



Achashverosh declines the money?

1. Malbim to Esther 3:8-9

המבואר שהמן גנב את לב אחשורוש בשני דברים, אחד שלא הודיע לו מי הוא העם הזה שמלשין עליהם, שאם היה אחשורוש יודע שהם היהודים שהיו מפורסמים לעם חכם ובנון לא היה שומע לעצתו, וכן אף על עם אחר היותר שפל ונבזה אם היה אומר לו שכוונתו להשמידם, ג"כ לא היה שומע לו, אבל המן בערמתו אמר ישנו עם אחד, עם הבלתי מפורסם, עד שאינו יכול לכנותו בשם...

זאת הדבר השני שגנב לבו שלא אמר לו שרוצה להשמידם רק לאבדם, שפשטות באורו הוא לאבד צורת האומה שהיא דתם לבטל דתם ולהכריחם לשמור דתות של יתר העמים, או יותר ענינים כאלה שיעשו תחבולות שישבת עניני העם והוא וחוקיהם ונמוסיהם...

It is clear that Haman deceived Achashverosh in two matters. First: He didn't inform him of the identity of the nation he was maligning; were Achashverosh to know they were the Jews, who were well-known as a wise and understanding nation, he would not have listened to [Haman's] counsel. Also, even regarding another nation, more lowly and degraded, if [Haman] would have told him he meant to destroy them, [Achashverosh] also wouldn't have listened to him. But Haman, in his trickery, said, "There is a nation," a nation not well-known, such that he couldn't name them...

This is the second area in which [Haman] deceived him: he did not tell him he wanted to entirely destroy them, only to ruin them. The simple meaning of that is to ruin the structure of the nation, their laws, to eliminate their laws and to force them to observe the laws of the rest of the nations. Or similar things, to develop tactics to halt the affairs of the nation and their laws and practices...

2. Maharal, Ner Mitzvah 1, **עניני ארבע המלכיות**

ולפיכך אמר להמן "הכסף נתון לך", ולא שאין אני רוצה הכסף שלך, רק מקבל אני ממך, וחוזר אני ונותן לך. ולא החזיק בכסף, שזה ודאי היה לו גנאי גדול לקבל כסף, ולתת עם אחד להריגה בשביל כסף. רק בשביל אהבת כסף, היה מקבלו וחוזר ונתן הכסף אליו.

Because Achashverosh perpetually sought to swallow up, he said to Haman, "The money is given to you." Not that I don't want your money; rather, I accept it from you, and then I give it back to you. He did not hold on to the money, as it would have been disgraceful for him to accept money and to give a nation for execution for the sake of money. Only, for love of money, he received it, and then he gave the money back.

Review Questions on our introduction, and Chapters 1-3

- 1) How is the book of Esther different from the rest of Tanach?
- 2) Which Persian king is most likely the Achashverosh of Megilat Esther, based on his name, his era, and the writings of Herodotus?
- 3) What are three levels of interpretation of Achashverosh's feast in Chapter 1?
- 4) How might the text of Megilat Esther hint that Achashverosh was celebrating the exile of the Jews?
- 5) How did the Sages determine that Vashti was the true royal?
- 6) Why did Vashti refuse to go to the party?
- 7) Why does Achashverosh want a new queen?
- 8) What are three reasons offered for why Esther does not share her identity?
- 9) Why do Mordechai and Esther have the names of Mesopotamian gods?
- 10) What do we learn from Mordechai's presence at the palace gate?
- 11) Why does a midrash ascribe to Esther the vegetarian practice of Daniel and his cohort?
- 12) Why does Achashverosh elevate Haman?
- 13) What are two approaches to why Mordechai refuses to bow?
- 14) Why does Haman create a lottery, and how is it like other lotteries in Tanach?
- 15) Why does Achashverosh say "The money is given to you"?

Chapter 4

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|---------|-------------------------------------|
| 4:1-3 | The grief of Mordechai and the Jews |
| 4:4-9 | Mordechai informs Esther |
| 4:10-14 | Mordechai pushes Esther to act |
| 4:15-17 | Esther's plan |

Esther's Refusal – The Jew in the Royal Court, Part 1

3. Rashi to Esther 4:14

ומי יודע אם לעת כזאת הגעת - ומי יודע אם יחפוץ בך המלך לשנה הבאה שהוא זמן ההריגה:
הגעת למלכות - אם תגיע לגדולה שאת בה עכשיו:

“And who knows if for a time like this you arrived” - Who knows whether the king will desire you next year, at the time of the massacre?

“You have arrived on the throne” – Whether you will achieve the greatness you now hold.

4. Malbim to Esther 4:11

אחר שאני לא נקראתי לבא אל המלך זה שלשים יום, הלא ודאי בימים אחרים יקרא אותי, ואז יהיה יותר בקל לבקש בעד העם...
Since I have not been called to the king for thirty days, certainly, he will call me in a few days, and then it will be easier to petition him for the nation...

5. Rabbi Yosef David Sinzheim (18th-19th century France), Shlal David to Esther 4:5

ודאי תמוה אסתר הצדקת איך לא רצתה להכניס עצמה בסכנה בשביל כל ישראל. אלא שאמרה לפי דברי מרדכי כי החטא הוא בשביל ע"ז והוא כבר תיקן, א"כ ממילא תתבטל הגזירה ואין צורך להכניס עצמה בסכנה, אמנם אח"כ חשבה אסתר בדעתה כי אולי החטא הוא מפני שנהנו מהסעודה ונתרצתה לילך. ואמרה לך כנוס את כל היהודים הנמצאים בשושן, ובמסורה ב' הנמצאים כאן ובתחלת המגילה גבי הסעודה [א, ה] לכל העם הנמצאים בשושן, ופירשו בזה כי הצומות האלו לתיקון הנאת הסעודה, וזה רמזה אסתר למרדכי ואמרה וצומו עלי, כי אף על פי שהצום הוא לתקן החטא ממילא ג"כ הצום עליה, כי אם יתוקן החטא תמצא חן בעיני המלך ולא יהרגנה.

6. Talmud, Megilah 15a

"לדעת מה זה ועל מה זה" - אמר רבי יצחק שלחה לו: שמא עברו ישראל על חמשה חומשי תורה, דכתיב בהן "מזה ומזה הם כתבים"?
“To know what this was, and what it was for [mah zeh v'al mah zeh]” – Rabbi Yitzchak said, she sent to him: Perhaps Israel has violated the five books of the Torah, of which it is written, “They were recorded from this and from this [mizeh umizeh]”?

7. Bereishit 45:5-8 (JPS 1985 tr., c/o sefaria.org)

וְעַתָּה אֵל תַּעֲצֹבו וְאַל יִחַר בְּעֵינֵיכֶם כִּי מִכַּרְתֶּם אֹתִי הִנֵּה פִי לְמַחְיָה שָׁלַחֲנִי אֱלֹקִים לְפָנֵיכֶם: כִּי זֶה שָׁנַתִּים הָרַעַב בְּקָרֵב הָאָרֶץ וְעוֹד חָמֵשׁ שָׁנִים אֲשֶׁר אֵין חֲרִישׁ וְקָצִיר: וַיִּשְׁלַחֲנִי אֱלֹקִים לְפָנֵיכֶם לְשׁוּם לָכֶם שְׂאֲרִית בְּאָרֶץ וּלְהַחְיֹת לָכֶם לְפָלִיטָה גְדֹלָה: וְעַתָּה לֹא אַתֶּם שָׁלַחְתֶּם אֹתִי הִנֵּה פִי הָאֱלֹקִים וַיִּשְׁמַנֵּי לְאֵב לְפָרְעֹה וּלְאֲדוֹן לְכָל בֵּיתוֹ וּמִשָּׁל בְּכָל אָרֶץ מִצְרָיִם:

Now, do not be distressed or reproach yourselves because you sold me hither; it was to save life that Gd sent me ahead of you. It is now two years that there has been famine in the land, and there are still five years to come in which there shall be no yield from tilling. Gd has sent me ahead of you to ensure your survival on earth, and to save your lives in an extraordinary deliverance. So, it was not you who sent me here, but Gd; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, lord of all his household, and ruler over the whole land of Egypt.

8. Bereishit 50:20-21

וְאַתֶּם חִשַּׁבְתֶּם עָלַי רָעָה אֱלֹקִים חִשְׁבָה לְטוֹבָה לְמַעַן עֲשֶׂה פְּיֹם הַזֶּה לְהַחְיִית עִם רַב: וְעַתָּה אֵל תִּירָאוּ אֲנִי אֶכְלָל אֶתְכֶם וְאֵת טַפְּכֶם וַיִּנַּחֵם אוֹתָם וַיְדַבֵּר עַל לָבָם:

Besides, although you intended me harm, Gd intended it for good, so as to bring about the present result—the survival of many people. And so, fear not. I will sustain you and your children.” Thus he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

9. Prof. Yoram Hazony, *The Dawn*, pp. 132-133

Pharaoh does indeed consent to allow Joseph and his brothers to go up – with a military escort, while their children and herds are held hostage in Goshen. But what kind of behavior is this on Joseph's part, going to Pharaoh's other servants and begging them to try to influence him, and this only if Joseph has managed to “find favor in your eyes”?...

And there is likewise no question but that a man such as Joseph necessarily feels himself to be free, as he gives orders to others morning and night, and disposes of their lives, loved ones and property as he deems fit. But compelling as this experience may be, it is illusion. For the first among slaves may be powerful, but a slave he remains...

10. Prof. Yoram Hazony, *The Dawn*, pg. 141

It is not Joseph's building of Egypt which is unique in history; for there is virtually no man who does not work to build up the place in which he lives. What is unique is Moses' rejection of Pharaoh's court, with all the power that it offered him, in order to protect a slave who was being treated unjustly...

Mordechai's Argument – The Jew in the Royal Court, Part 2

11. Rashi to Esther 4:14

מי יודע שמא לא הגעת למלכות אלא בעבור העת הזאת שתושיעי את ישראל:

Who knows, perhaps you did not arrive on the throne other than for this time, to rescue Israel!

12. Ramban to Bereishit 27:4

ונראה שלא הגידה לו רבקה מעולם הנבואה אשר אמר ד' לה ורב יעבוד צעיר, כי איך היה יצחק עובר את פי ד' והיא לא תצלה.

It appears that Rivkah never told him of HaShem's prophecy to her, "And the greater will serve the younger," for how could Yitzchak violate the word of Gd? That could never succeed!

13. Three parallels

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|--------------------------------|-------------|
| • Chaniah, Mishael and Azaryah | Daniel 3 |
| • Daniel | Daniel 6 |
| • Nechemiah | Nechemiah 1 |

14. Prof. Yoram Hazony, *The Dawn*, pp. 138-139

It is this theory, of the divine will singling out a single person as the sole possible savior, that Mordechai categorically rejects... In contrast to Joseph's self-assurance that the divine plan is manifest and that he is it... Mordechai argues that while one may have a critical role to play in some divine plan, this cannot be known for certain... and that if one proves unwilling or unable to fulfill such a role, it will be played by someone else...

In disavowing this theory, Mordechai's first line of attack is a counterintuitive one. He seeks to deflate the importance that the individual in a position of power naturally tends to assign himself. By emphasizing the Jewish belief that the Jewish people is in any case eternal, and the survival of the Jews therefore foregone with or without Esther's help, he ironically renders her free to act....

15. Prof. Yoram Hazony, *The Dawn*, pp. 139-142

But the belief in the eternity of Israel has its problematic aspect as well. For if the relief and deliverance will surely come from elsewhere, then what possible reason can there be for Esther to act at all?...

Mordechai is not just trying to scare her. He is in deadly earnest. For although the fate of the Jewish people as a whole cannot and should not be understood to be in Esther's hands alone, there is nevertheless a portion whose fate may very well depend on her... If Esther is silent at such a time, then, who knows, perhaps she will have missed the opportunity to save thousands. But one thing is certain – that she herself will be "lost", and with her, the house of her father...

Mordechai's certainty comes from an understanding that the battle of the court Jew is ultimately the struggle to save, not the Jewish people, but himself.