

The Brilliant Plan of Mordechai, Esther, and G-d to save the Jews



Mordechai's plan

!

וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר קָרָהוּ וְאֵת | פָּרַשְׁתָּ הַכֹּסֶף אֲשֶׁר אָמַר הָמָן לְשִׁקוֹל עַל־גִּנְזֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בִּיהוֹדִיִּים [בְּיְהוּדִים] לְאַבְדָּם׃

and Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and all about the money that Haman had offered to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews.

וְאֵת־

תַּן לוֹ לְהִרְאוֹת אֶת־אֶסְתֵּר וּלְהַגִּיד לָהּ וּלְצַנּוֹת עָלֶיהָ לָבוֹא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהִתְחַנֵּן־לוֹ וּלְבַקֵּשׁ מִלְפָּנָיו עַל־עַמּוּהָ׃

He also gave him the written text of the law that had been proclaimed in Shushan for their destruction. [He bade him] show it to Esther and inform her, and charge her to go to the king and to appeal to him and to plead with him for her people.

Esther's reaction to Mordechai's plan

תְּלִבֵּד מֵאִשָּׁר יוֹשִׁיט־לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־שַׁרְבִיט הַזֶּהב וְחַיָּה וְאֲנִי לֹא נִקְרָאתִי לָבוֹא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ זֶה שְׁלוֹשִׁים יוֹם: כ

“All the king’s courtiers and the people of the king’s provinces know that if any person, man or woman, enters the king’s presence in the inner court without having been summoned, there is but one law for him—that he be put to death. Only if the king extends the golden scepter to him may he live. Now I have not been summoned to visit the king for the last thirty days.”

Mordechai's reaction to Esther's idea

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹרְדֵכַי לְהִשִּׁיב אֶל-אֶסְתֵּר אֶל-תְּדַמִּי בְּנַפְשִׁי לְהַמְלִיט בַּיִת-הַמֶּלֶךְ מִכָּל-הַיְהוּדִים:

Mordecai had this message delivered to Esther: “Do not imagine that you, of all the Jews, will escape with your life by being in the king’s palace.

הַחֲרַשׁ תִּחְרִישִׁי בְּעַת הַזֹּאת רֹחַ וְהַצְלָה יַעֲמִיד לַיהוּדִים מִמָּקוֹם אַחֵר וְאֶת וּבֵית-אָבִיךָ תֵּאבְדוּ וּמִי יוֹדֵעַ אִם-לָעַת כְּזֹאת הִגַּעַת לְמַלְכוּת: כ

On the contrary, if you keep silent in this crisis, relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another quarter, while you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows, perhaps you have attained to royal position for just such a crisis.”

What are his arguments?

Did Esther really want to hide? Bluma's question!



Esther's plan

ל

לְשֵׁת יָמִים לַיְלָה וַיּוֹם גַּם־אֲנִי וְנַעֲרֹתַי אֲצֻיִם כֵּן וּבְכֵן אָבֹא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר לֹא־כֹדֵת וְכֹאֲשֶׁר אָבִדְתִּי אָבִדְתִּי׃

“Go, assemble all the Jews who live in Shushan, and fast in my behalf; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens will observe the same fast. Then I shall go to the king, though it is contrary to the law; and if I am to perish, I shall perish!”

Part two

אִם־מִצְאָתִי יִּיָּן

תֵּן אֶת־שְׂאֵלָתִי וְלַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־בִּקְשֹׁתַי יָבֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמָּן אֶל־הַמִּשְׁתֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֶעֱשֶׂה לָהֶם וּמָחָר אֶעֱשֶׂה כְּדִבְרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ:ב

if Your Majesty will do me the favor, if it please Your Majesty to grant my wish and accede to my request—let Your Majesty and Haman come to the feast which I will prepare for them; and tomorrow I will do Your Majesty’s bidding.”

Why the delay?

Ibn Ezra

ולפי דעתי שאיחרה אסתר לדבר ביום הראשון במשתה היין בעבור שלא ראתה שום אות שחידש השם בעבור תענית ישראל וכאשר עשה ביום השני דבר גדולת מרדכי חזק לבה.

The intricacies of Esther's plan, Megilah 15b

Rabbi Elazar says: She hid a snare for him, as it is stated: "Let their table become a snare before them" (Psalms 69:23), as she assumed that she would be able to trip up Haman during the banquet

ר"א אומר פחים טמנה לו שנאמר (תהלים סט, כג) יהי שלחנם לפניהם לפח



Rabbi Yehoshua says: She learned to do this from the Jewish teachings of her father's house, as it is stated: "If your enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat" (Proverbs 25:21).

'ר' יהושע אומר מבית אביה למדה שנאמר (משלי כה, כא) אם רעב שונאך האכילהו לחם וגו'

Rabbi Meir says: She invited him **in order** that he be near her at all times, **so that he would not take counsel and rebel** against Ahasuerus when he discovered that the king was angry with him.

ר"מ אומר כדי שלא יטול עצה וימרוד

Rabbi Yehuda says: She invited Haman so that it not be found out that she was a Jew, as had she distanced him, he would have become suspicious.

ר' יהודה אומר כדי שלא יכירו בה שהיא יהודית



Rabbi Neḥemya says: She did this **so that the Jewish people would not say: We have a sister in the king's house, and consequently neglect their prayers for divine mercy.**

ר' נחמיה אומר כדי שלא יאמרו ישראל אחות יש לנו בבית המלך ויסיחו דעתן מן הרחמים



Rabbi Yosei says: She acted in this manner, **so that** Haman would **always be on hand for her**, as that would enable her to find an opportunity to cause him to stumble before the king.

ר' יוסי אומר כדי שיהא מצוי לה בכל עת

Rashi: What for? - אולי תוכל להכשילו בשום דבר לפני המלך

ירגיש הקב"ה - שאף אני מקרבת שונאיהן של ישראל אי נמי ירגיש שאני צריכה להחניף
:רשע זה ולזלזל בכבודי

Rabbi Shimon ben Menasya said that Esther said to herself: Perhaps the Omnipresent will take notice that all are supporting Haman and nobody is supporting the Jewish people, and He will perform for us a miracle.

ר"ש בן מנסיא אומר אולי ירגיש המקום ויעשה לנו נס

What?

Rashi

:ירגיש הקב"ה - שאף אני מקרבת שונאיהן של ישראל אי נמי ירגיש שאני צריכה להחניף רשע זה ולזלזל בכבודי

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korḥa says: She said to herself: **I will act kindly toward him** and thereby bring the king to suspect that we are having an affair; she did so **in order that both he and she would be killed**. Essentially, Esther was willing to be killed with Haman in order that the decree would be annulled.

רבי יהושע בן קרחה אומר אסביר לו פנים כדי שיהרג הוא והיא

So this is....?

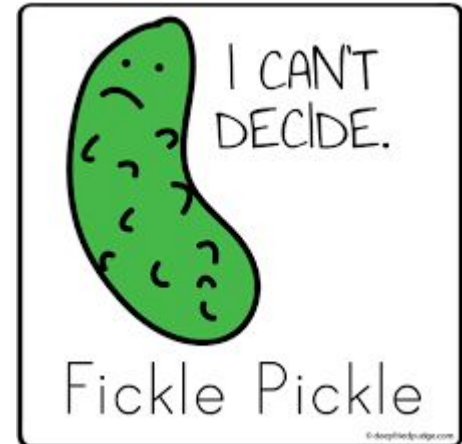
Rashi:[נ"א וכי גזרי גזירה ומית חד מינייהו בטלי הגזירה]

Rabban Gamliel says: Ahasuerus **was a fickle king**, and Esther hoped that if he saw Haman on multiple occasions, eventually he would change his opinion of him.

רבן גמליאל אומר מלך הפכפכן היה

So?

Rashi: מלך הפכפך היה - וחוזר בדיבורו אמרה שמא אוכל לפתותו ולהורגו ואם לא יהא מזומן תעבור השעה ויחזור
בו:



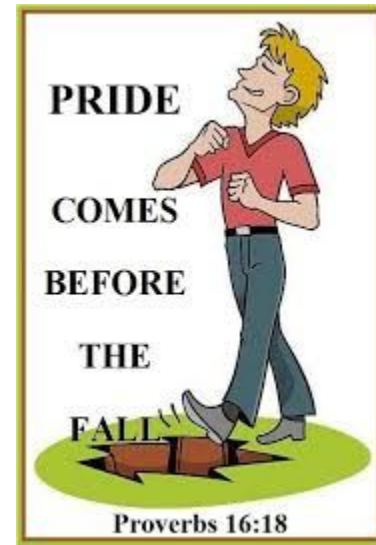
Rabban Gamliel said: We still need the words of Rabbi Eliezer HaModa'i to understand why Esther invited Haman to her banquet. **As it is taught in a *baraita*: Rabbi Eliezer HaModa'i says: She made the king jealous of him and she made the other ministers jealous of him,** and in this way she brought about his downfall.

אמר רבי גמליאל עדיין צריכין אנו למודעי דתניא ר' אליעזר המודעי אומר קנאתו במלך קנאתו בשרים



Rabba says: Esther invited Haman to her banquet in order to fulfill that which is stated: **“Pride goes before destruction”** (Proverbs 16:18), which indicates that in order to destroy the wicked, one must first bring them to pride.

רבה אמר (משלי טז, יח) לפני שבר גאון



It can be understood according to **Abaye and Rava, who both say** that she invited Haman in order to fulfill the verse: **“When they are heated, I will make feasts for them,** and I will make them drunk, that they may rejoice, and sleep a perpetual sleep” (Jeremiah 51:39).

'אביי ורבא דאמרי תרוייהו (ירמיהו נא, לט) בחומם אשית את משתיהם וגו

על בלשצר וסיעתו נאמר בשובם מן המלחמה שדריוש וכורש היו צרין על בבל ונצחן: Rashi:
בלשצר אותו היום והיו עייפים וחמים וישבו לשתות ונשתכרו ובאותו היום נהרג ואף אסתר אמרה:
מתוך משתיהן של רשעים באה להם פורענות

BTW who was right?

The Gemara relates that **Rabba bar Avuh** once **happened upon Elijah** the Prophet and **said to him: In accordance with whose understanding did Esther see fit to act in this manner?** What was the true reason behind her invitation? **He, Elijah, said to him:** Esther was motivated by all the reasons previously mentioned and did so **for all** the reasons previously stated by **the *tanna'im*** and **all** the reasons stated by **the *amora'im***.

אשכחיה רבה בר אבוא לאליהו א"ל כמאן חזיא אסתר ועבדא הכי א"ל ככולהו תנאי וככולהו אמוראי

What does this tell us about Esther's plan?

G-d's plan

וַיֵּצֵא הָמָן בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא שְׂמֵחַ וְטוֹב לֵב וְכִרְאוֹתָּהּ הָמָן אֶת־מֶרְדֵּכַי בְּשַׁעַר הַמְּלָכָה וְלֹא־קָם וְלֹא־זָע מִמֶּנּוּ וַיִּמְלֵא הָמָן עַל־מֶרְדֵּכַי חֲמָה:

That day Haman went out happy and lighthearted. But when Haman saw Mordecai in the palace gate, and Mordecai did not rise or even stir on his account, Haman was filled with rage at him.

וַיִּתְאַפֵּק הָמָן וַיָּבֹא אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ וַיִּשְׁלַח וַיִּבֵּא אֶת־אֶהֱבָיו וְאֶת־זֶרֶשׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ:

Nevertheless, Haman controlled himself and went home. He sent for his friends and his wife Zeresh,

וַיְסַפֵּר לָהֶם הָמָן אֶת־כְּבוֹד עֲשָׂרוֹ וְרַב בָּנָיו וְאֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר גָּדְלוֹ הַמְּלָכָה וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר נִשְׂאוֹ עַל־הַשָּׂרִים וְעַבְדֵי הַמְּלָכָה:

and Haman told them about his great wealth and his many sons, and all about how the king had promoted him and advanced him above the officials and the king's courtiers.

וַיֹּאמֶר הָמָן אֶף לֹא־הִבִּיאָהּ אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה עִם־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל־הַמִּשְׁתֵּה אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂתָה כִּי אִם־אוֹתִי וְגַם־לְמַחֵר אֲנִי קָרוּא־לָהּ עִם־הַמֶּלֶךְ:

“What is more,” said Haman, “Queen Esther gave a feast, and besides the king she did not have anyone but me. And tomorrow too I am invited by her along with the king.

וְכָל־זֶה אֵינְנוֹ שׂוּה לִי בְכָל־עֵת אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי רֹאֶה אֶת־מָרְדֳּכָי הַיְּהוּדִי יוֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ:

Yet all this means nothing to me every time I see that Jew Mordecai sitting in the palace gate.”

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גָּבַהּ חֲמִשִּׁים אַמָּה וּבִבְקָר | אָמַר לְמֶלֶךְ וַיִּתְּלוּ אֶת־מָרְדֳּכָי עָלָיו וּבָא־עִם־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל הַמִּשְׁתֵּה שָׂמַח וַיִּיטֵב הַדָּבָר לְפָנָי הָמָן וַיַּעַשׂ הַעֵץ: (פ)ת

Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, “Let a stake be put up, fifty cubits high, and in the morning ask the king to have Mordecai impaled on it. Then you can go gaily with the king to the feast.” The proposal pleased Haman, and he had the stake put up.

לַיְלָה הַהוּא נִדְדָה שְׁנַת הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיֹּאמֶר לְהַבִּיא אֶת־סֵפֶר הַזְּכוֹרוֹת דְּבַרֵי הַיָּמִים וַיְהִי נִקְרָאִים לְפָנָי הַמֶּלֶךְ:ב

That night, sleep deserted the king, and he ordered the book of records, the annals, to be brought; and it was read to the king.

The king's sleep was disturbed. It was a miracle.¹ *Otherwise, would Achashveirosh's sleep be disturbed, particularly on this night, after having partied earlier in the day. Achashveirosh's sleep was disturbed by a dream in which he saw Haman grabbing a sword to kill him. (Esther Rabbah 10:1)* And some [Rabbis] say that he took to heart that Esther had invited Haman; [thinking] perhaps she had set eyes upon him, and he [Haman] would assassinate him.²

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מֶלֶךְ מֵה־לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בִּיקְרוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּן בְּלִבּוֹ לְמִי יַחֲפֹץ הַמֶּלֶךְ לַעֲשׂוֹת יָקָר יוֹתֵר מִמֶּנִּי׃

Haman entered, and the king asked him, “What should be done for a man whom the king desires to honor?” Haman said to himself, “Whom would the king desire to honor more than me?”

The Angels!

Why didn't Vashti want to come out during the king's party?

The Gemmara answers that the angel, Gavriel, made her a tail. That's why she refused to come to the party.

The king didn't know what to do with Vashti.

How did he decide what to do? He gathered seven of his closest advisors and they advised him to banish her or perhaps kill her.

Which of the seven advisors told him to do this? It was Mehuman, who the midrash says was actually Gavriel the angel.

Another midrash says that the advisors were symbolic of all the angels in heaven arguing for the Jews. The angelic, Satan, argued that the Jews should be killed. He convinced G-d to sign and seal a decree for the Jew's destruction. The Torah was deeply saddened by this so she woke up the forefathers. But it was only when G-d heard the cries of the children who were fasting, that he decided to overturn the decree. Another midrash says that the seven advisors were actually seven arguments to G-d by the angels to save the Jews. They said, do the others bring these seven sacrifices as the Jews do? It was these angels who sealed Vashtis's fate.

Then Esther decided to try and save the Jews,

Achashvarosh had to recognize Esther with his golden scepter, or she would be killed. What made the king spare Esthers life?

One angel lifted up Esther's neck, because she was weary from fasting and davening for her people. Some Rabbis say that she wasn't looking her best that day, so a second angel made Esther full of grace and love. A third angel stretched out the king's scepter so it would reach Esther. There is another Midrash that the angels made Achashvarosh look at Esther, because he didn't even want to see her face.

One night the king couldn't sleep. He asked to see his book of records. When he was reading it, he came upon the part where Mordechai saved his life. He realized he hadn't rewarded him. What made the king awake from his sleep? The rabbis say that the sleep of the angels was disturbed by all the prayers of the Jews. Others say that the angels kept waking up the king saying, "You ungrateful person! You never paid back the one that saved your life!"

Esther invited the king and Haman to two parties. At the second party, Esther went to Achashvarosh and told him that her people were sold to be destroyed. He asked her who had done such a thing. She pointed to Haman. The rabbis say that at first she mistakenly pointed to Achashvarosh, so an angel pushed her hand to point to Haman. What does the Gemmara mean by that? Achashvarosh was actually part of the plan to kill the Jews. An accusation against Haman, is an accusation toward the king. The angels made sure that he didn't take offense to her words, and he didn't think her accusation was actually towards himself.

How did the king decide whether to listen to Esther as queen, or to believe Haman as chief advisor? He went to his garden to think. When he was there he saw workers, who were really angels, pulling out the trees from his beautiful garden. He asked them who told them to do it. They replied that Haman did. This made Achashverosh even more mad at Haman and this helped get Haman in deep trouble.

When Ahasvarosh came back in from the garden, he discovered that Haman had fallen on Esther's bed. He was infuriated. What made Haman fall on Esther's bed? The Gemara says that an angel came and pushed him. All this together guaranteed that Haman would be killed.

At this point, everything seems to be going pretty smoothly. In fact, the Jews defended themselves against their enemies the day before Purim, and killed many of them. Then the king told Esther that he heard the Jews killed 500 people and the 10 sons of Haman. At this point, we are not sure whether Achashvarosh is happy about it, or not. The Gemara says that he was about to get really angry with Esther and the Jews. Then an angel came and slapped him on his mouth, and prevented him from saying hateful words. Instead, he asked Esther what he could do for her.

So who saved the Jews?



THE WHO