

The Purim Story

RIGHT BACK AT YOU

By Rabbi Daniel Glatstein

The *Megillah* concludes with great praise of Mordechai HaTzaddik:

“For Mordechai HaYehudi was viceroy to King Achashveirosh; he was a great man among the Jews and found favor with the multitude of his brethren; he sought the good of his people and spoke for the welfare of all his seed” (Esther 10:3).

In the final words of the *Megillah*, we read the accolades of Mordechai: how he has risen to be second in command, and that he seeks the welfare and well-being of all of his brethren. This is understandably the appropriate ending to *Megillas Esther*.

The third-to-last *pasuk*, though, seems to be problematic. It states, *“King Achashveirosh levied a tax on the mainland and the islands of the sea” (ibid. v. 1).* Interestingly, the Vilna Gaon points out that *maas, taxes*, has the *gematria* of one hundred. *Veyai, and the islands*, is numerically equivalent to twenty-seven. This is an allusion to the fact that Achashveirosh taxed all one hundred twenty-seven provinces within his vast kingdom.

Why does the *pasuk* record that Achashveirosh taxed the citizens of his kingdom? Why should we care that Achashveirosh taxed his subjects? Is there something especially significant about this fact that warrants its placement among the concluding verses of the *Megillah*?

This question is compounded by the idea expressed in the very next *pasuk*: *“All his mighty and powerful acts, and the account of the greatness of Mordechai, whom the king had promoted, are recorded in the book of chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia.”*

The *Megillah* seems to be directing us to the records of the Shushan historical society for any additional information that is not included in the *Megillah*. Do the Anshei Knesses HaGedolah who canonized the *Megillah* really want us to be combing through the chronicles of ancient Persia to find out the rest of the story?

Rav Yechezkel Abramsky writes that this *pasuk* conveys a fundamental message regarding how to understand *Megillas Esther*. This *pasuk* is teaching that the *Megillah* was written for one reason and one reason only: to glorify and publicize the miracle — to record for posterity the Divine hand of salvation that delivered the Jewish people from their enemy in the city of Shushan. There is no information provided simply to offer a better picture of the political background; no information is given to add context to the historic authenticity of the palace intrigue. Each and every *pasuk* is critical to the miraculous deliverance, and anything that is not absolutely necessary is not included.

Why, then, asks the Brisker Rav, are we told about the taxes that were levied against the citizens of Shushan? This



seems a better fit for the history books.

That He Prepared “For Him”

“The king asked, “Who is in the courtyard?” [Now Haman was (just) coming into the outer courtyard of the royal palace to speak to the king about hanging Mordechai on the gallows that he had prepared for him]” (Esther 6:4).

Haman wanted to hang Mordechai on the gallows he had prepared “for him.” Why does the *pasuk* add the word *lo, for him*? The *Megillah* could have simply stated that Haman wanted to hang Mordechai “on the gallows that he had prepared.” *Maseches Megillah* addresses this question, and in the following five words of Gemara lie the key to understanding the entire events of Purim: “[The words] ‘prepared for him’ teach (i.e., mean) ‘prepared for himself.’”

The *pasuk* states, “The gallows which Haman had prepared for him.” We are taught in a *Baraisa* that these words should be interpreted, “on the gallows that Haman had prepared for himself.” The seemingly extraneous word “*lo*” indicates that he was actually making it for himself. As Rashi writes, *“Ltzorech atzmo, for his own use.”* Haman thought he was constructing gallows on which to hang Mordechai, but in reality, he was building it for himself.

And, in fact, this is what eventually transpired: Haman was executed on the very gallows that he had had constructed. Ironically, he unknowingly had built the gallows

on which he himself would hang.

This was not an isolated incident; rather, much of what Haman did as he plotted to annihilate the Jews actually set the stage for our salvation. Hashem directed events in such a way that the efforts that were “*heichin lo*, prepared for him,” that Haman prepared for the downfall of Klal Yisrael, actually were unwittingly “*lo heichin*,” prepared for *himself*, readying his own disgrace and defeat.

Eitzah vs. Machshavah

On Purim, we recite in *Al HaNissim*: *“And You, in Your abundant mercy, annulled his counsel, frustrated his intention, and brought his evil plan upon his own head, and they hanged him and his sons upon the gallows.”*

We thank Hashem because “*heifarta es atzaso, He annulled his [Haman’s] counsel,*” and also “*killalta es machashavto, frustrated his intentions.*”

How does *eitzah* differ from *machshavah*? What is the distinction between Hashem “annulling his counsel” and “frustrating his intention”?

The Vilna Gaon teaches that an *eitzah* is an idea that comes to fruition. *Machshavah*, on the other hand, is a plan that is never actualized. Rav Dovid Cohen, the Rosh Yeshivah of Yeshivas Chevron, employs this understanding of the Vilna Gaon to explain this *pasuk*: *“Many designs are in a man’s heart, but the counsel of Hashem, only it will*

prevail" (Mishlei 19:21).

People formulate many *machshavos*, thoughts, plans, and ideas which are never actualized. Hashem counsels *eitzos*, and these actually become reality and come to fruition.

Only Hashem's plans are realized. Man's ideas never move past the planning stage unless they are in accordance with Hashem's will. Hashem's ideas are therefore referred to as *eitzos*, while those of humans are called *machshavos*.

On Purim, we are celebrating not only Hashem's annulment of all of Haman's *atzaso*, his counsels. Not only did his ultimate plan not come to fruition. Hashem did more than that: Hashem appropriated all of Haman's schemes and machinations and used them against him. So first we thank Hashem for foiling Haman's plot, but then we acknowledge a much higher level of Divine intervention. Hashem used every scheme of Haman, and in an ultimate display of *hashgachah pratit*, each *machshava* of Haman was the very instrument used to bring about his downfall.

Haman, in essence, planned his own demise. This is a principle we find throughout the Torah and throughout history.

From the Forest Comes the Axe

Maseches Sanhedrin tells of Ovadiah, an Edomite who converted to Judaism and then prophesied about the downfall of Edom. The Gemara explains why it had to be specifically Ovadiah who delivered this *nevuah*, employing the following expression: "Minei u'va aba nizil bei narga, From and within the forest comes the axe to it." From the forest itself comes the handle for the axe. The source of the tool that brings about the forest's destruction is the forest itself.

This is a great principle in the *hashgachah* of the Ribbono shel Olam. Something is undermined from within. Ovadiah, who himself was an Edomite, provides the prophecy of Edom's end.

The Steipler Gaon directs us to Pharaoh as an illustration of this principle.

Pharaoh issued a decree throughout the land of Mitzrayim: "Pharaoh commanded his entire people, saying, 'Every son that will be born — into the River shall you throw him! And every daughter shall you keep alive'" (Shemos 1:22).

Pharaoh's astrologers had predicted that the savior of Bnei Yisrael would meet his end through water. Pharaoh therefore dictated that every newborn Jewish boy be drowned.

As a result of this very edict, Moshe was hidden in a basket set afloat on the Nile. Pharaoh's daughter Basya found him in his basket, floating on the river, and took Moshe home to Pharaoh's palace. She raised Moshe Rabbeinu, the very child Pharaoh sought to kill, in Pharaoh's own home! The purpose of Pharaoh's decree to cast the babies into the Nile was to kill the one child whom Pharaoh housed, clothed, fed, and cared for under his own roof!

The Ibn Ezra wonders why Hashem would orchestrate it so that Moshe would grow up in Pharaoh's home, away from the rest of the Jewish people. He explains that if Moshe had grown up among the Jews, with his own family, he would have shared their slave mentality. He would have acquired the traits and habits of bondage and enslavement. He would not have had the royal bearing necessary to be a leader. Growing up in Pharaoh's house provided Moshe with a mindset of royalty and leadership.

Pharaoh himself trained Moshe to lead Bnei Yisrael out of Mitzrayim! Pharaoh sought to murder the future redeemer of Klal Yisrael, yet, ironically, raised him in his own home and groomed him to assume the role as *manhig* of Klal Yisrael.

This is a prime example of the axe's handle coming from the forest itself.

When one seeks to foil Hashem's plans, He may very well orchestrate events so that those very plans will come to fruition through the individual seeking to derail them. The schemes and arrangements that are made in an effort to stop an event from taking place will be turned around, utilized to bring about the very result that the enemy is trying to prevent.

The Steipler Gaon then refers us to the incidents of Purim.

Haman was upset because Vashti did not invite his wife to the women's party and reacted by advising Achashveirosh to remove Vashti from her position as queen. In defense of his wife's honor, Haman suggested that Vashti be deposed. With Vashti out of the picture, Haman hoped that his wife would be included in future festivities.

This is yet another manifestation of Haman setting the stage for his own downfall.

According to another opinion, Haman's goal in removing Vashti was so that his own daughter could then marry the king. In either case, Haman's goal in suggesting that Vashti be killed was to improve his own standing and situation.

What transpired was anything but that. Instead of serving to advance Haman, Vashti's death opened the door for Esther to marry Achashveirosh and later provide the salvation for the Jewish people. Ultimately, it was Esther who had Haman executed!

Once again, the very result Haman was trying to avoid was facilitated by his own actions. Rather than furthering his agenda, removing Vashti served to bring about his own demise. Haman's plans served to hurt only himself.

The central pattern of *Megillas Esther* is that Haman's plans were not merely foiled; every idea he concocted in his quest to destroy the Jews backfired and was utilized against him.

The Hundred-Foot-Tall Gallows

The Vilna Gaon points out how absurd it was for Haman to have constructed a gallows that was fifty *amos* high. There is no reason to execute someone by hanging him one hundred feet in the air.

Haman made a cunning calculation in erecting the gallows to such a ludicrous height. He knew that Achashveirosh had trouble committing to a decision and would often change his mind. Even if he were to give Haman permission to execute Mordechai, it was possible that he would change his mind shortly afterward.

Haman knew that the only way to ensure that the hanging would take place was to have everything ready to go at a moment's notice, with the means to hang Mordechai clearly visible to the king. Then, once Achashveirosh gave his approval, Mordechai could be hanged immediately, and there would not be time for Achashveirosh to change his mind. And if he were to regret doing so in the future, it would be too late to reverse what had happened.

When Haman learned that Esther was Jewish, he pleaded for his life. He fell onto the couch on which she was lying, which served to make an already enraged Achashveirosh even more furious. While in a fit of rage, Achashveirosh glanced up and saw Haman's gallows, towering over all the surrounding buildings. He impulsively reacted to Charvonah's comment, "Furthermore, the gallows which Haman made for Mordechai ... is standing in Haman's house," sending Haman to his death.

Had the gallows not been so tall and readily visible to a furious Achashveirosh, he may have calmed down before deciding Haman's fate, and, explains the Vilna Gaon, he may not have ordered Haman's death.

Haman's precise calculations in erecting such exceedingly tall gallows in his quest to kill Mordechai is the very reason he was so quickly and easily dispatched to his own death.

The Cryptic Letter Backfires

"Letters were sent by couriers to all the provinces of the king, to destroy, to slay, and to exterminate all the Jews, from young and old, children and women, on one day, on the thirteenth of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their possessions. Copies of the document were to be promulgated in every province, and be published to all peoples, for them to be prepared for that day" (Esther 3:13-14).

The *pasuk* tells us that Haman sent letters to all the provinces under Achashveirosh's rule, dictating the annihilation of the Jews that was to occur on the thirteenth of Adar. Which document is then being referenced in the next *pasuk*, when it mentions "copies of the document" that were "to be published to all peoples" in order "for them to be prepared for that day"?

The Vilna Gaon explains that Haman HaRasha was afraid of publicizing his intentions to kill the Jews. He knew that if the Jews found out what was being planned, they would gather and implore their local leaders, petitioning them to disobey this evil edict. Enough pressure placed on the government officials might have led to his decree being rescinded.

To avoid this, Haman sent letters that were open and public to all, that stated only that they should be ready and be prepared for the thirteenth of Adar.

That is all that was disclosed to the masses. No details were given. The people were unaware that there was a plan in place to wipe out the Jewish members of their communities. They were merely told that something of note was going to happen, and that they should be ready when the time came. But they had no idea of Haman's looming decree.

Haman, however, did send detailed letters to the governors and rulers of each region, and in these communiqués no detail was left out: “to destroy, to slay, and to exterminate all the Jews, young and old, children and women, on one day, on the thirteenth of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their possessions.” But the public was not informed of this.

When Haman was eventually deposed, Mordechai and Esther beseeched Achashveirosh to rescind the decree, to abolish the evil edict dictating the murder of the Jews.

Achashveirosh responded that once a decree is issued, it cannot ever be revoked. It was not possible for Haman’s proclamation, made with the backing of the crown, to be withdrawn. However, when they realized how the text of the publicized decree was actually written, they were no longer concerned, as, in an effort to preserve his plan, Haman had kept the details secret from the public. The document did not say who should be prepared and for what they should be ready.

Mordechai and Esther did not have to change this proclamation, but, with Achashveirosh’s permission, they were able to tweak the order to “be prepared.” Instead of it being a reference to the date on which the Jews should be attacked, the people were instructed that the directive to be prepared was, in fact, to be ready for the Jews to go on the offensive. Since the public had no knowledge of Haman’s initial plan, it was simple to publicize instead a plan that was in the Jews’ favor.

The decree, signed with the seal of the king, would remain in effect, but the instructions to the citizenry would now be very different from what Haman had intended.

The Dubno Maggid writes that this is the principal theme of the *Megillah*. Not only were the schemes of Haman not realized, but each one of his plans against the Jewish people boomeranged back at him. He wound up the victim of many of his own plots. This is explicitly spelled out in the *Megillah* itself.

“But when [Esther] appeared before the king, he commanded by means of letters that [Haman’s] wicked scheme, which he had devised against the Jews, should recoil on his own head; and they hanged him and his sons on the gallows” (ibid. 9:25).

Haman’s well-laid plans against the Jews were carried out against him personally.

Why So Central a Theme?

There were numerous ways Hashem could have arranged for Haman’s demise or otherwise orchestrated that his plans would fail. Why did Hashem choose to appropriate Haman’s schemes and turn them on himself? Why did Haman have to hang on the very same gallows that he had prepared for Mordechai?

In his *sefer Beis Dovid*, Rav Dovid Tevel, a talmid of Rav Chaim Volozhiner, describes the two ways in which the world can operate: the natural and the supernatural.

Every country is rooted in a source of its strength, a force that it harnesses as its own. The *Sar*, the *malach* that represents this nation, assists them in utilizing that respective force. The force they employ becomes a part of their very identity, and if another power were to try to subdue them, they would have to employ a stronger opposing force.

For example, Egypt relied on the Nile River. Its dependence on the water of the Nile was to such an extent that the power of water became the identity of Mitzrayim. When

they wanted to rid themselves of the child they thought would one day free their Jewish slaves, they tossed all boys who were born to Jewish women into the water.

If another country were to try to overpower Egypt, it would have to conquer the force of water with the opposing force: fire. It would have to overcome Egypt with *aish*, fire, and only then could it hope to defeat the Egyptians.

The Ribbono shel Olam, however, is able to step outside of this established, natural system. He can defeat Mitzrayim without fire. Hashem does not require the assistance of the counterforce of His opponent. Hashem can take the very same water that is the pride and strength of the Egyptians and use it against them. He can turn a nation’s force against it. The very entity it has come to rely upon so heavily will then become the source of its downfall.

Hashem drowned the Egyptians in water to show His Omnipotence, His ability to overcome the very power with which Egypt was identified.

It was when the Mitzriyim were drowned, when their very life-force was utilized to bring about their defeat, that Yisro was profoundly impressed, and he proclaimed: “Now



I know that Hashem is greater than all the gods, for in the very matter in which [the Egyptians] had conspired against them ...” (Shemos 18:11).

Yisro now had confirmation of Hashem’s greatness, because He had employed the very scheme of the Mitzrim — that of drowning the Jewish children — to destroy them. The plans that they had developed were used against them.

The *Beis David* explains that this, too, is the principle behind the Purim narrative. Throughout the *Megillah*, no singular supernatural event transpired. Each event that occurred was cloaked in the guise of the natural.

Vashti angered Achashveirosh, and he had her executed. This was not an unusual occurrence in palace life. Haman was promoted. Esther was chosen as the new queen. Mordechai overheard Bigsan and Seresh plotting their murder of the king. These can all be viewed as natural, products of chance. No clear orchestration of Divine Intervention or supernatural powers is seen to be at work.

The disbeliever, the heretic, could easily chalk up the entire saga to a string of circumstances that just happened to work out nicely for the Jews of Persia. Hashem’s role is not overtly revealed.

The one aspect, however, that unequivocally reveals the *yad Hashem* is how every plan that Haman enacted, every strategy he employed against Mordechai and the Jews of Persia and Media, is turned on its head, and he becomes the victim of all of his own machinations. Every scheme of

his was used against him. What he decided to do to Mordechai was turned and directed toward him. The very letters he sent to mobilize the population against the Jews were employed for the diametrically opposite purpose. His selfishly motivated advice to have Vashti executed paved the way for Esther to become queen. He constructed extremely tall gallows to ensure that Achashveirosh wouldn’t change his mind, and in doing so provided the perfect circumstances for his own execution.

When we observe this compelling phenomenon, Hashem’s supernatural intervention now becomes obvious. The *yad Hashem* is crystal clear. This is incontrovertible evidence that the events of the Purim narrative were orchestrated by the Hand of G-d.

What’s in the Name?

The Maharam Schiff wonders why the holiday is called Purim. A *pur* is a lottery, and the name *Purim*, lotteries, does not seem to encapsulate the essence of the day. Usually, the name of a festival is related to what is being celebrated. How does the name Purim, *lotteries*, allude to the salvation of the Jewish people from the evil Haman?

Maharam Schiff explains that, through the use of the lottery, Haman saw that the thirteenth of Adar would be a bloody day for the Jewish people. Hashem turned things around, *v’nahafoch hu*, and He made it a bloody day for Haman and the Persians, while sparing the Jews. *Pur Haman nehpeach l’pureinu*, the lottery of Haman transformed into a lottery in our favor.

The name reflects the primary theme of the *Megillah*, the fact that all his plans, beginning with the lottery he cast to choose a date for his nefarious scheme, were turned about to bring about his demise.

Haman’s Law

At the beginning of the *Megillah*, we read about Achashveirosh’s dilemma. He did not know what to do with Vashti. Even though she had shamed him publicly, he did not want to kill her. She was beautiful and she had *yichus*. Her aristocratic background and royal blood gave credence to his sovereignty. Without her, he was a mere stable boy. As she was his claim to the throne, he needed her. He consulted with his advisers to formulate a plan on how to deal with her.

“Then the king spoke to the wise men, those who knew the times [for such was the king’s procedure (to turn) to all who knew law and judgment]” (Esther 1:13).

The Vilna Gaon points out that this is highly unusual. After all, the king ought to be able to make his own decisions, and he should have single-handedly decided her fate. Consulting with his team of advisers on how to proceed with his queen seems curious.

The Vilna Gaon explains that it was not by choice that Achashveirosh consulted with his advisers. Persian law stated that in all matters pertaining to the king personally, he was to recuse himself from passing judgment. He was not allowed to rule on matters that pertained to him. Adjudicating the matter of his wife’s offense to the crown would have to be judged by the courts, not by himself. He was therefore forced to bring other judges to decide her fate.

This new understanding calls into question the events that transpired later in the *Megillah*. When Achashveirosh learned that Haman was plotting not only against the Jewish people, but against his wife Esther as well, and he then

found him prostrated on the very couch on which Esther lay, he commanded (ibid. 7:9): “hang him” on the gallows he had built.

How was Achashveirosh able to pass judgment on Haman on his own, without consulting the advisers? After all, according to Persian law, he was required to consult with the officials to issue a ruling. The issue at hand fell under the purview of *dvar Ha'Melech*, a matter pertaining to the king, and, as such, legally it had to be brought to the royal court. How was he able to autonomously decide to send Haman to his death?

The Vilna Gaon explains that Achashveirosh was lawfully allowed to avenge his wife's honor by personally acting as judge and jury because of one man: Haman himself.

When Achashveirosh consulted with his seven advisors to decide Vashti's fate, Memuchan, which we are taught was another name for Haman, expressed incredulity at the king's inability to decide how his wife should be punished for her insubordination. After all, as the king, he ought to be able to personally judge any situation — even if it involved his own family. This, Memuchan argued, was a bad law. Achashveirosh was the monarch over the entire known world, and he ought to do as he pleased.

Memuchan told Achashveirosh: “If it pleases the king, let there go forth a royal edict from him, and let it be written into the laws of Persia and Media, that it not be revoked, that Vashti never again appear before King Achashveirosh; and let the king confer her royal state upon another who is better than she” (Esther 1:19).

The king should personally issue the verdict. First change this antiquated and ridiculous law, give yourself the ability to judge any issues personally, and then decide what to do with Vashti.

Achashveirosh followed Haman's advice and changed the law. He issued legislation allowing him the right to adjudicate all matters, even issues that pertain to the king. Then, with this privilege, he further accepted Haman's advice and had Vashti executed.

Years later, when Achashveirosh's anger drove him to punish Haman, he was empowered to do so himself, without consulting anyone. It was Haman himself who had suggested that the law be changed to allow the king to make decisions even in personal matters, and then Haman himself fell victim to this law when Achashveirosh decided his fate. This is yet another manifestation of Haman setting the stage for his own downfall.

Achashveirosh and the Beis HaMikdash

In *sefer Ezra*, we learn about Daryavesh, the son of Esther and Achashveirosh. After his father's death, he assumed the throne of Persia. At that time, the Jews were seeking to rebuild the Beis HaMikdash. They were met with opposition, and there was a shortage of funds to proceed with the construction.

The Navi tells us about the decree that Daryavesh issued: “A decree is hereby issued by me that you should cooperate with

these elders of the Jews to rebuild this Temple of G-d; and the expenses should be provided immediately to these people from the royal estate, from the Trans-Euphrates Region's taxes, so that [their work] not be halted.

“And whatever they require — young bulls, rams, and sheep for burnt-offerings to the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the specifications of the Kohanim who are in Jerusalem — shall be supplied to them day by day, without fail” (Ezra 6:8-9).

Daryavesh financed the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash and supplied the animals and other necessary items for the *korbanos*. He funded the rebuilding of the Temple with the tax money that had been collected from the citizens of Persia. And when had these funds been collected? “King Achashveirosh levied a tax on the mainland and the islands of the sea” (Esther 10:1).

Achashveirosh taxed his citizens, and then his son Daryavesh used those very funds to pay for the Beis Ha-

Hashem did more than that: Hashem appropriated all of Haman's schemes and machinations and used them against him.

Mikdash! Thus, when the *Megillah* informs us of the taxes imposed on the people of Persia, it is not extraneous information! It is teaching us the source of funds that enabled the Second Temple to be constructed.

And now the Purim story has come full circle. In the opening paragraphs of the *Megillah*, Achashveirosh celebrated the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash and that it was not being rebuilt. He believed that the seventy years of *galus* had come to an end with no redemption, and he was confident that the Temple would never be rebuilt. Klal Yisrael would never be redeemed. Yet, at the conclusion of the *Megillah*, we learn that Achashveirosh himself became the chief fundraiser for the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash.

A Party Clad in Irony

Achashveirosh threw a party to celebrate what he thought was the eternal destruction of the Beis HaMikdash. He went so far as to desecrate *keilim* from the Beis

HaMikdash and put them on display at the party. Ironically, that very party was the turning point that ultimately led to his son financing the construction of the Second Temple. Vashti would die as a result of the party, and Esther would take her place. Her child, Daryavesh, would ultimately enable the Jewish People to rebuild the very structure whose destruction Achashveirosh was celebrating.

Heichin lo tana lo heichin applied to Achashveirosh as well. While he was celebrating the destruction and exile of the Jewish people, he was in reality planting the seeds for their redemption and for the *binyan Beis HaMikdash*.

Sefer Ezra discusses the vast amount of silver that Daryavesh donated to the Beis HaMikdash. *Ezra* 7:22 records that one hundred *kikar* of silver was sent. From where was so much silver obtained? One cannot help but think that it was in part obtained from the ten thousand *kikar* of silver that Haman had offered to Achashveirosh as payment for the annihilation of the Jewish people.

The principal financiers of *Bayis Sheini* were Haman and Achashveirosh!

Daryavesh also sent *keilim*, vessels, to be used in the Beis HaMikdash. The Ramban writes that these vessels were the very same *keilim* that were used at Achashveirosh's party. Daryavesh returned them to the Beis HaMikdash.


The Mishnah in *Tamid* tells of an area in the Second Beis HaMikdash that was designated with the title *Shushan HaBira*. Perhaps the reason for this was because so much of the funding required for the construction of the Beis HaMikdash came from the Persians and their capital city.

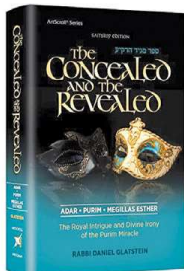
Nechemiah was the cupbearer for Daryavesh. Even after the Beis HaMikdash had been rebuilt, Yerushalayim still lay in ruins. Nechemiah asked Daryavesh for permission to go to Eretz Yisrael and assist with the rebuilding of Yerushalayim. Someone else, the Sheigal, was present at the time, and she persuaded Daryavesh to grant Nechemiah's request.

“The king said to me, with the queen sitting beside him, ‘When will you depart and when will you return?’ It pleased the king, and he gave me leave; and I gave him a time” (Nechemiah 2:6).

The Malbim teaches that the Sheigal was actually Esther, Daryavesh's mother. Esther would sit near her son's throne and advise him. She persuaded him to allow Nechemiah to go rebuild Yerushalayim.

The *Megillah* is not a history book. The details contained within it are all significant, as they show the *yad Hashem*. Hashem orchestrated events so that whatever was being plotted against the Jewish people instead served to help them. The nefarious plots of Haman and Achashveirosh were turned around and, ironically, the actions they took to destroy our nation served to bring about their downfall.

The astonishing irony found in the Purim narrative serves as an eternal reminder that Hashem is always manipulating events for our benefit, and just when things happen that seem precarious, we must recognize that the One “pulling the strings” is orchestrating our success and our salvation. 



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