



### Three Approaches to the Party

#### 1. Talmud, Megillah 12a

"בחצר גנת ביתן המלך" - רב ושמואל, חד אמר הראוי לחצר לחצר הראוי לגינה לגינה הראוי לביתן לביתן, וחד אמר הושיבן בחצר ולא החזיקתן, בגינה ולא החזיקתן, עד שהכניסן לביתן והחזיקתן...

"על גלילי כסף ועמודי שש מטות זהב וכסף" - תניא רבי יהודה אומר: הראוי לכסף לכסף הראוי לזהב לזהב. אמר לו רבי נחמיה: אם כן אתה מטיל קנאה בסעודה! אלא הם של כסף ורגליהן של זהב.

"In the yard of the garden of the house of the king" – Rav and Shemuel: One said: Those suited for the yard in the yard, those suited for the garden in the garden, those suited for the house in the house. The other said: He put them in the yard and it didn't hold them, in the garden and it didn't hold them, until he brought them in the house and it held them...

"On silver *gelilim* and marble pillars, beds of gold and silver" – Rabbi Yehudah taught: Those suited for silver on silver, those suited for gold on gold. Rabbi Nechemiah replied: That would create jealousy at the meal! Rather: The [beds] were of silver, with gold feet.

#### 2. Talmud, Megilah 11b

"בימים ההם כשבת המלך" וכתוב בתריה "בשנת שלוש למלכו"? אמר רבא: מאי "כשבת"? לאחר שנתיישרה דעתו. אמר: בלשצר חשב וטעה, אנא חשיבנא ולא טעינא... אמר [בלשצר] "השתא ודאי תו לא מיפרקי, אפיק מאני דבי מקדשא ואשתמש בהו." היינו דקאמר ליה דניאל "ועל מרא שמיא התרוממת, ולמאניא די ביתה היתיו קדמך." וכתוב "בה בליליא קטיל בלשצר מלכא"...

אמר [אחשורוש] "איהו מיטעא טעי, אנא חשיבנא ולא טעינא."... כיון דחזי דמלו שבעין ולא איפרוק, אמר "השתא ודאי תו לא מיפרקי, אפיק מאני דבי מקדשא ואשתמש בהו." בא שטן וריקד ביניהן והרג את ושתי.

"In those days, when the king sat" and then "In the third year of his reign"? Rava said: What is "when [the king] sat"? When his mind was settled. He said: Belshazzar calculated and erred, I will calculate and not err...

Belshazzar said, "Now, certainly, they will not be redeemed! I will take out the implements of the Temple and use them." Thus Daniel said, "You elevated yourself over the Master of Heaven, and the implements of His house were brought before you." And it says, "That night, King Belshazzar was killed"...

[Achashverosh] said "He erred; I will calculate and not err."... When he saw that the seventy were complete and they were not redeemed, he said, "Now, certainly, they will not be redeemed! I will take out the implements of the Temple and use them." The Satan came and danced among them, and he killed Vashti.

#### 3. Midrash, Esther Rabbah 1:12

"על כסא מלכותו" "מלכותו" כתיב! בא לישב על כסא שלמה ולא הניחוהו, אמרו לו: כל מלך שאינו קוזמיקרטור בעולם אינו יושב עליו. עמד ועשה לו כסא משלו כדמותו.

"On the throne of his reign [מלכותו]" – It is written! He tried to sit on Solomon's throne and it wouldn't let him. They told him: A king who does not reign over everything may not sit there. He made himself a throne, resembling it.

#### 4. Talmud, Megilah 12a

מלמד שלבש בגדי כהונה, כתיב הכא "יקר תפארת גדולתו" וכתוב התם "לכבוד ולתפארת."

This teaches that he wore the clothing of the kohen; here it says "the glory of the splendour of his greatness," and there it says, "for honour and for splendour".

#### 5. The King's Cup

<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/895431/>

#### 6. Talmud, Megilah 12a

'משונים' מיבעי ליה? אמר רבא: יצתה בת קול ואמרה להם, "ראשונים כלו מפני כלים, ואתם שונים בהם?!"

("And drinking from gold vessels, and vessels of different kinds [*shonim*"]) – Shouldn't it be *meshunim*? Rava said: A voice emerged and told them, "[Belshazzar] was destroyed because of the vessels, and you repeat [*shonim*] with them?"

#### 7. Midrash, Esther Rabbah 1:1, 1:3

[רבי יהודה] אמר "אחשורוש" שהרג אשתו מפני אוהבו, "הוא אחשורוש" שהרג אוהבו מפני אשתו

ור' נחמיה אמר "אחשורוש" שבטל מלאכת בהמ"ק, "הוא אחשורוש" שגזר עליו שיבנה...

ור' יצחק אמר "אחשורוש" שבאו כל הצרות בימיו... "הוא אחשורוש" שבאו כל הטובות בימיו...

רבנן אמרי "אחשורוש" עד שלא נכנסה אסתר אצלו, "הוא אחשורוש", משנכנסה אסתר אצלו לא היה בועל נדות.

[Rabbi Yehudah said:] "Achashverosh" – who killed his wife for his friend, "this is Achashverosh" who killed his friend for his wife.

And Rabbi Nechemiah said: "Achashverosh" who halted construction of the Beit haMikdash, "this is Achashverosh" who decreed that it be built...

And Rabbi Yitzchak said: "Achashverosh" in whose day all of the troubles came, "this is Achashverosh" in whose day all of the good came...

The Sages said: "Achashverosh" before Esther came to him, "this is Achashverosh" who stopped living with *niddot* once Esther came to him.

#### 8. Talmud, Megilah 11a

שלושה מלכו בכיפה ואלו הן: אחאב ואחשורוש ונבוכדנצר...

Three reigned over the curve (of the earth): Achav, Achashverosh and Nevuchadnezzar...

#### 9. Herodotus, The Histories, Vol. 1 133:4, Godley translation

Moreover, it is their custom to deliberate about the gravest matters when they are drunk. And what they approve in their deliberations is proposed to them the next day, when they are sober, by the master of the house where they deliberate; and if, being sober, they still approve it, they act on it, but if not, they drop it. And if they have deliberated about a matter when sober, they decide upon it when they are drunk.

#### 10. Herodotus, The Histories, Vol. 7 4-8, Godley translation

After declaring Xerxes king, Darius was intent on his expedition. But in the year after this and the revolt of Egypt, death came upon him in the midst of his preparations, after a reign of six and thirty years in all, and it was not granted to him to punish either the revolted Egyptians or the Athenians.

After Darius' death, the royal power descended to his son Xerxes. Now Xerxes was at first by no means eager to march against Hellas; it was against Egypt that he mustered his army. But Mardonius son of Gobryas, Xerxes cousin and the son of Darius' sister, was with the king and had more influence with him than any Persian. He argued as follows: "Master, it is not fitting that the Athenians should go unpunished for their deeds, after all the evil they have done to the Persians. For now you should do what you have in hand; then, when you have tamed the insolence of Egypt, lead your armies against Athens, so that you may have fair fame among men, and others may beware of invading your realm in the future." This argument was for vengeance, but he kept adding that Europe was an extremely beautiful land, one that bore all kinds of orchard trees, a land of highest excellence, worthy of no mortal master but the king.

He said this because he desired adventures and wanted to be governor of Hellas...

After being persuaded to send an expedition against Hellas, Xerxes first marched against the rebels in the year after Darius' death. He subdued them and laid Egypt under a much harder slavery than in the time of Darius, and he handed it over to Achaemenes, his own brother and Darius' son. While governing Egypt, this Achaemenes was at a later time slain by a Libyan, Inaros son of Psammetichus.

After the conquest of Egypt, intending now to take in hand the expedition against Athens, Xerxes held a special assembly of the noblest among the Persians, so he could learn their opinions and declare his will before them all.

#### 1:9-12 Vashti: A Deposed Royal?

#### 11. Talmud, Megilah 12b

ויקצף המלך מאד אמאי דלקה ביה כולי האי אמר רבא שלחה ליה בר אהוריריה דאבא אבא לקבל אלפא חמרא שתי ולא רוי והוא גברא אשתתי בחמריה מיד וחמתו בערה בו

"And the king was enraged" – Why did her refusal so incite him? Rava explained: She sent a message to him, "Stable-boy of my father! My father drank the equivalent of 1,000 others (per Daniel 5:1) and did not become intoxicated, but you have become foolish with your wine." Immediately, "And his anger burned in him."

#### 12. Midrash, Esther Rabbah 3:2

ארבע נשים נטלו ממשלה בעולם ואלו הן, איזבל, ועתליה מישראל, וושתי מאומות העולם.

Four women took the reins of power in the world: Izevel and Ataliah from the Jews, and Samiramit and Vashti from the nations of the world.

### 13. Rabbi Yeshayah DiTrani (12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century Italy), Piskei Ri"az to Sanhedrin, Perek Chelek

ויש מן המדרשים שכוונת חכמים בהם לדרוש המקרא בכל עניין שיכולין לדרוש, וסמכו על מה שכתוב (תהלים סב, יב) "אחת דבר אלקים שתיים זו שמעתי". וכן מה שכתוב (ירמיהו כג, כט) "הלוא כה דברי כאש נאום ד' וכפטיש יפוצץ סלע" למדו מזה שמקרא אחד יוצא לכמה טעמים, כמו שמבואר בפרק אחד דיני ממונות (סנהדרין לא.). ואל תתמה על זה, הלא תראה, רוב פעמים, אפילו הדיוט אחד מדבר דבריו מורכבין - שיש להם שתי פנים, וכל שכן דברי חכמה שנאמרו ברוח הקדש. ועל דרך זה דורשין חכמים המקרא בכל עניין שיכולין לדורשו ואמרו (שבת סג.) "אין מקרא יוצא מידי פשוטו" שהוא העיקר, וכל המדרשים הנדרשים בו יש מהן שהן עיקר קרוב לפשט, ויש מהן שיש בהן רמז כמעט כל שהוא.

In some of the midrashim the sages intend to analyze Scripture with any means possible, relying on Tehillim 62:12, "Gd said one thing; I heard two." And so Yirmiyah 23:29, "For My words are as fire; this is the word of Gd. And they are like a hammer, splitting stone." They learned from this that one sentence may lead to many meanings, as explained in Sanhedrin 31a.

Do not be shocked by this; you often see that even a normal person speaks a complex message with two facets, and certainly words of wisdom spoken with Divine inspiration. Along these lines, the sages analyze a passage in any way they can analyze it, while saying (Shabbat 63a), "The passage does not depart from its simple meaning," which is the essence, and then regarding all of the midrashim which are drawn from it, some of them are of the essence and close to the literal read and some of them have a small hint [in the text].

### 14. An archetype

- Kings I 21:25 and Kings II 10:13
- Kings II 11:1
- Samuel II 6:20
- Kings I 7:1-8

### 15. Well, that explains a lot

- About her
  - "The queen" (1:9-12)
  - Location (1:9)
  - The royal crown (1:11)
- About him
  - "Who reigned" (1:1, Megilah 11a)
  - A break with Cyrus
  - A Haman parallel
- The power imbalance
  - The *sarisim* (1:10-12)
  - The reaction (1:13)
  - The attraction of a pedigree-less queen
- Day ????

### 16. Malbim to Esther 1:9

איה סכלות גדול מזה, שמושל אדיר כזה יצוה להביא אשת חיקו, להראותה לפני המון גוים והמון לאומים כי יפת מראה היא. ובשגם לקבלת חז"ל שצוה להביאה ערומה. וביותר יפלא איכות הבאתה אשר נראה שצוה תיכף להביאה בע"כ ביד הסריסים, כמביאים אחת הנבלות, עד שנבחר לה מות מחיי הבז והקלון.

Where is there a greater foolishness, that a mighty king like this should bring his intimate bride to display her before the masses of the nations and the masses of the states, for she is beautiful. Especially with the rabbinic tradition that he commanded that she be brought unclothed. And it is even more shocking how she was to be brought; it appears that he commanded that she be brought immediately, against her will, via the *sarisim*, as a degraded person would be brought – such that she chose death rather than live with disgrace and humiliation.

### 17. Vashti, Esther and Salome?