

## Brief outline of Chapters 1 through 8

### Achashverosh's party (Chapter 1)

Three years in, Achashverosh throws a six-month international party to display his wealth. Then he throws a 1-week local party. At the second party, he summons Queen Vashti to be "on display", and she refuses. Achashverosh is angry, and he takes it up with his political advisors. The advice, which he accepts, is to remove her monarchy, and to decree empire-wide that women must listen to their husbands.

### Replacing Vashti (Chapter 2)

They seek young, attractive, single girls to audition. Each of them must surrender one year of her life beforehand for preparation, be with the king for a night, and then either she becomes queen or she is consigned to the harem forever. Esther, first-cousin of Mordechai, is brought to the king. She hides her Jewish identity. Esther finds favour and becomes Queen.

### Interlude: Plot on the life of Achashverosh (Chapter 2)

Bigtan and Teresh, palace officers, are angry at Achashverosh. They plot against the king. Mordechai finds out, tells the queen. They are executed, and the event is chronicled in the king's records.

### Achashverosh elevates Haman, who wants to kill the Jews (Chapter 3)

Achashverosh gives Haman absolute power, and demands absolute obedience from the population for him. Mordechai refuses to bow to Haman, gaining his ire. Haman sells Achashverosh on eliminating the Jews as a threat to his authority. He offers to pay, and Achashverosh declines the cash. The runners are rushed out to spread the word.

### Mordechai goes to Esther to help (Chapter 4)

Mordechai tells Esther to go to the king. Esther refuses, because going to the king without being invited can be fatal. She has not been invited in 30 days. Mordechai says Gd will always find a way, but she may not be saved if Gd goes another route. She agrees to go, after a three-day national fast

### Esther invites the king and Haman to a party (Chapter 5)

Achashverosh likes her, and tells her he will give her up to half the kingdom. Esther invites Achashverosh and Haman to a party, when she will make her request. At the first party, Esther invites them to another party, when she will really make her request. Haman is feeling good, until he sees Mordechai. Angry, he comes home and his friends say to hang Mordechai. He will do it.

### Rewarding Mordechai (Chapter 6)

Achashverosh can't sleep. He has the royal chronicles read to him. They find Mordechai's unrewarded rescue of the king's life. Achashverosh suddenly asks who is outside. It's Haman, come to get permission to hang Mordechai. The king asks how to reward someone. Haman assumes it's himself, and he says to give royalty to the person – horse, garb and crown. Achashverosh says to give horse and garb to Mordechai, and have Haman lead the horse. The deed is done. Haman returns home very angry. Haman's former friends tell him he is in trouble now.

### Hanging Haman (Chapter 7)

At the second party, Esther outs Haman as a villain. Haman pleads with Esther; Achashverosh mistakenly thinks he is assaulting Esther. Charvonah comes in to tell the king about Haman's tree to hang Mordechai; Haman is hanged.

## Jewish self-defense (Chapter 8)

Achashverosh puts Esther in charge of Haman's house, and replaces Haman with Mordechai. Esther puts Mordechai over Haman's house. Esther pleads with the king to end the decree against the Jews. Achashverosh can't retract, but he allows them to defend themselves. Mordechai is honoured, and the Jews rejoice.

### 1. Talmud, Megilah 12a

"And at the conclusion of these days, etc." Rav and Shemuel debated: One said he was a wise king, the other said he was a foolish king.

- The one who said he was a wise king said he did well, drawing near the distant first, for he could always appease the residents of his city.
- The one who said he was foolish said he should have drawn the residents of his city near first, for if the others would rebel, these would stand with him.

### 2. Esther 1:13-15, 1:19

And the king said to the wise men... Regarding what to do about Queen Vashti, for she had not performed the word of King Achashverosh, through his officers.

"If it is good to the king, let the royal word go forth before him, and let it be recorded in the laws of Persia and Medea, without violation, that Vashti did not come before King Achashverosh, and the king shall give her reign to her peer, who is better than her."

### 3. Talmud, Megilah 12b

Why didn't [Vashti] come? Rabbi Yosi bar Chanina said: This teaches that she broke out in *tzaraat*.

### 4. Talmud, Megilah 12b

"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."

### 5. Esther 3:1-2

After these matters, King Achashverosh elevated Haman, son of Hamedata, the Aggagite, and raised him up. And he placed [Haman's] seat above all of the officers who were with him. And all of the king's servants at the royal gate would kneel and bow to Haman, for so the king had instructed for him...

### 6. Talmud, Megilah 13a

"And Esther bore favour [in the eyes of all who saw her]" – Rabbi Elazar said: This teaches that she appeared to each one as though she was from his nation.

### 7. Talmud, Megilah 16a

We have learned: Haman was the barber of Kfar Kartzom for 22 years.

### 8. Talmud, Megilah 13b

Gd caused a master to rage against his servants to help a righteous person – Joseph... And Gd caused servants to rage against their master to help a righteous person – Mordechai....

### 9. Talmud, Megilah 13b

"And their law is different from that of any other nation" – They do not eat of ours, they do not marry of ours, and they do not marry theirs to ours.

"And they do not practice the king's laws" – They spend the entire year in 'Today is Shabbat' 'Today is Pesach'.  
"And it is not worthwhile for the king to let them be" – For they eat and drink and mock the throne. And even if a fly would fall into the cup of one of them, he would throw out [the fly] and drink it, but if my master the king would touch the cup of one of them, he would throw it on the ground and he would not drink it.

#### 10. Esther 6:1-4, 6:7-10

That night, the king's sleep was shaken. He said to bring the book of records, the accounts of days, and they were read before the king.

And it was found recorded that Mordechai had told of Bigtan and Teresh, two royal officers from the guards of the door, who had sought to send their hand against King Achashverosh. And the king asked, "What was done, what glory and greatness, for Mordechai for this?" And the king's youths, his servants, said, "Nothing was done for him." And the king said, "Who is in the yard?" And Haman had come to the yard...

And Haman said to the king, "For the man the king wishes to honour, let them bring royal garb which the king has worn, and the horse the king has ridden, and which has the royal crown upon its head. And let the garb and the horse be given to a man from the king's officers, the *partimim*, and let them dress the man whom the king wishes to honour, and ride him on the horse in the city street. And let them declare before him, 'So shall be done for the man whom the king wishes to honour.'"

And the king said to Haman, "Quickly, take the garb and the horse as you have spoken, and do this for Mordechai the Judean who resides at the royal gate; do not eliminate anything from all you have said."

#### 11. Talmud, Megilah 15b

"That night, the king's sleep was disturbed" – Rabbi Tanchum said: The 'sleep' of the King of the Universe was disturbed.

#### 12. Talmud, Megilah 15b

A thought fell into his mind. He said, "What is this, that Esther invited Haman? Perhaps they are taking counsel against 'that man', to kill him!" Then he said, "If so, isn't there anyone who likes me, who will tell me?" Then he said, "Perhaps there is someone who benefited me and I did not pay him back, and so people refrain from revealing this to me?"

#### 13. Talmud, Megilah 16a

"And the king rose in his anger from the feast of wine to the royal garden... And the king returned from the royal garden to the feast of wine" – Just as he rose in anger, so he returned in anger, for he went and found the ministering *malachim*, in the guise of men, uprooting the trees of the orchard. He said to them, "What are you doing?!" They said, "Haman instructed us."

He entered his palace, "And Haman was falling on the bed on which Esther was seated." "Falling"? Shouldn't it say "fell"? Rabbi Elazar said: This teaches that a *malach* came and knocked him down on to the bed.

#### 14. Midrash, Esther Rabbah 10:9

What did Eliyahu, of blessed memory, do? He made himself appear like Charvonah...