

## WHY DID MORDECHAI REFUSE TO BOW?

### Source 1: Megilat Esther Ch. 3

- א** אַחַר הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, גָּדַל הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחְשֵׁוּרוּשׁ אֶת-הָמֶן בֶּן-הַמְּדֵתָא הָאֲגָגִי-וַיִּנְשְׂאֵהוּ; וַיֵּשֶׁם, אֶת-כִּסֵּאוֹ, מֵעַל, כָּל-הַשָּׂרִים אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ.
- 1** After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him.
- ב** וְכָל-עֲבָדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר-בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ, כָּרְעִים וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוִים לְהָמָן--כִּי-כֵן, צִוָּה-לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ; וּמֶרְדֵּכַי--לֹא יִכְרַע, וְלֹא יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה.
- 2** And all the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, bowed down, and prostrated themselves before Haman; **for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not down, nor prostrated himself before him.**
- ג** וַיֹּאמְרוּ עֲבָדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ, אֲשֶׁר-בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ--לְמֶרְדֵּכַי: מַדּוּעַ אַתָּה עוֹבֵר, אֵת מִצְוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ.
- 3** Then the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai: 'Why transgressest thou the king's commandment?'
- ד** וַיְהִי, בְּאִמְרוֹם (כְּאִמְרוֹם) אֵלָיו יוֹם וַיּוֹם, וְלֹא שָׁמַע, אֵלֵיהֶם; וַיִּגִּידוּ לְהָמָן, לְרֵאוֹת הַיַּעֲמָדוֹ דְּבָרֵי מֶרְדֵּכַי--כִּי-הִגִּיד לָהֶם, אֲשֶׁר-הוּא יְהוּדִי.
- 4** Now it came to pass, when they spoke daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's words would stand; for he had told them that he was a Jew.
- ה** וַיֵּרָא הָמָן--כִּי-אֵין מֶרְדֵּכַי, פֹּרַע וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לוֹ; וַיִּמְלֵא הָמָן, חֲמָה.
- 5** And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not down, nor prostrated himself before him, then was Haman full of wrath.
- ו** וַיִּבֹז בְּעֵינָיו, לְשַׁלַּח יָד בְּמֶרְדֵּכַי לְבַדּוֹ--כִּי-הִגִּידוּ לוֹ, אֶת-עַם מֶרְדֵּכַי; וַיִּבְקֹשׁ הָמָן, לְהַשְׁמִיד אֶת-כָּל-הַיְּהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל-מְלָכוֹת אַחְשֵׁוּרוּשׁ--עִם מֶרְדֵּכַי.
- 6** But it seemed contemptible in his eyes to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had made known to him the people of Mordecai; wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai.

7 In the first month, which is the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, which is the month Adar. {S}

ז בַּחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן, הוּא-חֹדֶשׁ נִסָּן, בְּשָׁנַת שְׁתַּיִם עֶשְׂרֵה, לְמֶלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרוֹשׁ: הִפִּיל פּוּר הוּא הַגּוֹרֵל לְפָנָי הַמֶּן, מִיּוֹם לְיוֹם וּמִחֹדֶשׁ לְחֹדֶשׁ שְׁנַיִם-עֶשְׂרֵה--הוּא-חֹדֶשׁ אָדָר. {ס}

### Source 2: Pesikta Zutarta Esther Ch. 3

**כי כן ציוה לו המלך, כי ציוה בשבילו:** ומרדכי לא יכרע ולא ישתחוה. לא דרך יהירות, אלא מפני שעשה עצמו ע"ז, ולא היה יכול להשתחוות לו

### Source 3: Rashi

(ב) **כרעים ומשתחויים** - שעשה עצמו אלוה לפיכך ומרדכי לא יכרע ולא ישתחוה:

### Source 4: Ibn Ezra

(ב) **יכרע וישתחוה** - ידועים ונכון מה שדרשו רז"ל כי צורת צלם וע"ז היו בבגדיו או על מצנפתו:

### Source 5: Midrash Rabba Parsha 2

(ב) **ומרדכי לא יכרע** - וכי קנתרן היה ועובר על גזירת המלך, אלא כשצוה אחשורוש להשתחוות להמן, חקק עבודת כוכבים על לבו ונתכוין שישתחוו לעבודת כוכבים (מ"ר פרשה ב' פסוק ה'):

### Source 6: Commentary of Rav Moshe Alshich

אלשיך אסתר פרק ג ... ועוד כי מהראוי יאמר כי צוה להם ולא לו. והנה אמרו רבותינו ז"ל (אסתר רבה ו ב) שהניח עבודה זרה בבגדו שעל כן מרדכי שם נפשו מנגד לבלתי כרוע לפניו. **ובזה יתכן אומרו צוה לו ולא אמר להם, והוא כי הוא הרשיע לשים עבודה זרה**

להכשיל, כי המלך לא צוה שיכרעו כי אם לו לעצמו, כי אין אומרו  
 לו חוזר אל מלת צוה, כי אם אל הפעל, כי צוויו כורעים ומשתחוים  
 להמן, כלומר ולא לצלמו, כי כן צוה לו המלך ולא לעבודה זרה  
 שעמו

### Source 7: Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom Mordechai Would Neither Kneel Nor Bow

The first approach taken by most is to fall back on a common misconception – that Jews are bidden not to **bow to any but God; this is patently untrue, as is evidenced throughout Tanakh. Our greatest heroes and ancestors prostrated themselves before allies, royalty, family members and such.** Avraham bowed to Ephron, Yaakov's sons to the viceroy of Egypt, Moshe to Yitro -and, after Matan Torah, David to Yonatan, Avigail to David – and so on, not to mention the many people who bow to kings (especially to David). There is no prohibition to show respect, honor or gratitude to another human being by bowing – the prohibition is exclusively one related to idolatry.

There are, broadly, three approaches taken by Haza"l and later commentators to explain Mordekhai's refusal; as we will see, each is fraught with challenges and difficulties.

**The first, most famous approach, is related to the obligation to prefer a martyr's death "Al Kiddush Hashem" to idolatry;** to wit, Mordekhai refused to bow to Haman because, somehow, that act would constitute an act of worship to a foreign god....

**The difficulty with this general approach** – that Mordekhai's refusal was anchored in concerns about idolatry – **is really twofold.** First of all, even if an individual is bidden to suffer martyrdom rather than worship a foreign god, **it isn't at all clear that he has the right to do so at the expense of other's lives;** in other words, from the perspective of Halakhah, it isn't an open-and-shut case that one person has the right to make a martyr out of someone else. In this case, Mordekhai not only put his own life on the line, but risked the lives of all Jews in the world!

Secondly, and perhaps less dramatic yet far clearer – **is the reality that Mordekhai had a third choice – it wasn't a question of "worship or die" – there was also "quit"!** Mordekhai was only directed to bow as a servant of the court who worked in the government offices at the palace gates; if he were to leave his post, he would no longer have to bow and thus save himself – and everyone else – from the decree. True – after the decree was promulgated this would not have helped – but there were a number of days after Haman got the other members of the court to bow to him before Mordekhai was fingered by his colleagues and Haman took notice of him (**Esther 3:4**). If the decree involved some form of idolatrous obeisance, why not just quit the job?

Perhaps it is due to these difficulties that other answers have also been proposed – in later Midrashic literature as well as by the Mefarshim – both medieval and modern.

**A popular version of one of them is found in Targum Sheni of Esther (of Geonic provenance) wherein Mordechai and Haman are presented as two generals in Ahashverosh's army, dispatched with their armies to put down a rebellion in India.** Space does not permit us to present all the fascinating details of the story, but in the end, Haman agrees to sell himself to Mordechai as a slave and the bill of sale (the wording of which is presented, in full, in the Aggadah) is written on Mordekhai's leggings. Mordekhai, as such, refuses to bow to Haman because he is Haman's master; indeed, every time Haman passes by while others are bowing, Mordekhai points to his leggings as a not-so-subtle reminder of who owns whom. **This approach, while attractive, is even more difficult, as it means that Mordekhai is allowing his personal sense of pride to endanger his own life and that of his people.**

There is yet **a third approach found in the Midrashim...**In truth, this approach is a "spin" on the second; to wit, Mordekhai refuses to bow to Haman because he (Mordekhai) is a descendant of Yaakov and he will not bow to a descendant of Esav. When the Midrash challenges this on the grounds that Yaakov and his sons did, **indeed, bow to Esav ... Mordekhai's response is that he is a descendant of Binyamin who, being in utero at the time, never did bow to Esav.**

As noted earlier, any answer that is given will have to stand up to the fact that Mordekhai continued to refuse to bow (even after the decree became public)

and he did not simply quit the court but defiantly remained in place to make a stand and refuse to bow. One might argue that he didn't have the choice of whether or not to quit – but, even if that is so (and there is nothing in our knowledge of the Persian court to suggest that), he still should have taken whatever consequences were waiting someone who quit rather than remain in the court, day after day, defying the order and standing tall while everyone else fell to their knees.

### Source 8: Bereishit Ch. 39

- וַיְהִי, אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, וַתִּשָּׂא  
אִשְׁת־אֲדֹנָיו אֶת-עֵינֶיהָ, אֶל-יוֹסֵף;  
וַתֹּאמֶר, שְׁכַבָּה עִמִּי.  
7 And it came to pass after these things,  
that his master's wife cast her eyes upon  
Joseph; and she said: 'Lie with me.'
- ח וַיִּמָּאֵן--וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-אִשְׁת־אֲדֹנָיו,  
הֵן אֲדֹנִי לֹא-יָדַע אֶתִּי מִה-בַּבַּיִת;  
וְכָל אֲשֶׁר-יֵשׁ-לוֹ, נָתַן בְּיָדִי.  
8 But he refused, and said unto his  
master's wife: 'Behold, my master, having  
me, knoweth not what is in the house, and  
he hath put all that he hath into my hand;
- ט אֵינְנִי גָדוֹל בַּבַּיִת הַזֶּה, מִמֶּנִּי,  
וְלֹא-חָשַׁד מִמֶּנִּי מְאוּמָה, כִּי אִם-  
אוֹתָךְ בַּאֲשֶׁר אֶתְ-אִשְׁתּוֹ; וְאִיךָ  
אֶעֱשֶׂה הַרְעָה הַגְּדֹלָה, הַזֹּאת,  
וְחָטָאתִי, לַאלֹהִים.  
9 he is not greater in this house than I;  
neither hath he kept back any thing from  
me but thee, because thou art his wife.  
How then can I do this great wickedness,  
and sin against God?'
- י וַיְהִי, כַּדְּבָרָה אֶל-יוֹסֵף יוֹם יוֹם;  
וְלֹא-שָׁמַע אֵלֶיהָ לְשֹׁכַב אֶצְלָהּ,  
לְהִיּוֹת עִמָּהּ.  
10 And it came to pass, as she spoke to  
Joseph day by day, that he hearkened  
not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with  
her.

### Source 9: Bereishit Rabba Parshat Vayeshev 87

ו ויהי כדברה אל יוסף יום יום, ר' יודן בשם ר' בנימין אמר בניה של רחל נסן שוה וגדולתן שוה, נסן שוה ויהי כדברה אל יוסף יום יום, (אסתר ג) ויהי באמרם אליו יום ויום, ולא שמע אליה, (שם /אסתר ג'/) ולא שמע אליהם, וגדולתן שוה, (בראשית מא) ויסר

פרעה את טבעתו, (אסתר ח) ויסר המלך את טבעתו, ויתן אותה על יד יוסף, ויתנה למרדכי, וילבש אותו בגדי שש, (שם/אסתר/ו) ונתון הלבוש והסוס וגוי' ויקח המן וגוי', וישם רביד הזהב על צוארו (שם/אסתר/ח) ותשם אסתר את מרדכי על בית המן, וירכב אותו במרכבת המשנה אשר לו (שם/אסתר/ו) וירכיבהו [על הסוס] ברחוב העיר, ויקרא לפניו אברך, ויקרא לפניו ככה וגוי', ולא שמע אליה לשכב אצלה בעוה"ז, להיות עמה שלא יהיה עמה בגיהנם לעתיד לבא

### Source 10: Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

#### Refusing To Heed “Day After Day”

When Mordekhai refused to bow to Haman, the other members of the court pestered him as to why he was “transgressing the order of the king”. In 3:4, we read that “as they spoke to him day after day, he refused to heed them” and that caused them to tell Haman of his refusal (why Haman didn’t notice until now is odd) “in order to see if Mordekhai’s words would stand”; but we have no idea what those words were. We are also left a bit puzzled by the motivation of the other members of the court to push the confrontation between Mordekhai and Haman by informing the latter of the Judean’s non-compliance.

This unusual wording – “**vay’hi k’omram elav yom vayom v’lo shama**” is found in only one other place in Tanakh – in the story of Yoseph in Egypt! When Potiphar’s wife demanded that Yoseph “lie with her” and he wouldn’t give in, she “spoke to him day after day, and he refused to heed her.” What was Yoseph’s stated and explicit reason for not giving in to his master’s wife’s seduction? “Behold, my master, having me, knows not what is in the house, and he has put all that he has into my hand; he is not greater in this house than I; neither has he withheld anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (vv. 8-9). In other words, having relations with his master’s wife would be a betrayal of the trust placed in him (and her) by their common master – Potiphar!

**Applying this explicit reason to Mordekhai – he is telling the other members of the court that bowing to Haman would be an act of treason towards Ahashverosh – who is the master over the entire “house”. To wit – Mordekhai is accusing Haman of treason, maintaining that there never**

was a royal order for the members of the court to prostrate themselves to Haman; indeed, it would be an act of gross disloyalty to Ahashverosh for them to show such obeisance to any but the king – that Haman made this order up in order to start building support for his own planned revolt. This would explain the motivation of the other members of the court to generate the confrontation; they undoubtedly resented Haman and looked to Mordechai to “take him on”, lacking the courage themselves to do so. This also explains the indeterminate phrase *“lir’ot haya’am’du divrei Mordechai”* – to see if Mordechai’s words would “stand” – meaning, would his claim be confirmed and would Haman thereby be brought down.

### Source 11: Rabbi David Fohrman, The Viceroy: Mordechai's Hidden Story

Suddenly, at that point, all the king's servants in the palace courtyards – they would all start bowing to Haman,

כִּי־כֵן צִוְּה־לּוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ

...because so the king commanded him...

..When the king commanded that all the servants of the king should bow to Haman, exactly who did the king command?

...Here's the question: Who's 'him'?

**It doesn't seem like it can be the servants of the king.** They're a bunch of people, and *lo* is a singular pronoun, it indicates the king was talking to only one. Now, it could be that the text just isn't being precise – some commentators, like Ibn Ezra, suggest that – but if the text is being precise, what's it really implying with that singular pronoun? The only particular person the king could have commanded about this would have been Haman himself. So you'd have to read the verse this way: All the king's servants were bowing to Haman... because so the king commanded... [Haman].

But now the obvious question is: Why was the decree issued to him? It doesn't oblige Haman, it obliges everybody else!



Moreover, there's a second problem here: How did the courtiers know about this decree? If the king really was talking just to Haman, that means Haman himself was their only source of information. There's no way to independently verify what he's telling them. And it makes you wonder: Were those courtiers of the king really getting the whole story from Haman?

... Perhaps the Megillah is hinting that Haman is taking some liberties here; he's going beyond the king's actual intent in some way. How so?

Well, evidently the king and Haman must have had some sort of conversation in which the subject of bowing came up. The Megillah, it doesn't tell us exactly what happened between Haman and the King in that conversation, but we can perhaps imagine how that discussion might have gone:

Sire, I really appreciate the promotion. Together, you and I shall bring order to the Persian Empire. Just one tiny little thing that may have been overlooked in all of the hullabaloo surrounding my advancement. You know, perhaps it would be a good idea for the senior staff around here to show some deference to me when I roam through the palace courtyards. After all, as Executive Vice President of the Persian Empire, I really do represent the crown...

Look sire, we both know this isn't for me. I am just your humble servant, sitting at the dust of your feet. But where I go, there goes the might of Persia. By bowing to me whenever they see me, the other servants will be constantly expressing their allegiance to the crown. Might this not be in the interests of the Empire? In your interests, o' King?

Now, we don't know exactly what transpired, of course. But Haman may have made some argument like that to the king, and the king might have bought it. And, by the way, on some level, Haman might have bought it himself. Haman might well have thought himself a loyal servant, just doing what's best for the good of Persia. But in reality, his drive for power is getting the best of him. He is engineering a power grab. He wants to be seen as the king.

And this seems like a good time to remember the Midrash about the idol around Haman's neck. It may well be that this is what the Sages were talking about, when they mentioned that idol. Because let's talk about the origins of idolatry, for a minute. Idolatry, **Rambam tells us, got its beginning when people began to make an error – an understandable, but catastrophic, mistake. God, they thought, was very abstract, it's hard to show honor**



and deference to such an abstract being. So how could you best show honor to God? People began to think: By honoring His servants. The sun, it was a very powerful force created by God. If I bowed to the sun, wouldn't that be a good way to honor the sun's creator? From there, idolatry degenerated, and eventually people began to worship the sun as the ultimate power and eventually forgot entirely about God – but idolatry started with the mistaken notion that you could bow to the servant and thereby honor the master. Well, that's Haman's essential argument here: Bowing to him, the great second-in-charge to the king, is great for the crown. In a deep way, what Haman is doing is nothing but the political equivalent of idolatry: He is the second-in-charge who is seeking to be treated like the king.

## Source 12: Esther Ch. 2

**כא** בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם, וּמְרֹדֶכַי יוֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר-הַמֶּלֶךְ; קֶצֶף בְּגָתוֹ וְתָרֵשׁ שְׁנֵי-סָרִיסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ, מְשֹׁמְרֵי הַסֹּף, וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ לְשַׁלַּח יָד, בַּמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁוּרֶשׁ. **21** in those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those that kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hands on the king Ahasuerus.

**כב** וַיִּוָּדַע הַדָּבָר לְמֹרְדֵכַי, וַיַּגִּד לְאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה; וְתֹאמֶר אַסְתֵּר לְמֶלֶךְ, בְּשֵׁם מְרֹדֶכַי. **22** And the thing became known to Mordecai, who told it unto Esther the queen; and Esther told the king thereof in Mordecai's name.

**כג** וַיִּבְקֶשׁ הַדָּבָר וַיִּמָּצֵא, וַיִּתְּלוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם עַל-עֵץ; וַיִּכְתַּב, בְּסֵפֶר דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים--לְפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ. {ס} **23** And when inquisition was made of the matter, and it was found to be so, they were both hanged on a tree; and it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king. {S}

## Source 13: Megilat Esther Ch. 1

**בַּיּוֹם, הַשְּׁבִיעִי, כְּטוֹב לֵב-הַמֶּלֶךְ, בְּיַיִן--אָמַר לְמַהוּמָן בְּזֵתָא, חַרְבוּנָא בְּגֵתָא וְאַבְגָּתָא, זֶתָר** **10** On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded **Mehuman**, Bizzetha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven

וְכַרְכָּס, שְׁבַעַת הַסְּרִיסִים,  
הַמְּשָׁרְתִים אֶת-פְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ  
אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ.

chamberlains that ministered in the presence of Ahasuerus the king,

יֵא לְהַבִּיא אֶת-וַשְׁתִּי הַמְּלָכָה,  
לְפָנַי הַמֶּלֶךְ--בְּכֹתֶר  
מַלְכוּת: לְהַרְאוֹת הָעַמִּים  
וְהַשָּׂרִים אֶת-יָפֶיהָ, כִּי-טוֹבַת  
מְרֵאָה הִיא.

11 to bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to show the peoples and the princes her beauty; for she was fair to look on.

### Source 13: Esther, Ch. 2

א אַחַר, הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, כְּשֶׁן,  
חֲמַת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ--זָכַר  
אֶת-וַשְׁתִּי וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר-עָשְׂתָה,  
וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר-נִגְזַר עָלֶיהָ.

1 After these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was assuaged, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her.

ב וַיֹּאמְרוּ נְעָרֵי-הַמֶּלֶךְ,  
מְשָׁרְתָיו: יִבְקְשׁוּ לַמֶּלֶךְ נְעָרוֹת  
בְּתוּלוֹת, טוֹבוֹת מְרֵאָה.

2 Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him: 'Let there be sought for the king young virgins fair to look on;

### Source 14: Commentary of Malbim on Megilat Esther, Ch. 3

Meir Leibush ben Yehiel Michel Wisser (March 7, 1809 – September 18, 1879), better known as **the Malbim** (Hebrew: מלבי"ם), was a rabbi, master of Hebrew grammar, and Bible commentator. The name *Malbim* was derived from the Hebrew initials of his name. He used this acronym as his surname in all his published works, and became known by it in common usage. Malbim's fame and popularity rest upon his novel commentary to the Bible. His first published commentary was on Megillat Esther (1845), followed by his commentary on most of the Hebrew Tanakh from then until 1876.

*He is referring to Source 1: The appointment and elevation of Haman*

**After these events:** The commentaries explained that after Achashverosh forgot that that Esther had told him this in the name of Mordechai, and the king very much wished to repay those who acted kindly for him, and he did not find anything for which he could re-pay Esther for saving him, thought that at

אחר הדברים האלה. בארו המפרשים כי אחר שנשכח מאחשורוש שאסתר הגידה זאת בשם מרדכי, וזה המלך היה חפץ מאד ביחוד לשלם גמול למיטיביו, ולא מצא דבר במה שישלם לאסתר עבור שהצילה נפשו משחת, חשב כי אך בזאת יאות לה במה שייטיב להשרים אשר יעצוהו לקחת את אסתר, שהראשון מסריסיו

least he could act kindly to the ministers that advised him to choose Esther; the first one was Mehuman, who advised him to seek young maidens...and since he had forgot who revealed the plot of Bigtan and Teresh, it was easy for Haman, whose timing was right, to convince the king that he was the one who reported it, and that's why he was promoted to such a high position....this honor was really due Mordechai, but it was God's will that temporarily it rested on the head of the wicked one until the time came to return the crown to its true owner.

היה מהומן, והוא יעצהו לבקש לו נערות בתולות ועיי נשא את אסתר, ולכן העלהו על במתי עב, וגם כי אחר שנשכח ממנו מי היה המגלה מדבר בגתן ותרש, היה נקל להמן אשר שעתו הצליחה לו לפתות לב המלך שהוא היה המגיד דבר, ולכן העלהו לגדולה, ובאופן שהמן התלבש בטלית שאינו שלו, והכבוד הלז היה באמת מגיע למרדכי אך מאת ה' היתה נסבה שתחול על ראש הרשע לפי שעה עד בא העת להחזיר העטרה לבעליה:

### Source 15: Megilat Esther Ch. 3

ח ויאמר המן, למלך אַחַשְׁוֵרֶשׁ--יִשְׁנוּ עִם-אֶחָד מִפְּזֵר וּמִפְּרֹד בֵּין הָעַמִּים, בְּכָל מְדִינֹת מְלְכוּתְךָ; וְדִתֵּיהֶם שְׁנוֹת מִכָּל-עַם, וְאֶת-דִּתֵּי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵינָם עֹשִׂים, וְלִמְלֶכֶךְ אֵין-שׁוּה, לְהַנִּיחֵם.

8 And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus: 'There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from those of every people; neither keep they the king's laws; therefore it profiteth not the king to suffer them.

ט אִם-עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב, יִכָּתֵב לְאַבְדָּם; וְעֵשֶׂר תְּאַלְפִים כֶּסֶף, אֲשַׁקּוּל עַל-יְדֵי עֹשֵׂי הַמְּלָאכָה, לְהַבִּיא, אֶל-גִּנְזֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ.

9 If it please the king, let it be written that they be destroyed; and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those that have the charge of the king's business, to bring it into the king's treasuries.'

### Source 16: Malbim

It's astounding how a ruler could agree to annihilate an entire nation for no crime at all, and even more surprising is, after agreeing to this, how he could say, "Who is the one who had the nerve to do such a thing?" Was such a major decision not significant enough for him to remember what he had done? And

הלא יפלא איך יסכים מושל עמים להשמיד אומה שלמה על לא חמס בכפם, וביותר יפלא אם באמת ברשעתו הסכים על זאת, איך תמה אח"כ לאמר מי הוא זה אחר אשר מלאו לבו לעשות כן. וכי דבר גדול כזה לא שוה בעיניו אף לזכור את אשר פעל ועשה. וגם אם הרשיע לעשות זאת מדוע שפך חמתו על המן,

even if he did wickedly decide to do so, why did he pour out his wrath on Haman?

And Haman said: It's clear that Haman deceived Achashverosh in two matters: First, he did not tell him who the nation was, because if Achashverosh knew that they were the Jews, known as a wise and understanding nation, he would never have listened to his advice; so, too, regarding even another lowly nation, had he said that he wanted to annihilate them, he would not have listened to them. But Haman, in his deceptiveness said, "there is one nation, ie not famous, to the point where he could not even give them a name, and since he wanted to slander them saying that they are damaging to other nations – through their belief system and approach towards citizenship....It's known that if a nation lives in its own province, even if the nation is really lowly, they won't negatively impact neighboring nations; and even if they do living among the other nations, they'll have separate towns...so the king should not want to harm them. So what did Haman do? He prefaced his words by saying that they are dispersed, that they don't have their own state, and they are divided up, ie in the places they live, they live amongst others, **such that they can have a major negative impact on others in beliefs** – their laws are different than those of other nations – including three elements i) the difference between theirs and others' religions ii) religions often differ in some of their foundational principles, but practices are often similar; with their religion, there are so many different laws that differ fundamentally from other nations; iii) their religion separates them from others in their food, dress, and behavior....**Regarding their citizenship, he said "and they don't do the king's laws."** And from them, all of the other nations are learning to rebel against the king and his commands...It's not worth

(ח) ויאמר המן, המבואר שהמן גנב את לב אחשורוש בשני דברים, אחד שלא הודיע לו מי הוא העם הזה שמלשין עליהם, שאם היה אחשורוש יודע שהם היהודים שהיו מפורסמים לעם חכם ונבון לא היה שומע לעצתו, וכן אף על עם אחר היותר שפל ונבזה אם היה אומר לו שכוונתו להשמידם, ג"כ לא היה שומע לו, אבל המן בערמתו אמר ישנו עם אחד, עם הבלתי מפורסם, עד שאינו יכול לכנותו בשם, ויען שרצה להלשינם שמזיקים לכל העמים, אם באמונתם ואם בהנהגה המדינית, וידוע שאם עם לבדד ישכון במדינה מיוחדת אף שיהיו היותר גרועים לא יזיקו לעמים אחרים השוכנים במדינות אחרות, וכן אם אף ישכנו בין עמים אחרים במדינותיהם, אם עכ"פ בכל מדינה ששוכנים בה יש להם ערים נבדלים, ג"כ אין שכותם מזיק ולא יקפיד המלך לאבדם, ע"כ הקדים שהוא עם מפורז להוציא שאין להם מדינה מיוחדת, וגם מפורד להוציא שגם במדינות ששוכנים שם לא ישכנו בערים פרטים רק מפורדים ונמצאים בכל שכונה ושכונה, ולא בקצת מדינות רק בכל העמים אשר בכל מדינות מלכותך ובאופן שהיזק הנמשך מהם כולל כל העמים, ועתה התחיל לספר שני ההיזקות הכלליות הנמשכות מהם: א) באמונות, כי דתיהם שונות מכל עם, וכלל בזה שלשה דברים, א) שנוי הדת הישראלי מיתר הדתות, ב) שהגם שכל דת ודת בהכרח יהיה משונה מדת זולתו, מ"מ לא ישתנה רק בעקריו ושרשיו, אבל בפרטיהם יתחברו וישתתפו, אבל בדת הישראלי נמצאו בו דתות שונות ומצות רבות חלוקות עד שנחשב להרבה דתות וכל הדתות האלה הנבדלות משונות מכל דתי העמים, ולא יתדמו אליהם בשום דבר. ג) שלא לבד שדת הישראלי משונה מדתות העמים, אבל הם משונים גם מכל העמים בעצמם, כי הדת תבדיל אותם מן העמים במאכליהם ומלבושיהם והנהגתם, עד שע"י הדת משונים גם בחיי האנושית מכל עם, ונגד הקבוץ המדיני אומר ואת דתי המלך אינם עושים, שגם בדבר שאינו נגד דתם רק בענייני ממון אינם עושים דת המלך, ומהם לומדים כל העמים למרוד במלך ופקודיו, ואחר שחשב ההפסד הגדול המגיע על ידם, אומר בל תחשוב

letting them be at all, relative to the damage they are causing

שיש לך מהם איזו תועלת שבעבורו תניחם, אמר בכלל ולמלך אין שוה להניחם, שאין לך שום תועלת שישוה נגד ההיזק שתמצא בהנחתם:

Here is a second deception: He did not tell him that he wanted to annihilate them, but rather לאבדם, the simple meaning of which is to erase their national framework, to assimilate them, to negate their religion and force them to observe the religions of the other nations...and Achashaverosh had no intention to kill or destroy them...

... הדבר השני שגנב לבו שלא אמר לו שרוצה להשמידם רק לאבדם, שפשטות באורו הוא לאבד צורת האומה שהיא דתם לבטל דתם ולהכריחם לשמור דתות של יתר העמים, או יותר ענינים כאלה שיעשו תחבולות שישבת עניני העם ההוא וחוקיהם ונמוסיהם, ולא כוון אחשוורוש כלל אל הריגה ואבוד נפשות

### Source 17: Megilat Esther Ch. 3

10 And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy.

י וַיִּסֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-טַבַּעְתּוֹ, מֵעַל יָדוֹ; וַיִּתְּנָהּ, לְהָמָן בֶּן-הַמֵּדְתָּא הָאֲגָגִי--צֶרֶר הַיְהוּדִים.

11 And the king said unto Haman: 'The silver is given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee.'

יא וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהָמָן, הַכֶּסֶף נָתוּן לָךְ; וְהָעָם, לַעֲשׂוֹת בּוֹ כַּטּוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ.

12 Then were the king's scribes called in the first month, on the thirteenth day thereof, and there was written, according to all that Haman commanded, unto the king's satraps, and to the governors that were over every province, and to the princes of every people; to every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language; in the name of king Ahasuerus was it written, and it was sealed with the king's ring.

יב וַיִּקְרְאוּ סֹפְרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בַּחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן, בְּשָׁלוֹשָׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם בּוֹ, וַיִּכְתֹּב כָּכָל-אֲשֶׁר-צִוָּה הָמָן אֶל אַחֲשֻׁדְרָפְנִי-הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֶל-הַפְּחוֹת אֲשֶׁר עַל-מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה וְאֶל-שָׂרֵי עַם וְעַם מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה כְּכַתְּבָהּ וְעַם וְעַם כָּל-שׂוֹנוֹ: בְּשֵׁם הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֻׁרֶשׁ נִכְתָּב, וְנִחְתָּם בְּטַבַּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ.

13 And letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both

יג וַנְּשַׁלְּחָם סֹפְרִים בְּיַד הָרָצִים, אֶל-כָּל-מְדִינוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ--לְהַשְׁמִיד לַהֲרֹג



וּלְאֶבֶד אֶת-כָּל-הַיְהוּדִים מִנְּעַר וְעַד-  
זָקֵן טַף וְנָשִׁים בְּיוֹם אֶחָד, בְּשָׁלוֹשָׁה  
עָשָׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ שְׁנַיִם-עָשָׂר הוּא-חֹדֶשׁ  
אָדָר; וּשְׁלָלָם, לְבוֹז.

young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey.

יֵד פֶּתֶשֶׁן הַכְּתָב, לְהַנְתִּין דָּת בְּכָל-  
מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה, גְּלוּי, לְכָל-הָעַמִּים--  
לְהִיּוֹת עֲתָדִים, לַיּוֹם הַזֶּה.

14 The copy of the writing, to be given out for a decree in every province, was to be published unto all peoples, that they should be ready against that day.

טו הַרְצִים יֵצְאוּ דְחוּפִים, בְּדָבָר  
הַמְּלֶכֶת, וְהַדָּת נִתְּנָה, בְּשׁוֹשַׁן הַבֵּיֶרֶה;  
וְהַמְּלֶכֶת וְהַמֶּן יֵשְׁבוּ לְשִׁתּוֹת, וְהָעִיר  
שׁוֹשֵׁן נְבוֹכָה. {ס}

15 The posts went forth in haste by the king's commandment, and the decree was given out in Shushan the castle; and the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city of Shushan was perplexed. {S}

- Oral summary of Malbim's explanation of the letters that were sent out by Haman
- In Chapter five, Esther approaches the King and invites him and Haman to the first party

### Source 17: Esther Ch. 6

א בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא, נִדְּדָה שְׁנַת הַמְּלֶכֶת; וַיֹּאמֶר,  
לְהַבִּיא אֶת-סֵפֶר הַזְּכָרֹנוֹת דְּבַרֵי הַיָּמִים, וַיְהִיו  
נִקְרָאִים, לִפְנֵי הַמְּלֶכֶת.

1 On that night could not the king sleep; and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles, and they were read before the king.

ב וַיִּמְצָא כְּתוּב, אֲשֶׁר הִגִּיד מֶרְדֳּכַי עַל-בְּגַתְּנָא  
וְתֵרֶשׁ שְׁנֵי סָרִיסֵי הַמְּלֶכֶת--מִשְׁמֶרֶי, הַסֵּף: אֲשֶׁר  
בְּקִשׁוֹ לְשַׁלַּח יָד, בַּמְּלֶכֶת אַחֲשֵׁרוּשׁ.

2 And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, of those that kept the door, who had sought to lay hands on the king Ahasuerus.

ג וַיֹּאמֶר הַמְּלֶכֶת--מַה-נַּעֲשֶׂה יִקָּר וַיְגִדוּלָה  
לְמֶרְדֳּכַי, עַל-זֶה; וַיֹּאמְרוּ נַעֲרֵי הַמְּלֶכֶת, מִשְׁרָתָיו,  
לֹא-נַעֲשֶׂה עִמּוֹ, דְּבָר.

3 And the king said: 'What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this?' Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him: 'There is nothing done for him.'

- ד וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ, מִי בַחֲצַר; וְהָמָן בָּא, לַחֲצַר  
בֵּית-הַמֶּלֶךְ הַחַיצוֹנָה, לֵאמֹר לַמֶּלֶךְ, לְתַלּוֹת אֶת-  
מָרְדֳּכָי עַל-הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר-הֵכִין לוֹ. 4 And the king said: 'Who is in the court?'--  
Now Haman was come into the outer court of  
the king's house, to speak unto the king to  
hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had  
prepared for him.--
- ה וַיֹּאמְרוּ נְעָרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ, אֵלָיו--הֲיֵנָה הָמוֹן, עֹמֵד  
בַּחֲצַר; וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ, יָבוֹא. 5 And the king's servants said unto him:  
'Behold, Haman standeth in the court.' And the  
king said: 'Let him come in.'
- ו וַיָּבֹא, הָמוֹן, וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ, מַה-לַּעֲשׂוֹת  
בְּאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בִּיקְרוֹ; וַיֹּאמֶר הָמוֹן,  
בְּלִבּוֹ, לְמִי יִחַפֵּץ הַמֶּלֶךְ לַעֲשׂוֹת יָקָר, יוֹתֵר מִמֶּנִּי. 6 So Haman came in. And the king said unto  
him: 'What shall be done unto the man whom  
the king delighteth to honour?'--Now Haman  
said in his heart: 'Whom would the king  
delight to honour besides myself?'--
- ז וַיֹּאמֶר הָמוֹן, אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ: אִישׁ, אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ  
חָפֵץ בִּיקְרוֹ. 7 And Haman said unto the king: 'For the man  
whom the king delighteth to honour,
- ח יָבִיאוּ לְבוּשׁ מַלְכוּת, אֲשֶׁר לְבַשׁ-בוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ;  
וְסוּס, אֲשֶׁר רָכַב עָלָיו הַמֶּלֶךְ, וְאֲשֶׁר נָתַן כֶּתֶר  
מַלְכוּת, בְּרֹאשׁוֹ. 8 let royal apparel be brought which the king  
useth to wear, and the horse that the king  
rideth upon, and on whose head a crown royal  
is set;
- ט וְנָתַן הַלְבוּשׁ וְהַסּוּס, עַל-יַד-אִישׁ מִשָּׂרְי  
הַמֶּלֶךְ הַפְּרָתְמִים, וְהַלְבִּישׁוּ אֶת-הָאִישׁ, אֲשֶׁר  
הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בִּיקְרוֹ; וְהִרְפִּיבֵהוּ עַל-הַסּוּס, בְּרְחוֹב  
הָעִיר, וְקָרְאוּ לְפָנָיו, כְּכֹה יַעֲשֶׂה לְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר  
הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בִּיקְרוֹ. 9 and let the apparel and the horse be  
delivered to the hand of one of the king's most  
noble princes, that they may array the man  
therewith whom the king delighteth to  
honour, and cause him to ride on horseback  
through the street of the city, and proclaim  
before him: Thus shall it be done to the man  
whom the king delighteth to honour.'
- י וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהָמוֹן, מַהֲרָה קַח אֶת-הַלְבוּשׁ  
וְאֶת-הַסּוּס כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ, וַעֲשֵׂה-כֵן לְמָרְדֳּכָי  
הַיְהוּדִי, הַיּוֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ: אַל-תִּפְּלֵ דָבָר,  
מִכֹּל אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ. 10 Then the king said to Haman: 'Make haste,  
and take the apparel and the horse, as thou  
hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew,  
that sitteth at the king's gate; let nothing fail of  
all that thou hast spoken.'



## Source 18: Malbim

**At night:** There's no doubt that the King, when he saw all of the intense worry and fear that prompted Esther to come to him, he knew that she had a major request for him. That's why he said, "I'll give you half the kingdom." From the fact that she said, "If I have found grace" "If it pleases the King" - he understood that her request was good for the king himself and fit for him due to his integrity, since he is a ruler and his throne was one of kindness... This prompted him to think that there is no doubt that he owed a debt to someone but had not yet done so. That's why he ordered to have the Chronicles to be brought...It seems to me that there were two such books: a) Chronicles written for the next generation what the King did, for good or bad - that was in the hands of the second-in-command; b) the Chronicles to be held by the King himself to remind the King himself - that's why it was called The Memories Chronicles. I already wrote that the King had forgotten who informed Bigtan and Teresh, and because of that forgetfulness he ended up promoting Haman, because he didn't know who to reward for this great kindness, if not the person who prompted him to eventually choose Esther through whom he was saved from death, and thereafter Haman worked to make it appear that he was the one, and therefore the King promoted him, and no doubt that in the Chronicles that were in Haman's possession, Mordechai's name had been erased and was replaced by Haman's. But in the Chronicles in the possession of the King, the truth - that Mordechai had reported it, was written...

And they found that it was written. That Mordechai's name had not been erased. It became clear that Haman was not the one who told the King, but that Mordechai was. From this, the King knew that his whole promotion of Haman, thinking that he was the one who saved the king - was mistaken - and that the main honor was due Mordechai. This tells of Hashem's providence, how, at that moment, when Haman came in to request the hanging of Mordechai, the situation turned around and the King realized that Mordechai really deserved Haman's position.

(א) בלילה, אין ספק כי המלך בראותו את כל החרדה שחרדה אסתר לבא אליו, ידע כי בקשה גדולה יש לה לבקש, כי בעבור זה אמר עד חצי המלכות, ויען שכפלה בדבריה אם מצאתי חן, ואם על המלך טוב, הבין שהשאלה שתבקש הוא דבר הטוב לפני המלך בעצמו, והראוי אליו מצד ישרו באשר הוא מושל עמים והוכן בחסד כסאו, ובזה עלה בלבו כי אין ספק שנתחייב לשלם איזה גמול למטיב עמו. ולא שלם פעלו, ועיי"כ צוה להביא ספר הזכרונות....וולי נראה כי היו שני דברים הימים, א) דברי הימים שנכתב לזכרון לדור אחרון קורות המלך ומעשיו ועלילותיו הן טוב והן רע, ודי"ה הזה לא היה ביד המלך רק ביד המשנה, ב) דברי הימים שנכתב לפני המלך שיהיה לזכרון אל המלך עצמו, וזה נקרא ספר הזכרונות דברי הימים שהיה תכליתו למזכרת דברים, וכבר כתבתי כי מן המלך נשכח מי היה המגיד על בגתנא ותרש, ועיי"כ גדל את המן, כי לא ידע למי ישלם גמול בעד הטובה הגדולה הזאת, אם לא למי שסבב שישא את אסתר שעל ידה ניצל ממות, וגם שאח"כ השתדל המן שידמה להמלך שהוא היה המגיד, ועיי"כ גדלו ורוממו, ובודאי מספר דברי הימים שהיה ביד המן נמחק שם מרדכי ונכתב שם המן במקומו שהמן היה המגיד, אבל בספר הזכרונות שהוא דברי הימים אשר היה תחת יד המלך שם היה כתוב האמת, שמרדכי היה המגיד, ועז"א:

(ב) וימצא כתוב, כי משם לא נמחק שם מרדכי רק נמצא כתוב כי לא המן היה המגיד רק אשר הגיד מרדכי, ומזה נודע למלך כי כל מה שגדל את המן בחשבו שהוא היה סבה להצלתו היה בטעות, ועקר הגדולה הזאת מגיע למרדכי. ובזה ספר השגחת ה', איך באותו הרגע שחשב המן לבקש נפש הצדיק לתלותו, נהפך הדבר כי נתודע למלך שגדולת המן מגיע למרדכי: