

# אילים היסאוריים וילורים אנגזיים

## Pur4im: How Haman Became "Evil Incarnate" (???)

### A Journey From Mikra to Midrash

(1) שמות יז

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֱלֹהֵי מֹשֶׁה כְּתֹב זֶה וְקֵרָא בְּאָזְנֵי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ כִּי־מַחַה אֶמְחָה אֶת־זִכְרֵךְ עַמְלֹק מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם: (טו) וַיִּבֶן מֹשֶׁה מִזְבֵּחַ וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ ה' נִסִּי: (טז) וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי־יָד עַל־בָּס יִהְיֶה מִלְחָמָה לְה' בְּעַמְלֹק מִדֹּד דָּר:

And Hashem said to Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and recite it in the ears of Joshua; for I will completely put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar, and called its name Adonai-Nissi; For he said, Because Hashem has sworn that Hashem will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.

(2) דברי הימים א ד, מג

וַיִּכְוֹ אֶת־שְׂאֵרֵי־הַפְּלִטָּה לְעַמְלֹק וַיֵּשְׁבוּ שָׁם עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה: ... And they destroyed the rest of the Amalekites who had escaped...

(3) תוספתא ידים ב:ז

בו ביום, עמד יהודה גר עמוני לפנייהם בבית המדרש, אמר להן: "מה אני לבא בקהל?" אמר לו רבן גמליאל: "אסור אתה". אמר לו רבי יהושע: "מתר אתה". אמר לו רבן גמליאל: "הא כתוב: 'לא יבא עמוני ומואבי בקהל' אמר לו רבי יהושע: 'וכי עמון ומואב במקומן הן עומדין? כבר עלה סנחריב ובלבל את כל האמות, שנאמר: ויאסיר גבולת עמים, ועתודתיהם שושתי אמר לו רבן גמליאל: הכתוב אומר: 'ואחרי כן אשיב את שבות בני עמון, נאם י' - כבראשנה עדין לא שבו? אמר רבי יהושע: הכתוב אומר ושבתני את שבות עמי ישראל כדרך שאלו לא שבו, כך הם לא שבו."

(4) רמב"ם מלכים ומלחמות ה:ד-ה

מצות עשה להחרים שבעה עממין שנאמר החרם תחרימם. וכל שבא לידו אחד מהן ולא הרגו עובר בלא תעשה שנאמר לא תחיה כל נשמה. וכבר אבד זכרם: וכן מצות עשה לאבד זכר עמלק. שנאמר תמחה את זכר עמלק. ומצות עשה לזכר תמיד מעשיו הרעים ואריבתו. כדי לעורר איבתו. שנאמר זכור את אשר עשה לך עמלק. מפני השמועה למדו זכור בפה לא תשכח בלב. שאסור לשפח איבתו ושנאתו:

(5) אסתר ט:ט, כח

על-כן היהודים הפרזים הישבים בערי הפרוזות עשים את יום ארבעה עשר לחודש אדר שמחה ומשתה ויום טוב ומשלוח מנות איש לרעהו: ... והימים האלה נזכרים ונעשים בכל דור ודור...

(6) אסתר פרק ג

אחר הדברים האלה גדל המלך אחשוורוש את-המן בן-המדתא האגגי ונשאהו וישם את-כסאו מעל כל-השדים אשר אתו:

(7) אסתר פרק ח

ביום ההוא נתן המלך אחשוורוש לאסתר המלכה את-בית המן צרר היהודים

8) עמוס פרק א פסוק יא

כֹּה אָמַר ה' עַל־שָׁלֹשָׁה פְּשָׁעֵי אֲדוֹם וְעַל־אַרְבַּעָה לֹא אֲשִׁיבֶנּוּ עַל־דָּפְלוּ בַחֲרָב אַחִיו וְשָׁחַתוּ רֵחֲמָיו וַיִּטְרֹף לְעַד אָפוֹ וְעִבְרָתוֹ שְׁמֶרְהָ נִצָּח:

9) משנת רבי אליעזר פרשה ט

...ועברתו שמרדה נצח, בימי המן

10) אסתר פרק ג פסוק ח

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּן לְמֶלֶךְ אַחְשׁוּרוֹשׁ יִשְׁנֵנו עִם־אֶחָד מִפּוֹזֵר וּמִפּוֹרֵד בֵּין הָעַמִּים בְּכָל מְדִינֹת מְלֻכּוֹתֶיךָ וְדַתֵּיהֶם שְׁנוֹת מִכָּל־עַם וְאֶת־דַּתִּי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵינֶם עוֹשִׂים וְלִמְלֶךְ אֵין־שׁוֹה לְהִנְיָחָם:

11) תלמוד בבלי מסכת מגילה דף יג עמוד ב

ישנו עם אחד אמר רבא: ליכא דידע לישנא בישא כהמן. אמר ליה: תא ניכלינהו! - אמר ליה: מסתפינא מאלהיו, דלא ליעביד בי כדעבד בקמאי. - אמר ליה: ישנו מן המצות. - אמר ליה: אית בהו רבנן. - אמר ליה: עם אחד הן. שמא תאמר קרחה אני עושה במלכותך - מפוזרין הם בין העמים, שמא תאמר אית הנאה מינייהו - מפורד, כפרידה זו שאינה עושה פירות. ושמא תאמר איכא מדינתא מינייהו - תלמוד לומר בכל מדינות מלכותך. ודתייהם שנות מכל עם - דלא אכלי מינן, ולא נסבי מינן, ולא מנסבי לן. ואת דתי המלך אינם עושים - דמפקי לכולא שתא בשה"י פה"י. ולמלך אין שוה להניחם - דאכלו ושתו ומבזו ליה למלכות. ואפילו נופל זבוב בכוסו של אחד מהן - זורקו ושותהו. ואם אדוני המלך נוגע בכוסו של אחד מהן - חובטו בקרקע ואינו שותהו.

12) אסתר רבה (וילנא) פרשה ז ד"ה יב ויאמר המן

ויאמר המן למלך אחשורוש ישנו עם אחד... ד"א ישנו עם אחד אמר ליה שניהון רברבן שאוכלין ושותין ואומרים עונג שבת עונג יום טוב שהן מכניסין פחת בממונו של עולם, חדא לשבעה יומין שבתא, חד לתלתין יומין ריש ירחא, בניסן פיסחא, בסיון עצרת, בתשרי ריש שתא וצומא רבא וחגא דמטללתא, אמר לו אחשורוש כך הם מצווין בתורתן, אמר לו המן אלו היו משמרין את מועדיהם ומועדינו יפה היו עושין, אלא שמבזים מועדיך, ואת דתי המלך אינם עושים שאין משמרין לא קלנדס ולא סטרנליא, אמר לו הקב"ה רשע אתה מפיל עין רעה במועדיהם שלהם הרי אני מפילך לפנייהם ומוסיפים להם מועד אחד על מפלתך זה ימי הפורים הה"ד פכסיל מחתה לו

13) Juvenal; Satire XIV

For all which the father was to blame, who gave up every seventh day to idleness, keeping it apart from all the concerns of life

14) Tacitus, Histories, Book V

We are told that the rest of the seventh day was adopted, because this day brought with it a termination of their toils; after a while the charm of indolence beguiled them into giving up the seventh year also to inaction

15) Basnage, J. C. 1706-7 L'Histoire et la religion des Juifs depuis [J]esu Christ juqu'a present, 5 vols. (Rotterdam).

But they [the Jews] . . . used to set up a great gallows, and to hang up Haman's effigies, and 'twas imagined they designed to insult the Christians upon the death of Jesus Christ. . . . And perhaps this was true enough; for indeed they changed the gibbet into a cross, and afterwards burnt the cross, with the figure fastened to it; which was not done without maledictions, which reflected upon the Messiah we adore. Theodosius 11, having notice of it, forbid the raising and burning of these sorts of gibbets in 408 . . . because it was not fit they should insult the mysteries of Christianity.

16) ספרי דאגדתא על אסתר - מדרש פנים אחרים (בובר) נוסח ב פרשה ג

ויאמר המן למלך אחשורוש ישנו עם אחד מפוזר ומפורד בין העמים בכל מדינות מלכותך ודתייהם שונות מכל עם. כד אנן בעין למיזבן מנהון מיד סוגרים עלינו שוקים, ומשחקים עלינו ומכניסין הפרד בממוננו, חדא לשבעה יומין שבתא, לתלתין יומין ריש ירחא, בניסן פסחא, בסיון עצרתא, ואית להון ירחא ומפסדין בו ממונו של עולם, ריש שתא ויומא רבא וחגא דמטללא תמניא יומין, כל יומא אכלין ושותין ורווין ונפקין ויתבין ומבזי ליה למלכא, א"ל הקב"ה רשע יאות זנית אלא מה הנאה דלא מניח אינון תרין יומין דאנא עתיד למיתן בהון שמחה במפלתו של אותו רשע, כדכתיב להיות עושים את שני הימים האלה (אסתר ט כז).

ספרי דאגדתא על אסתר - מדרש פנים אחרים (בובר) נוסח ב פרשה ג

ויאמר המן למלך אחשורוש ישנו עם אחד, ... ד"א ישנו יש להם להחריב בבל מדי ויון. ודתייהם שונות מכל עם, א"ל מרי בוא וראה מה הם משונין, ומעוותין מכל האומות, אחת לשבעה ימים עושין ארניא, וקורין אותו שבת, ופותחין בתי כנסיות, וקורין דברים שאפשר להשמע, והן אומרים שמע ישראל ה' אלהינו ה' אחד, ואח"כ הן עומדין ומתפללין, והן אומרים בתפלה ומכניע זדים, והם אמרו שאנו הם הזדים, ואח"כ אומרים אוהב צדקה ומשפט, ומקוים הם שיעשה הקב"ה בנו דין, ואחר כך הן נוטלין ספר תורה ומקללין אותנו בעלילה, ואומרים ויכחשו אויבך לך.

א"ל מפוזר ומפורזים הם, 'י הכי וי' הכא, אמר ליה כ"ש שהם מתכנשים ובאים עליך, א"ל מפורד מה פרדה זו אינה קולטת זרע, כך אין אחד מהם קולט זוכה לאומות העולם, שכן כתב להם משה רבם בתורה לא תתחתן במ (דברים ז ג), ויש להם חג ששמו פסח, ושמחים בו על מיתת פרעה שעשה להם כמה טובות, ומבערין חמץ מביתם, ואומרים כך יבער הקב"ה כל אויביהם].

*Aggadat Esther, ed. Buber, pp. 38-40 and 45-46; Esther R. 7:13 and 9:4; Midrash Abba Gorion 4-5; Yalkut, Esther, #1055.*

"Haman said: 'There is (*yeshno*) one people' " (Esther 3:8). Rava commented: There never was a slanderer as skillful as Haman. Haman said to Ahasuerus, "Come, let us engage them in battle." Ahasuerus answered, "I am afraid. Their God punishes anyone who engages them in battle." Haman: "But they are negligent (*yashenu*) of God's precepts." Ahasuerus: "Nevertheless, there are righteous men in Israel who will seek mercy for the transgressors." Haman: "But they are 'one people' [ibid.]. Should you argue [that by obliterating them] I will make a barren area in your kingdom, [please remember] that they are 'scattered' [ibid.]--scattered among many peoples.

Should you say, 'But surely there is some benefit to be derived from them,' remember that they are *meforad* [ibid.]--they are like a *firdah*, a mule that bears no progeny. Should you argue, 'But they are outside my domain,' and so you cannot act against them, they are 'in all the provinces of thy kingdom' [ibid.].

"Beside, 'their laws are diverse from those of every people' [Esther 3:8]--they do not eat with us, drink with us, or intermarry with us. 'Neither keep they the king's laws' [ibid.]--they spend the entire year dawdling and lolling about. They say, 'It is the Sabbath, it is a festival,' and thus get out of doing the king's work." Haman then proceeded to reckon the Jewish festivals: the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Feast of Weeks, Feast of Tabernacles, New Year's Day, and the Fast of Atonement. At that, the Holy One said to Haman, "Villain, you would cast an evil eye on their festivals? I will cause you to fall down before them, and to celebrate your downfall they will add still another festival." Haman went on, " 'It profiteth not the king to suffer them' [Esther 3:8], for they eat and drink, and hold the king in contempt. If a fly falls into the cup of one of them, he flings it out and drinks the wine. But if my lord king touches the cup of one of them, he dashes it to the ground and will not drink from it. Therefore, 'if it please the king, let it be written that they be destroyed; and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver,' " etc. (Esther 3:9).

"Then were the king's scribes called . . . and there was written . . . and letters were sent" (Esther 3:12-13). What was written in those letters? [The following]: To all peoples of diverse races and languages: May your well-being increase! Be it known unto you that there came to us a man, who is not of our city or of our land, an Amalekite, the son of distinguished forebears, and his name is Haman. He put a small--one may say, trifling--request to us, saying: In our midst there dwells a nation more despicable than any other nation. Arrogant in spirit, they are ever ready for treachery and corruption. They hold us in contempt and rejoice in our misfortune. Evening, morning, and noon the cursing of the king is habitual in their mouths. They keep saying, "The Lord is king forever and ever. May the nations vanish from His earth" (Ps. 10:16) when "He wreaks vengeance upon the nations, punishment upon the peoples" (Ps. 149:7).

The scions of this despicable and arrogant people are notorious ingrates. Look what they did to poor Pharaoh. When their forebears came down to Egypt, he welcomed them with extraordinary kindness--he even allowed them to settle in the very best part of his land. During years of famine he did not merely feed them, he gave them choice viands. Then, when he asked that they build him just one palace, they came with a trumped-up tale, saying, "Let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice unto the Lord our God" (Exod. 5:3); after that we will come back. In the meantime--they said--please lend us silver vessels, gold vessels, and garments. So the Egyptians lent them their silver, their gold, and their finest clothing. Then each one of these ingrates loaded ever so many asses, until they emptied Egypt. After that, they made their getaway. Naturally, Pharaoh--he and his entire camp--had no choice but to pursue them to retrieve their stolen treasure. What did these ingrates do? They had among them a certain person whose name was Moses son of Amram. By means of his witchcraft he took a staff, uttered incantations over it, and with it smote the sea, until it became dry. Then all of them went into the midst of the sea on dry land, and all of them got across. I do not know by what means they were able to cross the sea or by what means its waters were dried up. When Pharaoh saw this, he went in after them--I do not know how they managed to push him into the sea--but he and his entire host drowned in it. The ingrates, you see, chose not to remember the good things Pharaoh had done for them.

Then do you know what they did to Amalek, Haman's ancestor? After they had come up out of the sea, Amalek went to Balaam to seek advice from him, saying: Look what this people has done to Egypt. Now, if they have done this to Egypt, which bestowed so many boons upon them, how much more are they likely to do to other peoples! What do you advise? Balaam replied: Go and wage war against them.

If you cannot prevail against them, no mortal will ever prevail against them, because they depend on the merit of Abraham, and so do you.

At that, Amalek went to war against them. What did their leader Moses do then? He had an understudy named Joshua son of Nun, cruel--utterly without mercy. Moses said to him, "Choose us men, and go out, fight with Amalek" (Exod. 17:9). I do not know the kind of men he chose--whether they were wizards or just mighty warriors. But Moses took a stick in his hand--I do not know precisely what he did with it--and also took a stone and sat on it--again I do not know what incantations he whispered over it. All I know is that Amalek's strength grew weak; and, powerless, they fell, slain by them.

Then they attacked Sihon and Og, the mightiest warriors in the world. No mortal could stand up to these two. I still do not know how they managed to slay them.

After that, what did Joshua, that person's understudy, do? He led Israel into the land of the Canaanites, not only taking their land, but slaying thirty-one of their kings. He then divided the land of the Canaanites among the Israelites. Even the Gibeonites, who made peace with them, they forced to become menservants and maidservants. Then Sisera and his multitude attacked Israel. What they did to him, I do not know, but the brook of Kishon swept away Sisera and his multitude, carried them off, and cast them into the Great [Mediterranean] Sea.

As their first king, they had a man named Saul. He went to the land of Haman's ancestor Amalek, where in one day Saul slew a hundred thousand horsemen—he had no pity on man or woman, child or suckling. How he managed to slay them, I do not know. Then what did they do to Haman's grandfather, Agag, whom they first had spared? After a while one of them, named Samuel, came forth, cut him in pieces, and served his flesh as food to the birds of heaven. I do not know why Samuel felt he had to inflict such a horrible death upon Agag.

After that, they had another king, David son of Jesse by name, who destroyed and exterminated ever so many realms, and showed no pity to their inhabitants.

After David, his son Solomon rose up and built for Israel an edifice he called "the sacred house." What they had in it, I do not know. But whenever enemies came to fight them, they entered that edifice and performed their witchcraft in it, and when they emerged from it, they killed [enough] to destroy the entire world. There was not a virtue they did not boast of having, and because of their extraordinary prosperity, no other people or tongue was deemed by them to amount to anything.

But when that God of theirs grew old, Nebuchadnezzar attacked them and burned that edifice of theirs, and their wizardry no longer availed them. Some he slew; others, after fettering in irons, he exiled from their Land and brought into our midst. But they still did not change their ugly ways. Even though they are in exile in our midst, they mock us and mock what we hold in awe. In their eyes, we are an abomination. So now all of us have agreed to cast lots to determine the best time to exterminate them from the world. The lot against them fell on the month of Adar, the thirteenth day in it. Accordingly, when these presents reach you, get ready for that day. He who draws a bow, let him draw it. He who wields a sword, let him wield it.

Be ready to kill, to exterminate in one day all the Jews in your midst--young and old, little ones and women; do not allow even one of them to escape or get away.

The following is the text of the letter Haman the Agagite wrote and sent to all the kingdoms of the world and to all the notables of the peoples of the world: I, chief officer of the king, second only to him, first of all prefects and most distinguished among the nobles in the realm, I, in full agreement with the king's eparchs and officers, satraps and governors, speaking as one, in the same language, using the same words, which King Ahasuerus has authorized, do herewith indite this writing, which is sealed with his signet and is therefore irreversible. The writing concerns the great vulture [Israel] whose wings had been spread over the whole world. No fowl, no beast, tame or wild, could withstand him. But then came the great lion [Nebuchadnezzar], who dealt the vulture a mortal blow. His wings were broken, his feathers plucked out, his feet hacked off. From the day the vulture was forced out of his eyrie until this day, the entire world, all of it, has had bestowed upon it calm, quiet, and serenity. But now we see the vulture determined to grow feathers and wings once again, determined to overshadow us and the entire world, all of it, as he once overshadowed and plundered our earliest forebears. Therefore we, all the foremost regents of Media and Persia, under the authority of King Ahasuerus, with common consent, are writing to you as follows: "Set snares for this vulture and trap him before he renews his strength and returns to his eyrie. We advise you to pluck his feathers and break his wings, to feed his flesh to the fowl of heaven, to crack his eggs, to crush his fledglings, and to root out his memory from the world. Let not our counsel be like Pharaoh's, who decreed only against males but let the females be; nor like Amalek's, who smote the stragglers and left the strong unscathed; nor like Sennacherib's, who exiled them to a land like their own; nor like Nebuchadnezzar's, who only exiled them but let them live, even seating some of them near his throne.

Clearly aware [of the threat], we are resolved to slay, to exterminate all Jews, young and old, so that there be left of them no memorial, no name, no posterity in the world.

Thus, they will be unable to do to us what they did to our forefathers and fathers. For whoever did them a favor, they paid back only with evil." After the letters were sealed and given to Haman, he, together with his entire band of associates, left the royal palace, overjoyed.

When Mordecai met them [and learned of the fate in store for the Jews], he happened to see three Jewish children coming from school and hastened to catch up with them. Haman and his band, seeing Mordecai hasten after the children, followed him to find out what he might say to them.

When Mordecai caught up with the children, he asked one of them: Recite for me the verse in Scripture you studied today. He replied, "Be not afraid of sudden terror, neither of the destruction of the wicked, when it cometh" (Prov. 3:25). The second child followed him, saying: Today in school I studied the verse "Take counsel together, and it shall be brought to naught; speak the word, and it shall not stand; for God is with us" (Isa. 8:10). The third added, "Even to old age I am the same, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you; I have made and I will bear; yea, I will carry, and will deliver" (Isa. 46:4). When Mordecai heard these verses, he not only cheered up, he became jubilant. Haman asked him: What did the children say to you that made you so joyful? Mordecai replied: They gave me the good tidings that I need not fear the evil counsel you have devised against us. Enraged, wicked Haman said: I will make these children the first to feel the blow of my hand.

Then Haman said to Ahasuerus: The God of these people hates lewdness. So make a feast for them and seat women next to each one of them. Order that all of them come, eat and drink, and do whatever they desire. The king gave the order. At once Mordecai rose up and issued a proclamation: My children, go not to the place of Ahasuerus's feasting, so that Satan will not be given cause to make accusations against you. But they disregarded the words of Mordecai, and all of them went to the place of feasting.

R. Ishmael said: Eighteen thousand five hundred men went to the place of feasting, where they ate, drank, became drunk, and committed acts of depravity, giving no thought whatever to the destruction of their Temple.

At once Satan rose up and, in the presence of the Holy One, brought charges against the Jews, saying bluntly to the Holy One: Master of the universe, how long will You cleave to this people, who keep provoking You? If You please, cause this people to perish from the world. The Holy One asked: But what will happen to the Torah? Satan replied: Master of the universe, You will have to make do with [the allegiance to it of] those on high. Indeed, the Holy One Himself, becoming reconciled with Satan's counsel, said: What need have I of this people, because of whom I have had so many reasons for anger? "I will make their memory cease from among men" (Deut. 32:26). At once the Holy One said to Satan: Bring Me a scroll and I will write in it: "Extermination." Satan went and brought God a scroll, which He inscribed and sealed.