

***Ad d'Lo Yada***  
**“Until it is impossible to know”**

***Seuda Shlishit (Shabbat Zachor) Study Prepared by Rabbi Chaim Singer-Frankes<sup>1</sup>***



“Esther (standing) Before Ahasuerus” by Giovanni Sirani, Italy 17<sup>th</sup> Century



Vintage Poster of Purim “AdLoYada” Celebrations in Tel-Aviv, 1933

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**Esther Chapter 3: Verses 12-13 (Haman’s decree)**

**12)** On the thirteenth day of the first month, the king’s scribes were summoned, and a decree was issued, as Haman directed, to the king’s governors (henchmen), to the governors of every province, and to the officials of every people, to every province in its own script and to every people in its own language. The orders were issued in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the king’s signet.

וַיִּקְרְאוּ סֹפְרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בַּחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן בְּשִׁלּוּשָׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם בּוֹ וַיִּכְתֹּב כָּכָל־אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה הֶמֶן אֶל אַחֲשֻׁדְרָפְנֵי־הַמֶּלֶךְ  
 וְאֶל־הַפְּחוֹת אֲשֶׁר | עַל־מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה וְאֶל־שָׂרֵי עַם וְעַם מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה כְּכַתְּבָהּ וְעַם וְעַם כָּל־שׂוֹנוֹ בְּשֵׁם  
 הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֻׁרְשׁ נִכְתָּב וְנִחְתָּם בְּטַבַּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ:

**13)** Accordingly, written instructions were dispatched by couriers to all the king’s provinces to destroy, massacre, and exterminate all the Jews, young and old, children and women, on a single day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month—that is, the month of Adar—and to plunder their possessions.

וְנִשְׁלְחוּ סֹפְרִים בְּיַד הַרְצִיִּים אֶל־כָּל־מְדִינוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַשְׁמִיד לְהַרְגוֹ וּלְאַבְדֹת אֶת־כָּל־הַיְהוּדִים מִנְעָר וְעַד־זָקֵן  
 טָף וְנָשִׁים בַּיּוֹם אֶחָד בְּשִׁלּוּשָׁה עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ שְׁנַיִם־עָשָׂר הוּא־חֹדֶשׁ אָדָר וּשְׁלָלָם לְבוֹז:

**Esther Chapter 8: Verses 9-14 (Mordechai & Esther’s Decree)**

**9)** So the king’s scribes were summoned at that time, on the twenty-third day of the third month, that is, the month of Sivan; and letters were written, at Mordecai’s dictation, to the Jews and to the satraps, the governors and the officials of the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces from India to Cush: to every province in its own script and to every people in its own language, and to the Jews in their own script and language.

וַיִּקְרְאוּ סֹפְרֵי־הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּעֵת־הַהִיא בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁלִישִׁי הוּא־חֹדֶשׁ סִיּוֹן בְּשִׁלּוּשָׁה וְעָשָׂרִים בּוֹ וַיִּכְתֹּב כָּכָל־אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה  
 מֶרְדֵּכָי אֶל־הַיְהוּדִים וְאֶל הָאֲחֻשְׁדָּרְפָּנִים־וְהַפְּחוֹת וְשָׂרֵי הַמְּדִינֹת אֲשֶׁר | מִהַדּוֹ וְעַד־כּוּשׁ שִׁבְעַת עָשָׂרִים וּמֵאָה  
 מְדִינָה מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה כְּכַתְּבָהּ וְעַם וְעַם כָּל־שׂוֹנוֹ וְאֶל־הַיְהוּדִים כְּכַתְּבָם וְכָל־שׂוֹנָם:

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**10)** He had them written in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the king’s signet. Letters were dispatched by mounted couriers, riding steeds used in the king’s service, bred of the royal stud,

וַיִּכְתֹּב בְּשֵׁם הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרֶשׁ וַיַּחֲתֵמם בְּטַבַּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיִּשְׁלַח סָפְרָיִם בְּיַד הַרְצָיִם בְּסוּסִים רַכְבֵי הַרְקָשׁ  
 הָאֲחֻשְׁתָּרָנִים בְּנֵי הַרְמְכִים:

**11)** to this effect: The king has permitted the Jews of every city to assemble and fight for their lives; if any people or province attacks them, they may destroy, massacre, and exterminate its armed force together with women and children, and plunder their possessions—

אֲשֶׁר נָתַן הַמֶּלֶךְ לַיהוּדִים | אֲנִי בְּכָל־עִיר־וְעִיר לְהַקְהִיל וְלַעֲמֹד עַל־נַפְשָׁם לְהַשְׁמִיד וְלַהַרְג וּלְאַבֵּד אֶת־כָּל־  
 חַיִל עִם וּמְדִינָה הַצָּרִים אֲתָם טָף וְנָשִׁים וּשְׁלָלָם לְבוֹז:

**12)** on a single day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, namely, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, that is, the month of Adar.

בְּיוֹם אֶחָד בְּכָל־מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרֶשׁ בְּשָׁלוֹשָׁה עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ שְׁנַיִם־עָשָׂר הוּא־חֹדֶשׁ אָדָר:

**13)** The text of the document was to be issued as a law in every single province: it was to be publicly displayed to all the peoples, so that the Jews should be ready for that day to avenge themselves on their enemies.

פְּתֻשָׁן הַכְּתָב לְהַגָּתוֹ דָּת בְּכָל־מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה גְלוּי לְכָל־הָעַמִּים וְלַהֲיוֹת (הַיהוּדִים) [הַיהוּדִים] (עַתוּדִים)  
 [עַתִּידִים] לְיוֹם הַזֶּה לְהַנָּקָם מֵאִיְבֵיהֶם:

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**Esther 9:22-23 (The Feast)**

כַּיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר־נָחַו בָּהֶם הַיְהוּדִים מֵאֲיִבֵיהֶם וְהַחֲדָשׁ אֲשֶׁר נִהְפָּךְ לָהֶם מִיָּגוֹן לְשִׂמְחָה וּמֵאֲבֵל לְיוֹם טוֹב לַעֲשׂוֹת אוֹתָם יְמֵי מִשְׁתֵּה וְשִׂמְחָה וּמְשָׁלַח מְנוֹת אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ וּמִתְּנוּת לְאֲבִינָיִם:

**22)** The same days on which the Jews enjoyed relief from their foes and the same month that had been transformed for them from one of grief and mourning to one of festive joy.

**23)** They were to observe them as days of feasting and merrymaking, and as an occasion for sending gifts to one another and presents to the poor.

וְקִבְּלוּ הַיְהוּדִים אֶת אֲשֶׁר־הִחֲלוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת וְאֶת אֲשֶׁר־כָּתַב מֶרְדֵּכַי אֲלֵיהֶם:

The Jews accordingly assumed as an obligation that which they had begun to practice and that Mordecai prescribed for them.

**Talmud, Tractate Megillah 7b**

אמר רבא: מיחייב איניש לבסומי בפורי' עד דלא ידע בין ארוח המן לברוך מרדכי.

**Rava said: A person is obligated to become intoxicated (with wine) on Purim until he (is so intoxicated) that he does not know (how to distinguish) between cursed is Haman and blessed is Mordecai.**

רבה ורבי זירא עבדו סעודת פורים בהדי הדדי. איבסום. קם רבה שחטיה לרבי זירא. למחר, בעי רחמי ואחיה. לשנה, אמר ליה: ניתי מר ונעביד סעודת פורים בהדי הדדי. אמר ליה: לא בכל שעתא ושעתא מתרחיש ניסא.

(The Gemara relates that) **Rabba and Rabbi Zeira prepared a Purim feast with each other, and they became intoxicated (to the point that) Rabba arose and slaughtered Rabbi Zeira. The next day, (when he became sober and realized what he had done, Rabba) asked (God) for mercy, and revived him. The next year, (Rabba) said to (Rabbi Zeira): Let the Master come and let us prepare the Purim feast with each other. He said to him: Miracles do not happen each and every hour, (and I do not want to undergo that experience again).**

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**Excerpt From: JPS Bible Commentary on Esther, by Dr. Adele Berlin, bible scholar, Hebraist**

To the ancient reader an imaginative story was just as worthy, or even as holy, as a historically accurate one, so to declare Esther to be imaginative does not in any way detract from its value. What we have in chapter 9 is the orgy, riot, the revelry, that fits so well with farce and carnival. The violent free-for-all in which the Jews kill their enemies is transmuted into the revelry of the festival. The make-believe victory is the safety valve for Diaspora Jewry that permits the continuation of the belief in the security of their lives and their community.

Esther should be seen as part of the same literary context from which the Greek writings emerged. Esther and the Greek works share a set of literary motifs and stereotypes relating to Persian court life (p. xxviii).

The comic aspects of the book are not incidental, merely to provide comic relief; they are the essence of the book. They define the genre of the book, and thus set the parameters according to which we should read it. We cannot appreciate the story fully unless we realize that it is meant to be funny (p. xviii).

**Excerpt from S. Talmon “Wisdom in The Book of Esther, 1963**

With regard to the historicity of Esther, we have no reason whatsoever to assume that in this matter the book truthfully puts on record actual historical facts. "In its essence it is most probably a true description of an actual socio-historical situation, garnished with chronistic details of suspect accuracy. This analysis led to the definition of the book as a 'historical novel,' a definition which found favor with many scholars. In sum, the non-historical character of Esther and the absence of specific religious coloration in it are the consequences of its character as a Wisdom book.

**Excerpt from Biblical Studies, A. Haham, Commentary on Esther, Jerusalem 1973**

King Ahasuerus is frequently named in Esther while the God of Israel is not referred to even once, in order to demonstrate that while the earthly king of Persia stands in the center of the tale, the reader understands that it is the hidden King of Kings who determines all the events of the narrative.

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**“Purim, Proximity, and Radical Love” summarized excerpt from Rabbi Dr. Aryeh Cohen’s article, March 16, 2019**

A striking passage in the Babylonian Talmud lists history's great enemies of the Jewish people—and tucked within it is this: “Haman's descendants taught Torah in Bnei Brak.” Haman, descended from Amalek, whose biblical destiny was total obliteration. Bnei Brak, the very heart of rabbinic learning. The juxtaposition is jarring.

A Hasidic teaching resolves the paradox beautifully: this is the fulfillment of wiping out Amalek. Not through destruction, but transformation. Someone, at some point, brought Haman's children into the study hall. The wager was audacious—that proximity to the object of one's hatred, and access to its deepest wisdom, might dissolve the hatred itself. That the ideology of Amalek—targeting the different, the weak, the vulnerable—could be displaced by an ideology of welcome.

The insight cuts deep: enemies are not always best defeated by force. Sometimes they are defeated by invitation. When Haman is welcomed into the house of learning, there is no next chapter in which he receives the king's ring and plots genocide—because he has already become someone else.

Transformation, not annihilation, as the truest form of victory.