

## The Book of Esther: Wine, Humour & Mysteries

### Introduction & Chapter 1

- (א) וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם אֲחַשְׁוֶרוֹשׁ הוּא אֲחַשְׁוֶרוֹשׁ הַמֶּלֶךְ מֵהַדוּ וְעַד כּוּשׁ שֶׁבַע וְעֶשְׂרִים וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה.
- (ב) בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם כָּשְׁבֶת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֶרוֹשׁ עַל כֶּסֶּא מַלְכוּתוֹ אֲשֶׁר בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה.
- (ג) בְּשָׁנָה שְׁלוֹשׁ לְמַלְכוֹ עָשָׂה מִשְׁתֵּה לְכָל שָׂרָיו וְעַבְדָּיו חֵיל פָּרֶס וּמְדֵי הַפָּרְתִּימִים וְשָׂרֵי הַמְּדִינוֹת לִפְנָיו.
- (ד) **בְּהִרְאֹתוֹ אֶת עַשְׂרֵי כְבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ וְאֶת יְקָר תַּפְאָרֶת גְּדוּלָּתוֹ** יָמִים רַבִּים שְׂמוּנִים וּמֵאֶת יוֹם.
- (ה) וּבְמִלּוּאֵת הַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה עָשָׂה הַמֶּלֶךְ לְכָל הָעָם הַנִּמְצָאִים בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה לְמַגְדוֹל וְעַד קֶטֶן מִשְׁתֵּה שְׁבַעַת יָמִים בַּחֲצֵר גִּנַּת בֵּיתוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ.
- (ו) חוּר כְּרַפֵּס וּתְכֵלֶת אַחֲזָה בַּחֲבִלִי **בוּץ וְאַרְגָּמָן** עַל גְּלִילִי כֶסֶף וְעַמּוּדֵי נֶשֶׁשׁ מִטּוֹת זָהָב וְכֶסֶף עַל רֹצֶפֶת בֵּהֵט וְנֶשֶׁשׁ וְדָר וְסֹחֶרֶת.
- (ז) וְהַשְׁקוֹת בְּכָלִי זָהָב וְכֵלִים מַכְלִים **שׁוּנִים** וְיֵין מַלְכוּת רַב כִּיד הַמֶּלֶךְ.
- (ח) וְהַשְׁתִּיָּה כֶדֶת אֵין אִנֶּס כִּי כֵן יִסֵּד הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל כָּל רַב בֵּיתוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּרָצוֹן אִישׁ וְאִישׁ.
- (ט) **גַּם וְשִׁתִּי הַמַּלְכָּה** עָשְׂתָה מִשְׁתֵּה נָשִׁים בֵּית הַמַּלְכוּת אֲשֶׁר לְמֶלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֶרוֹשׁ.
- (י) בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי כְּטוֹב לֵב הַמֶּלֶךְ בֵּינָם אָמַר **לְמַהוּמָן בְּזִתָּא חֲרֻבֹנָא בְּגִתָּא וְאַבְגָּתָא זֹתֵר וְכִרְכַּס** שְׁבַעַת הַסְרִיסִים הַמְשָׁרְתִּים אֶת פְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֶרוֹשׁ.
- (יא) לְהִבְיָא אֶת וְשִׁתִּי הַמַּלְכָּה לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּכֶתֶר מַלְכוּת לְהִרְאֹת הָעַמִּים וְהַשָּׂרִים אֶת יָפִיָּה כִּי טוֹבֶת מְרָאָה הִיא.
- (יב) וְתַמְמָן הַמַּלְכָּה וְשִׁתִּי לְבֹא בְּדֶבֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר בִּיד הַסְרִיסִים וַיִּקְצֹץ הַמֶּלֶךְ מֵאֵד **וְחִמְתּוֹ בַּעֲרָה בּוֹ**.
- (יג) וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לַחֲכָמִים יָדְעִי הָעֵתִים כִּי כֵן דִּבֶּר הַמֶּלֶךְ לִפְנֵי כָּל יָדְעֵי דָת וְדִין.
- (יד) וְהִקְרַב אֵלָיו כְּרִשְׁנָא שֶׁתֶּר אֲדָמְתָא תְּרִשְׁיִשׁ מֶרֶס מְרֻסָּא מְמוּכָן שְׁבַעַת שָׂרֵי פָרֶס וּמְדֵי רָאִי פְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ הַיִּשְׁבִּים רֹאשְׁנָה בַּמַּלְכוּת.
- (טו) כֶּדֶת מָה לַעֲשׂוֹת בַּמַּלְכָּה וְשִׁתִּי עַל אֲשֶׁר לֹא עָשְׂתָה אֶת מַאֲמַר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֶרוֹשׁ בִּיד הַסְרִיסִים.
- (טז) וַיֹּאמֶר [מְמוּכָן] [מְמוּכָן] לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַשָּׂרִים לֹא עַל הַמֶּלֶךְ לְבַדּוֹ עֹתָה וְשִׁתִּי הַמַּלְכָּה כִּי עַל כָּל הַשָּׂרִים וְעַל כָּל הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל מְדִינוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֶרוֹשׁ.
- (יז) כִּי יֵצֵא דֶבֶר הַמַּלְכָּה **עַל כָּל הַנָּשִׁים לְהַבְזוֹת בַּעֲלֵיהֶן בַּעֲיֵניהֶן** בְּאַמְרָם הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֶרוֹשׁ אָמַר לְהִבְיָא אֶת וְשִׁתִּי הַמַּלְכָּה לִפְנָיו וְלֹא בָּאָה.
- (יח) וְהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה תֵּאֲמַרְנָה שְׂרוֹת פָּרֶס וּמְדֵי אֲשֶׁר שָׁמְעוּ אֶת דִּבְרֵי הַמַּלְכָּה לְכָל שָׂרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְכִדִּי בְּזִיוֹן וְקֶצֶף.
- (יט) אִם עַל הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב יֵצֵא דֶבֶר מַלְכוּת מִלִּפְנֵי וַיִּכְתֹּב בְּדִתִּי פָרֶס וּמְדֵי וְלֹא יַעֲבוֹר אֲשֶׁר לֹא תִבּוֹא וְשִׁתִּי לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֶרוֹשׁ וּמַלְכוּתָהּ יִתֵּן הַמֶּלֶךְ לַרְעוּתָהּ הַטּוֹבָה מִמֶּנָּה.
- (כ) וְנִשְׁמַע פִּתְגָם הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה בְּכָל מַלְכוּתוֹ כִּי רַבָּה הִיא וְכָל הַנָּשִׁים יִתְּנוּ יָקָר לְבַעֲלֵיהֶן לְמַגְדוֹל וְעַד קֶטֶן.
- (כא) וַיִּיטֵב הַדָּבָר בַּעֲיֵנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַשָּׂרִים וַיַּעַשׂ הַמֶּלֶךְ כְּדִבְרֵי מְמוּכָן.
- (כב) וַיִּשְׁלַח סָפְרִים אֶל כָּל מְדִינוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה כְּכַתְּבָהּ וְאֵל עַם וְעַם כָּלִשׁוֹנוֹ לִהְיוֹת כָּל אִישׁ שֹׁרֵר בְּבֵיתוֹ וּמְדַבֵּר כָּלִשׁוֹן עַמּוֹ.

(1) In the days of Achashverosh, this is Achashverosh who reigned from India to Ethiopia, over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces,

(2) in those days, when King Achashverosh sat on his royal throne which was in Shushan the castle [or the capital],

(3) in the third year of his reign, he made a feast for all his officers and servants, the army of Persia and Media, the nobles and officers of the provinces being before him,

(4) **when he displayed the riches of his glorious kingdom** and the honor of his splendid majesty, for many days, one hundred and eighty days.

(5) And when these days were complete, the king made a feast **for all the people who were present in Shushan** the castle [or the capital], from great to small, seven days, in the courtyard of the garden of the king's house.

(6) White, fine cotton, and **blue**, fastened with cords of **fine linen** and **purple** to silver rods and marble pillars; couches of gold and silver upon a floor of alabaster, marble, pearl, and black onyx.

(7) And he gave them to drink in golden vessels, **vessels of all different types**, and the royal wine was in abundance, in accord with the king's power.

(8) And the drinking was according to the **law**; there was no coercion, for so the king had instituted, that all the officers of his house should do according to every man's desire.

(9) Also **Vashti the queen** made a **feast for the women** in the royal house of King Achashverosh.

(10) On the seventh day, when the king's heart was merry with wine, he said to **Mehuman, Bizzeta, Charvona, Bigta, Avagta, Zetar, and Carcas**, the seven eunuchs who served King Achashverosh,

(11) to bring **Vashti the queen** before the king in the royal crown, to show the people and the officers her beauty, for she was beautiful.

(12) But **Queen Vashti** refused to come at the king's word conveyed by the eunuchs; and the king was very angry, and **his wrath burned within him**.

(13) The king said to the wise men who knew the times, for so was the king's custom to consult with all who knew law and judgment,

(14) and those close to him were Carshena, Shetar, Admata, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memukhan, the seven officers of Persia and Media, those who saw the king's face and sat first in the kingdom,

(15) "According to law, what shall we do to Queen Vashti, since she has not done the bidding of King Achashverosh conveyed by the eunuchs?"

(16) Memukhan answered before the king and the officers, "Not against the king alone has Vashti the queen sinned, but also against all the officers and all the peoples that are in all the provinces of King Achashverosh.

(17) For the queen's word will go out to **all the women, causing them to view their husbands with contempt**, saying, 'King Achashverosh said to bring Vashti the queen before him, but she did not come.'

(18) And this day, the noble woman of Persia and Media who heard the queen's word will say likewise to all the king's officers, and there will be more than enough scorn and anger.

(19) If it pleases the king, let a royal edict go forth from him, and let it be written among the laws of Persia and Media, that it not be revoked, that Vashti not come before King Achashverosh, and that the king give her royal crown to another that is better than she.

(20) And the king's decree which he shall make, shall be heard throughout his kingdom, though it is vast, and all the wives will give honor to their husbands, from great to small."

(21) And the words pleased the king and the officers; and the king did according to the word of Memukhan.

(22) He sent letters to all the king's provinces, to each province according to their writing, and to each people according to their language, that each man should rule in his own house and speak according to the language of his people.

### 1. מסכת בבא בתרא ט"ז ע"א | Bava Batra 15a:

אנשי כנסת הגדולה כתבו יחזקאל ושנים עשר דניאל ומגילת אסתר.

The members of the Great Assembly wrote the following Yehezkel, Sheneim Asar, Daniel, and Megillat Ester.

### 2. מסכת יומא כ"ט ע"א | Yoma 29a:

מה שחר סוף כל הלילה, אף אסתר סוף כל הנסים.

Just as the dawn is the conclusion of the entire night, so too, Esther was the conclusion of all miracles.

### 3. מבנה המגילה, גרוסמן וריס, אתר התנ"ך | The Structure of the Megillah, J.G & Y.R, Hatanakh.com:





Artaxerxes I (465 - 424 BC)



Xerxes I (485 - 465 BC)

#### 4. אסתר רבה, א' | Esther Rabbah, 1

רבי לוי ורשב"א, רבי לוי אמר אֲחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ הוּא אֲרַתַּחְשַׁשְׁטָא.

Rabbi Levi and the Rabbis, Rabbi Levi said: Ahashverosh is Artahshasta.





5. קרב טרמופיל, אתר בריטניקה | <https://www.britannica.com/event/Battle-of-Thermopylae-Greek-history-480-BC>

Battle of Thermopylae, (480 BCE), battle in central Greece at the mountain pass of Thermopylae during the Persian Wars. The Greek forces, mostly Spartan, were led by Leonidas. After three days of holding their own against the Persian king Xerxes I and his vast southward-advancing army, the Greeks were betrayed, and the Persians were able to outflank them. Sending the main army in retreat, Leonidas and a small contingent remained behind to resist the advance and were defeated.

The Battle of Thermopylae's political origins can be traced back to Xerxes' predecessor, Darius I (the Great), who sent heralds to Greek cities in 491 BCE in the hopes of persuading them to accept Persian authority. This offended the proud Greeks greatly; the Athenians went so far as to toss the Persian heralds into a pit, while the Spartans followed suit and tossed them into a well. In 480 BCE Xerxes invaded Greece as a continuation of Darius's original plan. He began the same way his predecessor had: he sent heralds to Greek cities—but he skipped over Athens and Sparta because of their previous responses. Many Greek city-states either joined Xerxes or remained neutral, while Athens and Sparta led the resistance with a number of other city-states behind them. Before invading, Xerxes implored the Spartan king Leonidas to surrender his arms. Leonidas famously replied, "Come and take them" ("Molon labe"). Xerxes intended to do just that and thus moved toward Thermopylae.

6. דברי הימים ב ג':י"ד | Divrei Hayamim 2, 3, 14 |  
וַיַּעַשׂ אֶת הַפָּרֹכֶת תְּכֵלֶת וְאַרְגָּמָן וְכֶרְמִיל וּבוֹץ וַיַּעַל עָלָיו כְּרוּבִים.

And he made the veil of **blue**, and **purple**, and crimson, and **fine linen**, and wrought cherubim thereon.

7. מדרש אסתר רבה ב' | Midrash Esther Rabbah, 2 |  
הָבִיא כְּלָיו וְכָלִי בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ, וְנִמְצְאוּ נָאִים וְיָפִין מִכְּלָיו.

He brought his vessels and the Temple vessels, and they were found to be finer and more beautiful than his.

8. דברים ל"ג, ב | Dvarim 33, 2 |

בָּא וְזָרַח מִשְׁעִיר לָמוֹ הוֹפִיעַ מֶהָר פָּאֵרן וְאַתָּה | מִרְבֶּבֶת קָדֵשׁ מִימִינוֹ אֲשֶׁר דָּת לָמוֹ: אֶף חֲבֹב

9. גמרא מגילה ט"ו ע"א:

תָּנוּ רַבָּנָן: אַרְבַּע נָשִׁים יְפִיפּוֹת הָיוּ בְּעוֹלָם: שָׂרָה (וְאַבִּיגַיִל, רָחַב) וְאַסְתֵּר, וְלִמָּן דְּאָמַר אֶסְתֵּר יִרְקוּקֶת הָיְתָה — מִפִּיק אֶסְתֵּר וּמַעֲיִיל וְשִׁתִּי.

There were four women of extraordinary beauty in the world: Sarah, and Abigail, Rahab, and Esther. And according to the one who said that Esther was greenish in colour, lacking natural beauty, remove Esther from the list and insert Vashti in her place.

10. הורודוטוס, היסטוריה [430-], ספר תשיעי, 107 | Herodotus, Histories [430 BC], 9th book, 107 |

אל המצביא ארטאינטיס הרבה דברים קשים, ואמר בתוך שאר דבריו שהוא גרוע מאשה... אצל הפרסים החרפה הגדולה ביותר היא להיקרא גרוע מאשה.

Masistes son of Darius, who happened to have been present at the Persian disaster, reviled the admiral Artayntes very bitterly, telling him (with much beside) that such generalship as his proved him worse than a woman, and that no punishment was too severe for the harm he had done the king's estate. Now it is the greatest of all taunts in Persia to be called worse than a woman.

**11. מגילה י"ג ע"ב | Talmud Megillah 13b:**

אמר רבא: אחר שברא הקדוש ברוך הוא רפואה למכה.

Rava said: G-d had created a healing for the blow.

**12. מגילה י"ב ע"א | Talmud Megillah 12a:**

שאלו תלמידיו את רבי שמעון בן יוחאי: מפני מה נתחייבו שונאיהן של ישראל שבאותו הדור בליה? אמר להם: אמרו אתם. אמרו לו: מפני שנהנו מסעודתו של אותו רשע.

His disciples asked R. Shimon b. Yohai, Why did the enemies of Israel [Jews who misbehaved] in that generation deserve extermination? He said to them: You answer. They said: Because they enjoyed the feast of that wicked one [Achashverosh].



# TIMELINE

# Esther

This is a useful timeline to help us understand the historical background of the story of Purim.

**-597**

**THE EXILE OF KING JECONIAH**

King Jeconiah is exiled from Jerusalem along with the elite of the society by Nebuchadnezzar (Kings 2, 24, 10-17)

"He burned the House of the L-d, the king's palace, and all the houses of Jerusalem; he burned down the house of every notable person" (Kings 2, 25, 9).

**-586**

**THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FIRST TEMPLE**

**-583**

**CYRUS CYLINDER**

King Cyrus' policy of the repatriation of the Jewish people (Ezra 1, 1-4)

The Jews (mostly poor, but Mordechai with them) who came from Babylon after Cyrus' declaration rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 3, 10-13)

**-516**

**THE SECOND TEMPLE IS BUILT**

**-485**

**THE STORY OF PURIM**

Mordechai, Esther and their story of saving the Jewish people in Shushan (The Book of Esther)

The victory of the few Jews against the many Greeks, and the miracle of the vessel of the oil.

**-164**

**THE STORY OF CHANUKAH**

**0**

The Romans, led by general Titus, destroyed the second temple in Jerusalem, and it was never rebuilt since then.

**+70**

**THE DESTRUCTION OF THE SECOND TEMPLE**