

## Part IV - Textual and Thematic Support

For a start, we will bring two examples where there appears to be an 'echo' of God's voice behind certain statements in the Megilla.

For example, the story of Vashti may reflect God's utter disappointment with Am Yisrael for not returning to Israel to fulfill their divine purpose, to become God's 'model' nation:

"[Vashti was called to] **Come** to the **King** and show **all the nations** her beauty... but she did not come as the King commanded, and he became very angry..." ([see Esther 1:9-12](#))

Is not Vashti's behavior similar to that of Am Yisrael? Is not the King's conclusion similar to God's? Is not the fear that all the women in the Persian kingdom will now disobey their husbands ironic? If Am Yisrael (destined to be an "or lagoyim") does not respond to its divine call, what could God expect from other nations?

[Note that in earlier prophecy, Am Yisrael is often compared to God's wife; [see Hoshea 2:4,16-18](#). See also [Zecharya 1:1-3](#); note "shuvu aylai..." and "va'yiktzof," and compare it to [Esther 1:12](#).]

After all, who is the real **King** in the Megilla? [Chazal](#) suggest the possibility that the word "HaMelech" in the megilla may be "kodesh," as it may be referring to **God** and not to Achashveyrosh!

Even Haman's petition to Achashveyrosh to destroy Am Yisrael may echo a similar complaint that God may have against His own nation:

"There is a certain nation scattered among the nations whose laws are different than any other nation, but the laws of the King they do not keep, and it is not worthwhile for the King to leave them be." ([3:8](#))

In a certain way, Haman's accusation is similar to God's threat in **Shirat Ha'azinu** to destroy Am Yisrael for not keeping His laws ([32:26](#)). After all, what purpose is there for God to keep His people if they refuse to obey Him and fulfill their divine goal?

Even though these first two examples may appear a bit 'stretched,' a more convincing textual proof is found in the parallel between Achashveyrosh's palace and the Bet HaMikdash. This parallel is significant for it reflects the fact the Bnei Yisrael had neglected the Bet HaMikdash in Yerushalayim, preferring instead to be dependent on the palace of Achashveyrosh. We begin by comparing the overall structure of each:

### **Chatzer P'nimit = Kodesh Kodashim**

The Megilla refers to the most inner chamber of the king's palace as the "chatzer hap'nimit" ([5:1](#)), where entry to anyone, unless **called** to enter, is forbidden under threat of death (as Esther feared in [4:11](#)). Here we find an obvious parallel to the **Kodesh HaKodashim** in the **Mikdash** (Purim - Yom Kippurim!).

### **Chatzer Chitzona = Kodesh**

The 'waiting area' outside the inner chamber is called the "chatzer hachitzona" ([6:4](#)). Here "roey pnei haMelech" ([1:14](#)) like Haman himself are allowed to enter freely. This is parallel to the **Kodesh** where **Kohanim** are permitted to enter. [See the description of the Temple in [Yechezkel 40:18-19](#).]

### **Sha'ar Bet HaMelech = Azara**

In front of the palace is "sha'ar bet hamelech" where people like Mordechai are permitted to stand ([2:21](#)). However, even here one must dress properly ("aveilut" is not permitted); therefore he can not be there dressed in sackcloth ([see 4:2!](#)). This area is parallel to the **Azara** in the **Mikdash**.

### **Rechov Ha'Ir Shushan = Yerushalayim**

This is the area "lifnei sha'ar hamelech" ([4:2](#)) or "rechov ha'ir" ([4:6](#)) where Mordechai can dress in sackcloth. This is parallel the city of **Yerushalayim** surrounding the **Mikdash**.

This parallel is strengthened by the Megilla's use of the word "**Bira**" to describe **Shushan**. As we explained in our introduction, in Divrei HaYamim, the only other time in Tanach prior to Megillat Esther where this word is mentioned, "**Bira**" describes specifically the **Bet HaMikdash**, in the context of its purpose to serve as a national center and symbol of God's Name. [See [Divrei HaYamim I 29:1,19](#); you should read [29:1-25](#) to see the context. (You'll find there a familiar passage from davening, which you may now understand a little better.) See also [Mesechet Midot I:9](#), where the Mishna refers to the Bet HaMikdash as the "**Bira**."] ]

Other parallels to the Mikdash are found in the use of key words such as "yekar v'tiferet" ([1:4](#)) and "techelet, butz, v'argaman" ([1:6](#)) in the Megilla's description of the king's party. [Based on these psukim, the gemara ([Megilla 12a](#)) claims that Achashveyrosh donned the "bigdei Kohen Gadol" at his party!]

Even the 6-month party followed by a seven day special celebration may parallel the six months that it took to build the Mishkan (from Yom Kippur till Rosh Chodesh Nissan) followed by the seven day "miluim" ceremony. Likewise, [Chazal](#) explain, "v'keilim mikeilim shonim" ([1:7](#)) as referring to the vessels of the Bet HaMikdash. Chazal even suggest that Haman's decree may have been Am Yisrael's punishment for

drinking from these 'keilim' or alternately for their participation in and enjoyment of the royal party ([see Megilla 12a](#)).

[Note that according to pshat, the "keilim" had returned with Sheshbatzar during the time of Koresh ([see Ezra 1:7-8](#)). However, the Midrash emphasizes the thematic connection between the party and Bnei Yisrael's lack of enthusiasm to build the Mikdash.]

Hence we can conclude that the Megilla's satire suggests that during this time period Am Yisrael had replaced:

- ◆ God with Achashveyrosh;
- ◆ God's Temple with Achashveyrosh's palace; and
- ◆ Yerushalayim HaBira with Shushan HaBira! ["V'nahafoch Hu!"]

### 70 Days/70 Years

Another seemingly unimportant detail in the Megilla concerning **when** the two decrees were sent may also allude to this prophetic backdrop.

Recall that the original decree calling for the destruction of the Jews was sent out on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of Nissan ([3:12](#)). Several days later Haman was hanged and Esther pleaded from the king to repeal this decree ([8:3-6](#)). Achashveyrosh agreed; **however**, the actual letters were not sent out until the 23<sup>rd</sup> of Sivan - some **two months** later ([8:9](#))! What took so long?

By carefully comparing these two dates, we again find an amazing reminder of Yirmiyahu's prophecy of the **seventy** years. Between the 13<sup>th</sup> of Nissan until the 23<sup>rd</sup> of Sivan - **70 days** elapsed (17+30+23=70). During these seventy days, all of the Jews throughout the Persian empire were under the tremendous peril of impending destruction, thinking that their doom was inevitable. Could this be an ironic reminder to the Jewish people that they had not heeded Yirmiyahu's prophecy of what he expected from Bnei Yisrael once the seventy years had expired ([see 29:10-14](#))?

A similar concept of suffering for a sin, a day for a year (and vice versa), is found twice in Tanach in related circumstances. After the sin of the "meraglim," the forty days of their mission are replaced by the punishment of forty years of wandering. Here, too, the nation opted not to fulfill their divine destiny, preferring a return to Egypt over the conquest of Eretz Yisrael. Yechezkel, too, is required to suffer 'a day for each year.' [For 390 days followed by an additional 40 days, he must lie on his side and repent for the sins of Israel and Yehuda that led to the destruction of Yerushalayim. ([Yechezkel 4:1-14](#)!)]

A similar claim is made by the [Midrash](#) that suggests that Achashveyrosh threw his 180 day party in celebration of the fact that Yirmiyahu's seventy years were over and the Bet HaMikdash was **not** rebuilt. In pshat, this explanation is unreasonable. Why should the most powerful king of civilization worry about the prophecies of Yirmiyahu, while the Jews themselves do not listen to him? On the level of drash, however, this explanation is enlightening. Chazal, in the spirit of the megilla - "v'nahafoch hu" - put into Achashveyrosh's mind what should have been in the mind of Am Yisrael, i.e. the fulfillment of Yirmiyahu's prophecy of seventy years and the desire to return.

### **Pesach and Purim**

Based on our understanding thus far, it is also understandable why Israel's salvation from Haman's decree comes only after Am Yisrael collectively accept a three day fast. This fast takes place on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 17<sup>th</sup> of Nissan. Interestingly enough, the events that led to the repeal of Haman's decree take place 'davka' during the holiday of Pesach - the holiday on which we celebrate our freedom from subjugation to a foreign nation and the beginning of our journey to the Promised Land.