דְּבַר חֲכָמָה – The fact that there are wise men among the nations of the world is not a new idea and is not the novelty in the verse; see, however, the *Hatam Sofer*. Rather, the Gemara is explaining that even though they were previously called “his friends,” their uttering even one wise statement made them worthy of being called “his wise men” (Rashash). They were wise in that they recognized that there are some Jews before whom if Haman falls even once, it is a sign that he will never again be able to prevail over them (Rabbi Yoshiya Pinto). Others explain that they were wise in that they were indicating to Haman that he should flee to save his life. However, before he was able to do this he was taken to the king (Lyyun Ya’akov).

This adversary is not concerned [*eino shoveh*] – צַר זֶה – The word *shoveh* is explained here to mean concerned with, or cares about. The same root is used in the verse “which put forth fruit freely [*yeshaveh*]” (Hosea 10:1).

She was pointing toward Ahasuerus – שֶׁהִיָּתָה מַתְווֹה – כִּלְפֵי אַחַשְׁוֵרוּשׁ: Most of the commentaries explain that she wanted to blame Ahasuerus for his involvement with the decree. However, the *Rishon LeTziyyon* explains that out of emotional excitement she mistakenly pointed her finger at Ahasuerus.

וַיֹּסֶפֶר הַמֶּן לְזֶרֶשׁ אֵשֶׁתוֹ וְלִכְל אֹהֲבָיו וְגו', קָרִי לָהּ "אוֹהֲבָיו" וְקָרִי לָהּ "חֲכָמָיו". אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: כָּל הָאוֹמֵר דְּבַר חֲכָמָה, אֶפְיָלוּ בְּאוֹמוֹת הָעוֹלָם – נִקְרָא חָכֵם.

"אִם מְזַרְעֵי הַיְהוּדִים מֵרַדְכִּי" וְגו', אָמְרוּ לִיָּהּ: אִי מִשְׂאָר שְׂבָטִים קָאָתִי – יְכַלֶּת לִיָּהּ, וְאִי מִשְׂבֵּט יְהוּדָה וּבְנֵימִין וְאַפְרַיִם וּמְנַשֶּׁה – לֹא יְכַלֶּת לִיָּהּ. יְהוּדָה – דְּכַתִּיב "יָדָךְ בְּעַרְףְּ אוֹיְבֶיךָ", אֵינְךָ – דְּכַתִּיב בָּהּ "לִפְנֵי אֶפְרַיִם וּבְנֵימִין וּמְנַשֶּׁה עוֹרְרָה אֶת גְּבוּרַתְךָ".

"כִּי נִפְּוֹל תִּפְּוֹל לִפְנֵינוּ", דִּרְשׁ רַבִּי יְהוּדָה בַּר אֶלְעָאִי: שְׁתֵּי נִפְּוֹלוֹת הִלְלוּ לָמָּה? אָמְרוּ לוֹ: אֹמְרָה זֶה מִשְׁוֹלָה לְעַפְר וּמִשְׁוֹלָה לְכּוֹכָבִים, כְּשֶׁהֵן יוֹרְדִין – יוֹרְדִין עַד עַפְר, וּכְשֶׁהֵן עוֹלִין – עוֹלִין עַד לְכּוֹכָבִים.

"וְסָרִיסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ הִגִּיעוּ וַיִּבְהִילוּ" – מִלְּמַד שֶׁהִבִּיאוּהוּ בְּבִהָלָהּ.

"כִּי נִמְכַרְנוּ אִנִּי וְעַמִּי" וְגו' "כִּי אִין הִצַּר שׁוּהָ בְּנִיק הַמֶּלֶךְ" אָמְרָה לוֹ: צַר זֶה אֵינּוּ שׁוּהָ בְּנִיק שֶׁל מֶלֶךְ: אֵינְנִי בַּהּ בּוֹשֵׁתִי – וְקִטְלָהּ, הַשְׁתָּא אֵינְנִי בְּדִידִי – וּמִבְּעֵי לְמִקְטָלִי.

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוּשׁ וַיֹּאמֶר לְאַסְתֵּר הַמֶּלֶכָּה, "וַיֹּאמֶר" וַיֹּאמֶר לָמָּה לֵי? אָמַר רַבִּי אֲבָהוּ: בְּתַחֲלָה עַל יַדִּי תוֹרַגְמָן, בֵּינָן דְּאַמְרָה לִיָּהּ: מִדְּבֵית שְׂאוּל קָאָתִינָא – מִיָּד וַיֹּאמֶר לְאַסְתֵּר הַמֶּלֶכָּה.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר אִישׁ צַר וְאוֹיֵב הַמֶּן הָרַע הַזֶּה" אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר: מִלְּמַד שֶׁהִיָּתָה מַתְווֹה כִּלְפֵי אַחַשְׁוֵרוּשׁ, וּבֵא מִלְּאֶךְ וְסָטֵר יָדָהּ כִּלְפֵי הַמֶּן.

The following verse states: “And Haman recounted to Zeresh his wife and to all his friends everything that had befallen him. Then his wise men and Zeresh his wife said to him: If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, be of the seed of the Jews, then you will not prevail over him, but you shall fall before him” (Esther 6:13). The Gemara comments: At the beginning of the verse it calls them “his friends,” and in the continuation of the verse it calls them “his wise men.” Rabbi Yoḥanan said: Whoever says something wise,ⁿ even if he is from the nations of the world, is called a wise man.

The Gemara explains that their wise remark, which earned them their distinction, is contained in their advice: “If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews [*Yehudim*], then you will not prevail over him” (Esther 6:13). The word *Yehudim* can also refer to people from the tribe of Judah. Haman’s wise men thereby said to him: If he descends from the other tribes, you can still prevail over him, but if he descends from the tribe of either Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, or Manasseh, you cannot prevail over him. With regard to Judah, the proof of this is as it is written: “Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies” (Genesis 49:8), indicating that Judah will emerge victorious over his enemies. And the proof that Haman cannot prevail over the others that were mentioned is as it is written with regard to them: “Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up Your might” (Psalms 80:3).

The wise men continued: “But you shall fall [*nafol tippol*] before him” (Esther 6:13). Rabbi Yehuda bar Ilai interpreted a verse homiletically: Why are these two fallings, *nafol* and *tippol*, mentioned here? The wise men said to Haman: This Jewish nation is compared in the Bible to the dust of the earth and it is also compared to the stars in heaven. This teaches you that when they descend, they descend to the dust, and when they rise, they rise to the stars. Accordingly, when Mordecai is on the rise, you will be utterly incapable of prevailing over him.

The next verse states: “The king’s chamberlains came, and they hastened [*vayavhilu*] to bring Haman” (Esther 6:14). This teaches that they brought him in disarray [*behala*], not even giving him a chance to wash himself from the filth.

During the banquet Esther said to Ahasuerus: “For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to be annihilated. But if we had been sold merely for bondmen and bondwomen, I would have held my tongue, since the affliction [*tzar*] would not have been worth [*eino shoveh*] the damage to the king” (Esther 7:4). The Gemara explains that she said to him: This adversary [*tzar*] is not concerned [*eino shoveh*]ⁿ about the damage that he is constantly causing to the king. First he was jealous of Vashti and killed her, as it has been explained that Memucan, who suggesting killing Vashti, was Haman; now he is jealous of me and desires to kill me.

The verse states: “Then said the king Ahasuerus and said to Esther the queen” (Esther 7:5). The Gemara asks: Why do I need it to say “said” and again “said”? Rabbi Abbahu said: At first he spoke to her through the translator, who would interpret on his behalf, because he thought that she was a common woman of lowly ancestry. Once she told him that she came from the house of Saul, immediately it says: “And said to Esther the queen.” Ahasuerus himself spoke to her, as if she had royal lineage, she was a woman befitting his status.

The next verse states: “And Esther said: An adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman” (Esther 7:6). Rabbi Elazar said: This teaches that she was in fact pointing toward Ahasuerus,ⁿ indicating that in fact he was an adversary and enemy, and an angel came and pushed her hand toward Haman.

Was also...involved in that plot – באותה עצה היה – The proof that Harbonah was involved in the plot is that otherwise he would not have known that the tree planned for hanging Mordecai was exactly fifty cubits tall (Maharsha; Yefe Mareh).

“והמלך קם בחמתו” וגו’ “והמלך שב מגנת הבית” מקיש שיבה לקימה, מה קימה בחימה – אף שיבה בחימה, דאזל ואשכח למלאכי השרת דאידמו ליה בגברי וקא עקרו לאילני דבוסתנו, ואמר לה: מאי עובדיכו? אמרו ליה: דפקדינו המן.

The verse states: “And the king arose from the banquet of wine in his wrath and went into the palace garden” (Esther 7:7), and the next verse states: “Then the king returned out of the palace garden to the place of the wine drinking” (Esther 7:8). The Gemara comments: The verses here compare his returning to his arising: Just as his arising was in wrath, so too, his returning was in wrath. And why did he return in wrath? For when he went out he found ministering angels who appeared to him as people and they were uprooting trees from the garden, and he said to them: What are you doing? They said to him: Haman commanded us to do this.

אתא לבייתה “והמן נפל על המטה” “נופל”? נפל מיבעי ליה! אמר רבי אלעזר: מלמד שבא מלאך והפילו עליה. אמר: ווי מביתא ווי מברא. “ויאמר המלך הגם לבוש את המלכה עמי בבית”.

And when he entered his house he saw that “Haman was falling upon the bed” (Esther 7:8). The Gemara asks: Why does it say “was falling” [*nofel*] in the present tense, implying that he was currently falling? It should have said “fell” [*nafal*] in the past tense. Rabbi Elazar said: This teaches that an angel came and pushed him down on it, and every time he would try to stand up, the angel would push him down again. Ahasuerus said: Woe unto me in the house and woe unto me outside, as the verse continues: “Then the king said: Will he even force the queen before me in the house?” (Esther 7:8).

“ויאמר חרבונה” וגו’ אמר רבי אלעזר: אף חרבונה רשע באותה עצה היה, בין שראה שלא נתקיימה עצתו – מיד ברח, והיינו דכתיב “וישלך עליו ולא יחמול מידו ברוח יברח”.

“And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman has made for Mordecai, who spoke good for the king, stands in the house of Haman” (Esther 7:9). Rabbi Elazar said: Harbonah was also wicked and involved in that plot,^N as he too wanted Mordecai executed. Once he saw that his plot had not succeeded, he immediately fled and joined Mordecai’s side. And this is the meaning of that which is written: “It hurls itself at him, and does not spare; he would fain flee out of its hand” (Job 27:22), indicating that when God sends calamity upon a wicked person, his friends immediately flee from him.

“וחמת המלך שככה”, שתי שכיכות הללו למה? אחת של מלכו של עולם ואחת של אחשוורוש, ואמרי לה: אחת של אסתר ואחת של ושתאי.

The verse states: “Then the king’s wrath was assuaged [*shakhakha*]” (Esther 7:10). The Gemara asks: Why are there two assuagings here? The term *shakhakha* is used rather than *shaka* and indicates doubled wrath. There was one assuaging of the wrath of the King of the universe, and one of the wrath of Ahasuerus. And some say: Ahasuerus’s wrath burned within him for two reasons; one due to Haman’s involvement with Esther, and one due to his involvement with Vashti, and now they were both assuaged.

“לכלם נתן לאיש חליפות שמלות ולבנימן נתן...חמש חליפות”, אפשר דבר שנצטער בו אותו צדיק

Before continuing its midrashic interpretation of the rest of the book of Esther, the Gemara expounds a verse concerning Joseph that relates to the Megilla: “To all of them he gave each man changes of clothing, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of clothing” (Genesis 45:22). The Gemara asks: Is it possible that in the very thing from which that righteous man Joseph had suffered, as his father’s show of favoritism toward him aroused the enmity of his brothers,

Perek I

Daf 16 Amud b

יכשל בו?! דאמר רבא בר מחסיה אמר רב חמא בר גוריא אמר רב: בשביל משקל שני סלעים מילת שהוסוף יעקב ליוסף משאר אחיו – נתגלגל הדבר, וירדו אבותינו למצרים. אמר רבי בנימן בר יפת: רמו רמו לו, שעתיד בן לצאת ממנו שיצא מלפני המלך בחמשה לבושי מלכות, שנאמר “ומרדכי יצא... לבבוש מלכות תכלת” וגו’.

he himself should stumble^N by showing favoritism to Benjamin? As Rava bar Meḥaseyya said that Rav Ḥama bar Gurya said that Rav said: Due to the weight of two sela of fine wool that Jacob gave to Joseph, which he added to what he gave Joseph beyond what he gave the rest of his brothers, as he made him his special coat, the story progressed and our forefathers went down to Egypt. How then could Joseph have displayed similar favoritism toward Benjamin? Rabbi Binyamin bar Yefet said: He was not showing favoritism. Rather, he intimated to him that a descendant was destined to issue from him who would go out from the presence of the king wearing five royal garments, as it is stated: “And Mordecai went forth from the presence of the king in royal apparel of sky blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a wrap of fine linen and purple” (Esther 8:15).

NOTES

He should stumble – יכשל בו – It is explained that the Gemara is indicating that especially since the favoritism Jacob demonstrated toward Joseph involved a preferred garment, it is not fitting that Joseph should single out his brother Benjamin for special treatment with regard to preferred garments (*Shenot Hayyim*; see Maharsha). For this reason, the Gemara mentions only the garments and does not comment on the additional three hundred pieces of silver he received. See the later authorities, who explain this at length.

On... Benjamin's neck – על צוֹאֲרֵי בִנְיָמִן: The Gemara's comment can be better understood in light of the fact that in several *midrashim* the Temple is referred to as the neck. Most notable in this regard is the Sages' explanation of the blessing that Moses gave to the tribe of Benjamin: "And he dwells between his shoulders" (Deuteronomy 33:17), as referring to the Temple, as the neck, which rests between the shoulders, is indicative of the Temple (Rashash).

Light, this is Torah – אורה זו תורה: One might wonder what is the connection between the salvation of Purim and the light associated with the happiness of Torah, Shabbat, and circumcision. Some commentaries explain, based on the description in tractate *Shabbat* (89a), that during the time of Mordecai, the Jewish people reaccepted the Torah upon themselves. Therefore, the verse refers to the Torah itself and to several mitzvot with which the Jewish people renewed their connection in the aftermath of the miracle (*Zikkaron BaSefer*). Others write, based on the *Targum*, including Rashi, who built his explanation on it, that these mitzvot are singled out because Haman had outlawed their observance, and that when the decree was annulled the Jews once again fulfilled these mitzvot. See the later authorities, who question Rashi's source. Furthermore, the mention of the mitzvot is significant, as the verse indicates that "many from the peoples of the land became Jews" (Esther 8:17), and thereby there was widespread mitzva observance, both new and renewed (Maharsha). Additionally, others understand that since all of the mitzvot mentioned distinguish the Jews from others, during the period of the decree against the Jewish people the Jews observed these mitzvot only in private, so as not to be associated as Jews. After the decree was annulled, they resumed practicing them in public (*Derashot HaRan*).

ויפול על צוֹאֲרֵי בִנְיָמִן אָחִיו – כמה צוֹאֲרֵי הוּוּ לִיה לְבִנְיָמִין? אָמַר רַבִּי אֱלֵעָזָר: בָּכָה עַל שְׁנֵי מִקְדָּשִׁים שֶׁעָתִידִין לְהִיטּוֹת בְּחֻלְקוֹ שֶׁל בִּנְיָמִין, וְעָתִידִין לְיַחֲרַב. וּבִנְיָמִין בָּכָה עַל צוֹאֲרָיו – בָּכָה עַל מִשְׁכַּן שִׁילֹה שֶׁעָתִיד לְהִיטּוֹת בְּחֻלְקוֹ שֶׁל יוֹסֵף, וְעָתִיד לְיַחֲרַב.

וְהִנֵּה עֵינֵיכֶם רוֹאוֹת וְעֵינַי אֲחִי בִנְיָמִין. אָמַר רַבִּי אֱלֵעָזָר, אָמַר לָהֶם: כְּשֶׁם שָׂאִין בְּלִבִּי עַל בִּנְיָמִין אֲחִי שֶׁלֹּא הִיָּה בְּמִכְרֹתִי – כִּךְ אֵין בְּלִבִּי עֲלֵיכֶם. "כִּי פִי הִמְדַּבֵּר אֵלֵיכֶם," כִּפִּי – בֵּן לִבִּי.

וְלֹאֲבִיו שִׁלַּח כְּזֹאת עֶשְׂרֵה חֲמוּרִים נוֹשְׂאִים מְטוֹב מְצָרִים. מֵאִי "מְטוֹב מְצָרִים"? אָמַר רַבִּי בִּנְיָמִין בַּר יֶפֶת אֱמַר רַבִּי אֱלֵעָזָר: שִׁלַּח לוֹ יַיִן [יִשְׁוֹן] שֶׁדַּעַת זְקֵנִים נוֹחָה הַיָּמָנָה.

וַיִּלְכוּ גַם אֲחָיו וַיִּפְּלוּ לִפְנֵי, אָמַר רַבִּי בִּנְיָמִין בַּר יֶפֶת אֱמַר רַבִּי אֱלֵעָזָר: הֵינְנוּ דֹאֲמָרֵי אֲנִישֵׁי: תַּעֲלֵא בְּעֵינֵינוּ סִגִּיד לִיה.

תַּעֲלֵא? מֵאִי בְּצִירוּתִיהָ מֵאֲחֻוּהָ?! אֵלֶּא, אִי אֵיתָמַר הָכִי אֵיתָמַר: וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל רֹאשׁ הַמִּטָּה, אָמַר רַבִּי בִּנְיָמִין בַּר יֶפֶת אֱמַר רַבִּי אֱלֵעָזָר: תַּעֲלֵא בְּעֵינֵינוּ סִגִּיד לִיה.

וַיְנַחֵם אוֹתָם וַיְדַבֵּר עַל לִבָּם" אָמַר רַבִּי בִּנְיָמִין בַּר יֶפֶת אֱמַר רַבִּי אֱלֵעָזָר: מִלְּמַד שָׂאֲמַר לָהֶם דְּבָרִים שֶׁמִּתְקַבְּלִין עַל הַלֵּב: וַיִּמָּה עֶשְׂרֵה נְרוֹת לֹא יָכִלוּ לְכַבּוֹת נֵר אֶחָד – נֵר אֶחָד הַיֶּאֱכָר יָכוֹל לְכַבּוֹת עֶשְׂרֵה נְרוֹת?

לִיהוּדִים הִתְהַ אֹרְהָ וְשִׂמְחָה וְשִׂשׁוֹן וְיִקְרָ, אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה: "אֹרְהָ" זוֹ תוֹרָה, וְכֵן הוּא אֹמֵר "כִּי נֵר מְצוּהָ וְתוֹרָה אֹרֵר." שִׂמְחָה – זֶה יוֹם טוֹב, וְכֵן הוּא אֹמֵר "וְשִׂמְחָת בְּחַגְגְךָ," "שִׂשׁוֹן" – זוֹ מִילָה, וְכֵן הוּא אֹמֵר "שֶׁשׁ אֲנִי עַל אֲמֵרְתְךָ."

The Gemara elaborates on certain elements in the story of Joseph and his brothers. The verse states with regard to Joseph: "And he fell on his brother Benjamin's neck [*tzavarei*]^N and wept" (Genesis 45:14). The wording of the verse gives rise to a question, as the word *tzavarei* is plural, meaning necks: How many necks did Benjamin have, such that the verse should use the plural *tzavarei* rather than the singular *tzavar*? Rabbi Elazar said: This intimates that Joseph cried over the two Temples that were destined to be in the tribal territory of Benjamin and were destined to be destroyed. The same verse continues: "And Benjamin wept on his neck" (Genesis 45:14); he cried over the tabernacle of Shiloh that was destined to be in the tribal territory of Joseph and was destined to be destroyed.

The verse states: "And behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin" (Genesis 45:12). Rabbi Elazar said: Joseph said to his brothers as follows: Just as I certainly harbor no resentment in my heart toward my brother Benjamin, for he was not even present when I was sold, so too, I harbor no resentment toward you. The verse continues: "That it is my mouth [*kifi*] that speaks to you" (Genesis 45:12), i.e., As my mouth [*kefi*] is, so is my heart.

The verse states: "And to his father he sent after this manner ten donkeys laden with the good things of Egypt" (Genesis 45:23). The Gemara asks: What are "the good things of Egypt" that are mentioned but not specified here? Rabbi Binyamin bar Yefet said that Rabbi Elazar said: He sent him aged wine, which the elderly find pleasing.

Following Jacob's death, it states concerning Joseph: "And his brothers even went and fell down before him" (Genesis 50:18). Rabbi Binyamin bar Yefet said that Rabbi Elazar said: This explains the folk saying that people say: When the fox is in its hour, bow down to it, i.e., if a fox is appointed king, one must bow down before and submit oneself to it.

The Gemara expresses astonishment at the use of this parable: Are you calling Joseph a fox? What, was he inferior to his brothers such that in relation to them you call him a fox? Rather, if such a statement was stated, it was stated as follows, not in connection with this verse, but rather in connection with a different verse. The verse states: "And Israel bowed himself upon the head of the bed" (Genesis 47:31). With regard to this, Rabbi Binyamin bar Yefet said that Rabbi Elazar said: When the fox is in its hour, bow down to it, as Jacob had to bow down before his son Joseph, who had reached greatness.

It says with regard to Joseph's remarks to his brothers: "And he comforted them and spoke to their hearts" (Genesis 50:21). Rabbi Binyamin bar Yefet said that Rabbi Elazar said: This teaches that he spoke to them words that are acceptable to the heart, and alleviated their fears. This is what he said: If ten lights could not put out one light, as all of you were unable to do me harm, how can one light put out ten lights?

§ The Gemara returns to its explanation of the Megilla. The verse states: "The Jews had light and gladness, and joy and honor" (Esther 8:16). Rav Yehuda said: "Light"; this is referring to the Torah^N that they once again studied. And similarly it says: "For the mitzva is a lamp and the Torah is light" (Proverbs 6:23). "Gladness" [*simha*]; this is referring to the Festivals that they once again observed. And similarly it says: "And you shall be glad [*vesamakhta*] on your Festival" (Deuteronomy 16:14). "Joy" [*sasson*]; this is referring to circumcision, as they once again circumcised their sons. And similarly it says: "I rejoice [*sas*] at Your word" (Psalms 119:162), which the Sages understood as referring to David's rejoicing over the mitzva of circumcision.

The ten sons of Haman...in one breath – ...עשרת בני המן – בנשימה אחת: The names of the ten sons of Haman and the word “ten” must be said in one breath, in accordance with the opinion of Rav Adda, and this is specifically *ab initio*. After the fact, however, if the reader paused, he has fulfilled his obligation (see *Tosafot*). The Rema, based on the Maharil and others, says that it is customary to read in one breath from the words “five hundred” until and including the word “ten” (*Shulḥan Arukh, Orah Ḥayyim 690:15*).

The *vav* in *Vaizatha* – וי דיוותא: One must extend the *vav* in the name *Vaizatha*. The Rema points out that this refers to extending the letter when writing it; he further explains that some say this refers to extending the sound when reading it (*Shulḥan Arukh, Orah Ḥayyim 691:4*).

All of the songs in the Bible are written – כל השירות בולן – בכתבות: One must write the songs in the Bible, e.g., the Song of the Sea, the Song of David, in a dispersed fashion, with the style of a whole brick on top of a half brick. If a song is written in the form of prose, as the rest of the Torah, it is invalid. If, however, it is written in a dispersed fashion, but in a different style than is traditionally done, for instance, it was written with a whole brick on top of a half brick, then it is valid (*Shulḥan Arukh, Yoreh De'a 275:3*).

NOTES

Must be elongated as a pole – צריך למיתתה בקיפא: The commentaries disagree as to the exact meaning of this statement. Some write that the letter *vav* here must be extended to be a larger *vav* (Meiri), while others write that the *vav* is written normally but must be read in an extended melody (Rid; Rabbi Aharon HaLevi). Still others understand that both of these explanations are correct and required (Rabbeinu Yehonatan), and some commentaries write that this *vav* must be written in a unique form, with its head raised upward like a pillar (Ran; Ritva).

LANGUAGE

Ship [*liberot*] – לירות: Possibly from the Greek λιβυρνίς, *liburnis*, indicating a Liburnian ship, which was a large ship whose steering oars were understandably very large. Alternatively, *liberot* is the name of a river or a lake (*Arukh*).

“ויקר” – אלו תפלין, וכן הוא אומר “וראו כל עמי הארץ כי שם ה' נקרא עליך ויראו ממך” ותניא, רבי אליעזר הגדול אומר: אלו תפלין שבראש.

“Honor”; this is referring to *phylacteries*, which they once again donned. And similarly it says: “And all peoples of the earth will see that you are called by the name of the Lord; and they will be afraid of you” (Deuteronomy 28:10). And it was taught in a *baraita*: Rabbi Eliezer the Great said: This is referring to the *phylacteries* worn on the head. Haman had banned the fulfillment of all the mitzvot mentioned, but upon Haman’s demise the Jews returned to their observance.

“ואת פרשנדתא” וגו’ “עשרת בני המן”, אמר רב אדא דמן יפו: עשרת בני המן ועשרת – צריך לממרינהו בנשימה אחת. מאי טעמא – כולהו בהדי הדדי נפקו נשמתיהו. אמר רבי יוחנן: ויו דיוותא צריך למיתתה בקיפא כמורדיא דלברות. מאי טעמא? כולהו בחד וקיפא אודקיפו.

The verse states: “And in Shushan the capital the Jews slew and destroyed five hundred men. And Parshandatha ... and Vaizatha, the ten sons of Haman” (Esther 9:6–10). Rav Adda from Jaffa said: When reading the Megilla, the names of the ten sons of Haman and the word “ten” must be said in one breath.^H What is the reason for this? It is that their souls all departed together. Rabbi Yohanan said: The letter *vav* in the name “Vaizatha” is a lengthened *vav*^H and must be elongated as a pole,^N like a steering oar of a ship [*liberot*].^L What is the reason for this? To indicate that they were all hanged on one pole.

אמר רבי חנינא בר פפא: דרש רבי שילא איש כפר תמרתא: כל השירות בולן בכתבות אריח על גבי לבינה ולבינה על גבי אריח.

Rabbi Hanina bar Pappa said that Rabbi Sheila, a man of the village of Timarta, interpreted a verse homiletically: All of the songs in the Bible are written^{Hb} in the form of a half brick arranged upon a whole brick and a whole brick arranged upon a half brick, i.e., each line of the song is divided into a stitch of text, referred to as a half brick, which is separated by a blank space, referred to as a whole brick, from the concluding stitch of that line of text.

BACKGROUND

Writing the songs – כתיבת השירות: Usually the text of the Torah and the other books of the Bible is written closely spaced, with virtually no empty spaces in the writing, with the exception of the lengthier empty spaces in the text that are intended to act as breaks between portions or between books of the Torah. Songs in the Torah, on the other hand, are written differently, as blank spaces are placed in the text to differentiate between different sections of the verses. The songs are written in two

different forms. One, like the Song of the Sea, is written in the style of a whole brick on top of a half brick and a half brick on top of a whole brick, meaning that the long and short rows are written on top of one another, as in the way a building is built. The second form is like the list of the ten sons of Haman, written as a whole brick on top of a whole brick and a half brick on top of a half brick, meaning that sections of the verses that are similar in length are placed one on top of another.

אז ישיר משה ובני ישראל את השירה הזאת ליהוה ויאמרו לאמר
 אשירה ליהוה כי גאה גאה ורכבו רמה בים
 וישועה לישועה זה אכיל ואגדהו יהוה איש מלחמה יהוה
 אביו וארמבנותו מרכבת פרעה וזיכורו ירה בים ומבואר
 שלשיו טבעו בים סוף תהמות יסכימו ירדו במעלות כמו
 אבן ימנך יהוה גאדרי בכוח ימנך יהוה תהרס
 וברב גאותך תהרס קמור קמור תשכח זרעך יאכלמו בקול
 גצבו כמו זר קפאו תהמות בלב ים איוב ארדף אשתי
 גפשי אריק זרבי תורישמו ירו עכלו כעופרת במים
 ברויך כסמו ים אדירים מי כמכה באלם יהוה
 גורא תהלת עשה פלא כמכה גאדר בקדש גשית ימנך תבלעמו ארץ
 גזית עם זו גאלת שמיעו עמים ירגזון תהלת בערך אל גזר
 קדשך איוב ישיבו פלישת איוב מואב יאוזמו רעד
 אדום כל ישיבי כנען תפל עליהם אימותה
 יפחדו בגדל זרעך ידמו כאבן עד יעבר עם זו
 יעבר עמך יהוה תבאמו ותשלמו בהר זכותך מוסף
 קצית לשבתך פעלות יהוה מקדש אדני כולו
 ידך יהוה ימנך לעלם ועד כי בא סוף פרעה ופרישיו בים
 וישב יהוה עלהם את מי הים ובני ישראל הלכו בים יבשה בתוך הים



Song of the Sea as it appears in a Torah scroll

List of the ten sons of Haman as it appears in a Megilla scroll

Except for this song – חוץ משירה זו: In fact, the song of Ha'azinu (Deuteronomy, chapter 32) is likewise written as a half brick upon a half brick. Still, the Gemara does not mention it, either because the rule stated here is only in reference to songs referring to miracles, such as the death of Haman's sons, or because the song of Ha'azinu also includes the downfall of the wicked and therefore it is fitting for it to be written in this manner (see Meiri and later authorities).

Let it be said by mouth – יאמר בפה: One interpretation of Esther's request is that she asked Ahasuerus for permission to sanction the commemoration of the miracle and the reading of the Megilla aloud, although it could possibly be seen as slightly critical of the king (Ritva; see *Or Hadash* and Maharam Schiff). A second understanding is that Esther requested that the announcers should also proclaim this matter out loud for all to hear and not only distribute the letters (Ritva).

As the Torah itself – כבאמתה של תורה: The *ge'onim* cite an alternative version of the text, which reads: As a true Torah; what does this refer to? It is like Elazar, and Moses, and the *Eida*, and the *Nesi'im*. This version of the text also appears in the Jerusalem Talmud (see Meiri). The *ge'onim* explain this version of the text as referring to the episode with the daughters of Zelophehad, who had approached Moses, Elazar, and the princes of the tribes in their efforts to gain a portion of Eretz Yisrael. The message of the Gemara is therefore that even though the incidents recorded in the Megilla are heavily focused on the actions of women, such as Esther and Vashti, it represents the truth and essence of the Torah, and likewise should require scoring the parchment just as does the story of Zelophehad's daughters in the Torah.

However, Rashi and most of the early authorities explain that the intention of the Gemara is simply that the lines of a Megilla must be scored just as the lines of a scroll of the Torah are scored. Rabbeinu Hananel and the *Arukh*, as well as Rabbeinu Tam, whose explanation is recorded at length in the *Sefer HaYashar*, explain that in fact a Torah scroll does not need to be scored, and that the Gemara is stating that a Megilla needs to be scored just as a *mezuzah* needs to be scored. They explain that a *mezuzah* is referred to as a true Torah, as it contains the *Shema*, which declares the essence of faith in the truth of God and of Torah. The Ritva, however, attempts to prove that Rashi is correct based on the parallel passage in the Jerusalem Talmud.

חוץ משירה זו ומלכי כנען, שאריח על גבי אריח, ולבינה על גבי לבינה. מאי טעמא? שלא תהא תקומה למפלגין.

”ויאמר המלך לאסתר המלכה בשושן הבריחה הרגו היהודים”, אמר רבי אבהו: מלמד שבא מלאך וספרו על פיו.

”ובבאה לפני המלך אמר עם הספר: “אמר? אמרה מיבעי ליה! אמר רבי יוחנן: אמרה לו: יאמר בפה מה שכתוב בספר.”

”דברי שלום ואמת”, אמר רבי תנחום, ואמרי לה אמר רבי אסי: מלמד שצריכה שרטוט באמתה של תורה.

”ויאמר אסתר קיים”, “מאמר אסתר” – אין, “דברי הצמות” – לא? אמר רבי יוחנן: “דברי הצמות...” “ויאמר אסתר קיים (את ימי) הפורים האלה.”

”כי מרדכי היהודי משנה למלך אחשורוש וגדול ליהודים ורצוי לרוב אחיו”, “לרוב אחיו” – ולא לכל אחיו, מלמד: שפירשו ממנו מקצת סנהדרין.

The next line of the song inverts the sequence. **This is the principle for all songs in the Bible except for this song**,^N referring to the list of Haman's sons, and the song listing the kings of Canaan who were defeated by Joshua. These two songs are written in the form of a half brick arranged upon a half brick and a whole brick arranged upon a whole brick, i.e., one stitch of text over another, and one blank space over another. **What is the reason that these two songs are written in this anomalous fashion? So that they should never rise from their downfall.** Just as a wall that is built in this manner will not stand, so too, these individuals should have no resurgence.^H

The verse states: “**And the king said to Esther the queen: The Jews have slain and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the capital, and also the ten sons of Haman; what have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? Now what is your petition and it shall be granted to you; and what more do you request, and it shall be done**” (Esther 9:12). **Rabbi Abbahu said: This teaches that an angel came and slapped him on his mouth**, so that he was unable to finish what he was saying; he started with a complaint about what the Jews were doing, but ended on an entirely different note.

The verse states: “**But when she came before the king, he said with a letter**” (Esther 9:25). Why does it say: “**He said**”? It should have said: “**She said**,” as it was Esther who changed the decree. **Rabbi Yoḥanan said: She said to Ahasuerus: Let it be said by word of mouth**,^N indicating that that which is written in the letter should also be ordered verbally.

With regard to what is stated: “**Words of peace and truth**” (Esther 9:30), **Rabbi Tanḥum said, and some say that Rabbi Asi said: This teaches that a Megilla scroll requires scoring**,^H i.e., that the lines for the text must be scored onto the parchment, **as the Torah itself**,^N i.e., as is done in a Torah scroll.

The verses say: “The matters of the fasts and their cry. **And the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim**” (Esther 9:31–32). The Gemara asks: Should we say that “**the decree of Esther**” indeed confirmed these matters of Purim, but “**the matters of the fasts**” did not? But didn't the fasts also contribute to the miracle? **Rabbi Yoḥanan said: These two verses, “The matters of the fasts and their cry. And the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim,” should be read as one.**

The verse states: “**For Mordecai the Jew was second to the king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted by the majority of his brethren**” (Esther 10:3). The Gemara comments: The verse indicates that Mordecai was accepted only “**By the majority of his brethren**,” but not by all his brethren. **This teaches that some members of the Sanhedrin parted from him**, because he occupied himself with community needs, and was therefore compelled to neglect his Torah study. They felt that this was a mistake and that he should have remained active on the Sanhedrin.

HALAKHA

The ten sons of Haman – עשרת בני המן: The ten sons of Haman must be written in the Megilla as a song, in a manner different from the standard writing. However, the passage is not written like other songs, with blank spaces above the words. Rather, the blank spaces are between the words, and the lines of words are written on top of one another. This is the only valid way to write this portion of the Megilla. It is stated in the Jerusalem Talmud that the word “man” [*ish*] should ideally be written in the beginning of the folio of the Megilla and the word “and” [*ve'et*] at the end of it. Nevertheless, the *Magen Avraham* holds that

if it is not written in this manner it is valid, while the *Sheyarei Keneset HaGedola* writes that it is invalid (*Shulḥan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 691:3–4).

A Megilla scroll requires scoring – צריכה שרטוט: The Megilla parchment must be scored before it is written, just as is done with a Torah scroll. However, it is enough to score the first line (*Magen Avraham*, citing *Levush*), though the *Hakham Tzvi* and the Vilna Gaon disagree, saying that all lines require scoring (*Shulḥan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 691:1).

Greater than saving lives – יותר מהצלת נפשות: The Gemara is not indicating that saving lives is less important than studying Torah; rather, since Mordecai had already saved the Jews, a number of Sages were angry with him for continuing to be involved in affairs of state with the intention of preventing further danger to Jews, as in this regard the study of Torah should take precedence (*Rishon LeTziyyon*).

For as long as Baruch ben Neriah was alive – כל זמן שברוך בן נריה קיים: A midrash explains that Baruch himself was of advanced age and was consequently unable to go up to Eretz Yisrael (see Maharsha).

Why were the years of Ishmael mentioned – למה נמנו שנותיו של ישמעאל: Rashi explains the Gemara's question as: Why count the life span of a wicked man? The *Turei Even*, however, questions this understanding, as there are opinions that state that Ishmael repented, dying a righteous man (see Maharsha), and according to Rashi's reasoning it would then be worthy of mention. Therefore, he offers an alternative interpretation, explaining simply that there are other righteous men whose life spans are not mentioned in the Torah. Therefore, the Gemara is questioning why Ishmael was singled out for special mention.

This teaches that Ishmael betrothed her to Esau – מלמד שקידשה ישמעאל: This is derived from the language of the verse, as it says: "And Esau went to Ishmael" in order to marry his daughter. Yet when mentioning the actual marriage it states: "The sister of Nebaioth," indicating that it was Nebaioth who actually married her off. Evidently, the verse is meant to teach us that Ishmael betrothed his daughter to Esau, but died before the actual marriage took place, and his son Nebaioth gave her over in marriage (Maharsha).

אמר רב יוסף: גדול תלמוד תורה יותר מהצלת נפשות. דמעיקרא חשיב ליה למרדכי בתר ארבעה ולבסוף בתר חמשה. מעיקרא כתיב "אשר באו עם זרובבל ישוע נחמיה שריה רעליה מרדכי בלשן" ולבסוף כתיב "הבאים עם זרובבל ישוע נחמיה עזריה רעמיה נחמני מרדכי בלשן".

אמר רב ואיתימא רב שמואל בר מרתא: גדול תלמוד תורה יותר מבנין בית המקדש, שכל זמן שברוך בן נריה קיים – לא הניחו עזרא ועלה.

אמר רבה אמר רב יצחק בר שמואל בר מרתא: גדול תלמוד תורה יותר מכבוד אב ואם, שכל אותן שנים שהיה יעקב אבינו בבית עבר לא נענש. דאמר מר:

Rav Yosef said: Studying Torah is greater than saving lives,ⁿ as initially, when listing the Jewish leaders who came to Eretz Yisrael, Mordecai was mentioned after four other people, but at the end he was listed after five. This is taken to indicate that his involvement in governmental affairs instead of in Torah study lowered his stature one notch. The Gemara proves this: At first it is written: "Who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan" (Ezra 2:2); but in the end in a later list it is written: "Who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahmani, Mordecai, Bilshan" (Nehemiah 7:7).

Rav said, and some say that Rav Shmuel bar Marta said: Studying Torah is greater and more important than building the Temple. A proof of this is that for as long as Baruch ben Neriah was aliveⁿ in Babylonia, Ezra, who was his disciple, did not leave him and go up to Eretz Yisrael to build the Temple.

Rabba said that Rav Yitzhak bar Shmuel bar Marta said: Studying Torah is greater and more important than honoring one's father and mother, and a proof of this is that for all those years that our father Jacob spent in the house of Eber and studied Torah there he was not punished for having neglected to fulfill the mitzva of honoring one's parents. As the Master said:

Perek I
Daf 17 Amud a

למה נמנו שנותיו של ישמעאל – כדי ליחס בהן שנותיו של יעקב. דכתיב "ואלה שני חיי ישמעאל מאת שנה ושלושים שנה ושבע שנים". כמה קשיש ישמעאל מיצחק – ארביסר שנין. דכתיב "ואברם בן שמונים שנה ויש שנים בלדת הגר את ישמעאל לאברם", וכתיב "ואברהם בן מאת שנה בהולד לו את יצחק בנו". וכתיב "ויצחק בן ששים שנה בלדת אותם". בר כמה הוה ישמעאל כדאתיליד יעקב – בר שבעים וארבעה, כמה פיישן משניה – שתין ותלת.

Why were the years of Ishmael mentionedⁿ in the Torah? For what purpose were we told the life span of that wicked man? In order to reckon through them the years of Jacob. As it is written: "And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, a hundred and thirty-seven years" (Genesis 25:17). How much older was Ishmael than Isaac? Fourteen years. As it is written: "And Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram" (Genesis 16:16). And it is written: "And Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him" (Genesis 21:5). And it is written with regard to Jacob and Esau: "And Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them" (Genesis 25:26). Based on these verses, how old was Ishmael when Jacob was born? Seventy-four. How many of his years remained then until his death? Sixty-three, as Ishmael died at the age of a hundred and thirty-seven.

ותניא: היה יעקב אבינו בשעה שנתברך מאביו בן ששים ושלוש שנה, ובו בפרק מת ישמעאל, דכתיב "וירא עשו כי ברך" וגו' "וילך עשו אל ישמעאל ויקח את מחלת בת ישמעאל אחות נביות" ממשמע שנאמר "בת ישמעאל" איני יודע שהיא אחות נביות? מלמד שקידשה ישמעאל ומת, והשיאה נביות אחיה.

And it was taught in a *baraita*: Jacob our father was sixty-three years old at the time he was blessed by his father, and at that same time Ishmael died. How is it known that these two events occurred at the same time? As it is written: "When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob... then Esau went to Ishmael and took for a wife Mahalath, the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebaioth" (Genesis 28:6-9). From the fact that it is stated: "the daughter of Ishmael," do I not know that she was the sister of Nebaioth? For what purpose then does the verse say this explicitly? This teaches that Ishmael betrothed her to Esauⁿ and in the meantime he died, and Nebaioth her brother married her off. Therefore, special mention is made of Nebaioth. Consequently, it is understood that Jacob was sixty-three years old when he received his blessing and left his father's house.