

**כאשר אבדתי אבדתי**  
**Feasting and Fasting in Megilat Esther**  
*based on the shiurim of R. Yonatan Grossman*

**Source 1: Megilat Esther Ch.1:3-4 ( I)**

- ג** בַּשָּׁנָה שְׁלוּשׁ, לְמֶלְכוֹ, עָשָׂה מִשְׁתֵּה, לְכָל-שָׂרָיו וְעַבְדָּיו : חֵיל פָּרַס וּמְדֵי, הַפְּרָתְמִים וְשָׂרֵי הַמְּדִינֹת-- לְפָנָיו. **3** in the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the army of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him;
- ד** בַּהֲרֵאתוֹ, אֶת-עֶשֶׂר כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ, וְאֶת-יָקָר, תִּפְאָרַת גְּדוּלָּתוֹ ; יָמִים רַבִּים, שְׁמוֹנִים וּמֵאָת יוֹם. **4** when he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty, many days, even a hundred and fourscore days.

**Source 2: Megilat Esther Ch.1 :5-8 ( II)**

- ה** וּבְמִלּוֹאת הַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה, עָשָׂה הַמֶּלֶךְ לְכָל-הָעָם הַנִּמְצָאִים בְּשׁוּשָׁן הַבֵּיָרָה לְמַגְדּוֹל וְעַד-קֶטָן מִשְׁתֵּה-- שִׁבְעַת יָמִים : בַּחֲצַר, גִּנַּת בֵּיתוֹ הַמְּלָךְ. **5** And when these days were fulfilled, the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the castle, both great and small, seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace;
- ו** חוֹר כַּרְפָּס וּתְכֵלֶת, אַחוּז בַּחֲבָלֵי-בוּץ וְאַרְגָּמָן, עַל-גְּלִילֵי קֶסֶף, וְעַמּוּדֵי שֵׁשׁ ; מִטּוֹת זָהָב וְקֶסֶף, עַל רִצְפַּת בֵּהַט-וְשֵׁשׁ-- וְדָר וְסַחֲרָת. **6** there were hangings of white, fine cotton, and blue, bordered with cords of fine linen and purple, upon silver rods and pillars of marble; the couches were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of green, and white, and shell, and onyx marble.
- ז** וְהַשְּׁקוֹת בְּכֵלֵי זָהָב, וּכְלִים מִכֵּלִים שׁוֹנִים ; וַיִּין מַלְכוּת רַב, כְּגִד הַמֶּלֶךְ. **7** And they gave them drink in vessels of gold--the vessels being diverse one from another--and royal wine in abundance, according to the bounty of the king.
- ח** וְהַשְּׁתִּיָּה כַּדָּת, אִין אִינִס : כִּי-כֹן יִסַּד הַמֶּלֶךְ, עַל כָּל-רַב בֵּיתוֹ--לַעֲשׂוֹת, כְּרָצוֹן אִישׁ-וְאִישׁ. {ס} **8** And the drinking was according to the law; none did compel; for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should do according to every man's pleasure. {S}

**Source 3a: Talmud, Megilah 12a**

נִשְׁאַלוּ תַלְמִידָיו אֶת רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּר יוֹחָאִי: מִפְּנֵי מָה נִתְחַיְּבוּ שׁוֹנְאֵיהֶן לְשַׁלּוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 נִשְׁבְּאוֹתוֹ הַדּוֹר כְּלָיָה? אָמַר לָהֶם: אָמְרוּ אִתְּכֶם. אָמְרוּ לוֹ: מִפְּנֵי שְׁנֵהֲנוּ מְסַעוּדָתוֹ  
 וְשַׁלּוּ אוֹתוֹ רְשָׁע

"The students of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai asked him: Why were the Jews of that generation doomed to destruction? He answered them: Say for yourselves. They said: Because they enjoyed the banquet of that evil one."

**Ashkenazic custom - to read מכלים שונים to the tune of Megilat Eicha**

**Source 4: Esther Ch. 1:9 ( IIb)**

ט 9 Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women in the royal house which belonged to king Ahasuerus.  
 גַּם וַשְׁתִּי הַמַּלְכָּה, עָשְׂתָה מִשְׁתֵּה נָשִׁים--בֵּית, הַמְּלָכוֹת, אֲשֶׁר, לַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוּשׁ.

**Source 5: Esther 2:17-18 ( III)**

יז 17 And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti.  
 וַיֶּאֱהָב הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-אֶסְתֵּר מִכָּל-הַנְּשִׂים, וַתִּשְׂא-חֵן וְחֶסֶד לְפָנָיו מִכָּל-הַבְּתוּלוֹת; וַיִּשֶׂם כִּתְר-מְלָכוֹת בְּרֹאשָׁהּ, וַיִּמְלִיכָהּ תַּחַת וַשְׁתִּי.

יח 18 Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Esther's feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the bounty of the king.  
 יח וַיַּעַשׂ הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁתֵּה גְדוֹל, לְכָל-שָׂרָיו וְעַבְדָּיו--אֶת, מִשְׁתֵּה אֶסְתֵּר; וַהֲנַחַח לְמַדְיָנוֹת עֲשָׂה, וַיִּתֵּן מִשְׁאֵת כֶּיֶד הַמֶּלֶךְ.

## Source 6: Esther 3:15 ( IV)

יג וְנִשְׁלַח סְפָרִים בְּיַד הַרְצִים, אֶל-כָּל-מְדִינֹת הַמְּלָךְ--לְהַשְׁמִיד לְהַרְגַּ וּלְאַבֵּד אֶת-כָּל-הַיְהוּדִים מִנְעַר וְעַד-זָקֵן טוֹף וְנָשִׁים בְּיוֹם אֶחָד, בְּשָׁלוֹשָׁה עָשָׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ שְׁנַיִם-עָשָׂר הוּא-חֹדֶשׁ אָדָר; וּשְׁלָלָם, לְבוֹז.

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 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.

יד פְּתֻשָׁגוֹן הַכְּתָב, לְהַנְתִּין דָּת בְּכָל-מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה, גְּלוּי, לְכָל-הָעַמִּים--לְהִיּוֹת עֵתָדִים, לְיוֹם הַיָּה.

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, בְּדַבַּר הַמְּלָךְ, וְהָדַת נִתְּנָה, בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה; וְהַמְּלָךְ וְהָמֶן יֹשְׁבוּ לְשִׁתּוֹת, וְהָעִיר שׁוּשַׁן 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}

## Source 7: Esther 5:4-8 ( V)

ד וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר, אִם-עַל-הַמְּלָךְ טוֹב--לָבוֹא הַמְּלָךְ וְהָמֶן הַיּוֹם, אֶל-הַמִּשְׁתֶּה אֲשֶׁר-עָשִׂיתִי לוֹ.

4 And Esther said: 'If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him.'

ה וַיֹּאמֶר הַמְּלָךְ--מִהֲרוּ אֶת-הָמֶן, לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת-דְּבַר אֶסְתֵּר; וַיָּבֹא הַמְּלָךְ וְהָמֶן, אֶל-הַמִּשְׁתֶּה אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂתָה אֶסְתֵּר.

5 Then the king said: 'Cause Haman to make haste, that it may be done as Esther hath said.' So the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

ו וַיֹּאמֶר הַמְּלָךְ לְאֶסְתֵּר בְּמִשְׁתֵּה הַיַּיִן, מִה-שְׂאֵלָתְךָ וַיִּנְתֶּנוּ לָךְ; וּמִה-בְּקִשְׁתְּךָ עַד-חֲצֵי הַמַּלְכוּת, וְתַעֲשׂ.

6 And the king said unto Esther at the banquet of wine: 'Whatever thy petition, it shall be granted thee; and whatever thy request, even to the half of the kingdom, it shall be performed.'

ז וַתַּעַן אֶסְתֵּר, וַתֹּאמֶר--

7 Then answered Esther, and said: 'My petition and my request is--

ותאמר : שאלתי, ובקשתי.

**ח** אם-מצאתי חן בעיני המלך, ואם-על-המלך טוב, לתת את-שאלתי, ולעשות את-בקשתי--יבוא המלך והמן, אל-המשתה אשר אעשה להם, ומחר אעשה, כדבר המלך.

**8** if I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request--let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and I will do to-morrow as the king hath said.'

### Source 8: Esther 7:1-10 ( VI)

- א** ויבא המלך והמן, לשותות עם-אסתר המלכה.
- 1** So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen.
- ב** ויאמר המלך לאסתר גם ביום השני, במשתה היין--מה-שאלתך אסתר המלכה, ותנתן לך; וימה-בקשתך עד-חצי המלכות, ותעש.
- 2** And the king said again unto Esther on the second day at the banquet of wine: 'Whatever thy petition, queen Esther, it shall be granted thee; and whatever thy request, even to the half of the kingdom, it shall be performed.'
- ג** ותען אסתר המלכה, ותאמר--אם-מצאתי חן בעיניך המלך, ואם-על-המלך טוב: תנתן-לי נפשי בשאלתי, ועמי בבקשתי.
- 3** Then Esther the queen answered and said: 'If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request;
- ד** כי נמכרנו אני ועמי, להשמיד להרוג ולאבד; ואלו לעבדים ולשפחות נמכרנו, החרשתי--כי אין הצר שזה, בגזק המלך. {ס}
- 4** for we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my peace, for the adversary is not worthy that the king be endamaged.' {S}
- ה** ויאמר המלך אחשוורוש, ויאמר לאסתר המלכה: מי הוא זה ואי-זה הוא, אשר-מלאו לבו לעשות כן.
- 5** Then spoke the king Ahasuerus and said unto Esther the queen: 'Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?'
- ו** ותאמר אסתר--איש צר ואויב, המן הרע הזה; והמן נבעת, מלפני המלך והמלכה.
- 6** And Esther said: 'An adversary and an enemy, even this wicked Haman.' Then Haman was terrified before the king and the queen.
- ז** והמלך קם בחמתו, ממשתה
- 7** And the king arose in his wrath from

הַיַּיִן, אֶל-גִּנַּת, הַבַּיִתָּו; וְהָמֶן עָמַד, לְבַקֵּשׁ עַל-נַפְשׁוֹ מֵאֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה-- כִּי רָאָהּ, כִּי-כָלְתָהּ אֵלָיו הָרָעָה מֵאֵת הַמֶּלֶךְ.

the banquet of wine and went into the palace garden; but Haman remained to make request for his life to Esther the queen; for he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king.

ח וְהַמֶּלֶךְ שָׁב מִגִּנַּת הַבַּיִתָּו אֶל-בַּיִת מִשְׁתֵּה הַיַּיִן, וְהָמֶן נָפַל עַל-הַמַּטָּה, אֲשֶׁר אֶסְתֵּר עָלֶיהָ, וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ, הֲגַם לְכַבּוֹשׁ אֶת-הַמַּלְכָּה עִמִּי בְּבַיִת; הַדָּבָר, יֵצֵא מִפִּי הַמֶּלֶךְ, וּפְנֵי הָמֶן, חִפּוּ.

8 Then the king returned out of the palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman was fallen upon the couch whereon Esther was. Then said the king: 'Will he even force the queen before me in the house?' As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face.

ט וַיֹּאמֶר חַרְבוּנָה אֶחָד מִן-הַסְּרִיסִים לְפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ, גַּם הִנֵּה-הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה הָמֶן לְמֹרְדֵכַי אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר-טוֹב עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ עֹמֵד בְּבַיִת הָמֶן--גְּבֵהָ, חֲמִשִּׁים אַמָּה; וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ, תִּלְהֶוּ עָלָיו.

9 Then said Harbonah, one of the chamberlains that were before the king: 'Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman hath made for Mordecai, who spoke good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman.' And the king said: 'Hang him thereon.'

י וַיִּתְּלוּ, אֶת-הָמֶן, עַל-הָעֵץ, אֲשֶׁר-הָכִין לְמֹרְדֵכַי; וַחֲמַת הַמֶּלֶךְ, שִׁכְּכָה. {ס}

10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath assuaged. {S}

### Source 9: Esther 8:11-17 - The Possibility of Salvation! ( VII)

יא אֲשֶׁר נָתַן הַמֶּלֶךְ לַיהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל-עִיר-וָעִיר, לְהַקְהֵל וְלַעֲמֹד עַל-נַפְשָׁם--לְהַשְׁמִיד וְלְהַרְגׁוֹ וְלֵאבֹד אֶת-כָּל-חַיִּל עִם וּמְדִינָה הַצָּרִים אֹתָם, טַף וְנָשִׁים; וּשְׁלָלָם, לְבוֹז.

11 that the king had granted the Jews that were in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, and to slay, and to cause to perish, all the forces of the people and province that would assault them, their little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey,

יב בְּיוֹם אֶחָד, בְּכָל-מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרֹשׁ--בְּשָׁלוֹשָׁה עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ שָׁנִים-עָשָׂר, הוּא-חֹדֶשׁ אָדָר.

12 upon one day in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, namely, upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar.

יג פְּתֻשָׁגֹן הַכְּתָב, לְהַנְתִּין דָּת בְּכָל-מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה, גְּלוּי, לְכָל-הָעַמִּים;

13 The copy of the writing, to be given out for a decree in every province, was to be published

וְלִהְיוֹת הַיְהוּדִים (הַיְהוּדִים) עֲתוּדִים  
(עֲתִידִים) לַיּוֹם הַזֶּה, לְהִנָּקֵם  
מֵאִיְבֵיהֶם. unto all the peoples, and that the Jews should be  
ready against that day to avenge themselves on  
their enemies.

יָד הַרְצִים רַכְבֵי הַרְקָשׁ,  
הָאֲחַשְׁתָּרְנִים, יֵצְאוּ מִבְּהֵלִים  
וְדַחוּפִים, בְּדַבַּר הַמֶּלֶךְ; וְהִדָּת נִתְּנָה,  
בְּשׁוֹשַׁן הַבִּירָה. {ס} 14 So the posts that rode upon swift steeds that  
were used in the king's service went out, being  
hastened and pressed on by the king's  
commandment; and the decree was given out in  
Shushan the castle. {S}

טו וּמֶרְדֵּכַי יָצָא מִלְּפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ, בְּלְבוּשׁ  
מַלְכוּת תְּכֵלֶת וְחוּר, וְעֵטְרַת זָהָב  
גְּדוּלָה, וְתִכְרִיד בּוּץ וְאַרְגָּמָן; וְהָעִיר  
שׁוֹשַׁן, צָהָלָה וְשִׂמְחָה. 15 And Mordecai went forth from the presence  
of the king in royal apparel of blue and white,  
and with a great crown of gold, and with a robe  
of fine linen and purple; and the city of Shushan  
rejoiced and was glad.

טז לַיְהוּדִים, הִיְתָה אוֹרָה וְשִׂמְחָה,  
וְשָׁן, וִיקָר. 16 The Jews had light and gladness, and joy and  
honour.

יז וּבְכָל-מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה וּבְכָל-עִיר  
וְעִיר, מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר-הַמֶּלֶךְ וְדָתוֹ  
מֵגִיעַ, שִׂמְחָה וְשָׁן לַיְהוּדִים, מִשְׂתָּה  
וַיּוֹם טוֹב; וְרַבִּים מֵעַמֵי הָאָרֶץ,  
מִתִּיּהָדִים--כִּי-נָפַל פַּחַד-הַיְהוּדִים,  
עֲלֵיהֶם. 17 And in every province, and in every city,  
whithersoever the king's commandment and his  
decree came, the Jews had gladness and joy, a  
feast and a good day. And many from among the  
peoples of the land became Jews; for the fear of  
the Jews was fallen upon them.

#### Source 10: Psalms 116:12-13

יב מַה-אֲשִׁיב לַיהוָה--  
כָּל-תַּגְּמוֹלוֹהִי עָלַי. 12 How can I repay unto the LORD all His  
bountiful dealings toward me?

יג כּוֹס-יִשׁוּעוֹת  
אֲשָׂא; וּבְשֵׁם יְהוָה  
אֶקְרָא. 13 I will lift up the cup of salvation, and call  
upon the name of the LORD.

#### Source 11: Esther 9:15-18 Celebrating after the actual salvation ( VIII and IX)

טו וַיִּקְהֻלוּ הַיְהוּדִים  
(הַיְהוּדִים) אֲשֶׁר-בְּשׁוֹשַׁן, גַּם  
בַּיּוֹם אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ אָדָר,  
וַיַּהַרְגוּ בְּשׁוֹשַׁן, שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת  
אִישׁ; וּבְבִזָּה--לֹא שָׁלְחוּ, אֶת-

15 And the Jews that were in Shushan  
gathered themselves together on the  
fourteenth day also of the month Adar,  
and slew three hundred men in Shushan;  
but on the spoil they laid not their hand.

יָדָם.

טז וַיִּשְׁאַר הַיְהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר  
בְּמַדִּינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ נִקְהָלוּ וַעֲמְדוּ  
עַל-נַפְשָׁם, וְנוֹחַ מֵאִיְבֵיהֶם,  
וְהָרוּג בְּשֵׁנְאֵיהֶם, חֲמֵשֶׁה  
וּשְׁבַעִים אֶלֶף; וּבְבֹזֶה--לֹא  
שָׁלְחוּ, אֶת-יָדָם.

16 And the other Jews that were in the  
king's provinces gathered themselves  
together, and stood for their lives, and had  
rest from their enemies, and slew of them  
that hated them seventy and five  
thousand--but on the spoil they laid not  
their hand--

יז בְּיוֹם-שְׁלוֹשָׁה עָשָׂר, לְחֹדֶשׁ  
אָדָר; וְנוֹחַ, בְּאַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר בּוֹ,  
וַעֲשָׂה אֹתוֹ, יוֹם מְשֻׁתָּה  
וְשִׂמְחָה.

17 on the thirteenth day of the month  
Adar, and on the fourteenth day of the  
same they rested, and made it a day of  
feasting and gladness.

יח וְהַיְהוּדִים (וְהַיְהוּדִים)  
אֲשֶׁר-בְּשׁוּשָׁן, נִקְהָלוּ בְּשְׁלוֹשָׁה  
עָשָׂר בּוֹ, וּבְאַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר, בּוֹ;  
וְנוֹחַ, בְּחֲמֵשֶׁה עָשָׂר בּוֹ, וַעֲשָׂה  
אֹתוֹ, יוֹם מְשֻׁתָּה וְשִׂמְחָה.

18 But the Jews that were in Shushan  
assembled together on the thirteenth day  
thereof, and on the fourteenth thereof; and  
on the fifteenth day of the same they  
rested, and made it a day of feasting and  
gladness.

### Source 12: Esther 9:21-25 (X)

כא לְקַיֵּם, עֲלֵיהֶם--לְהִיּוֹת עֲשִׂים אֶת  
יוֹם אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ אָדָר, וְאֶת  
יוֹם חֲמֵשֶׁה עָשָׂר בּוֹ: בְּכָל-שָׁנָה, וְשָׁנָה.

21 to enjoin them that they should keep the  
fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth  
day of the same, yearly,

כב כַּיְמֵים, אֲשֶׁר-נָחוּ בָהֶם הַיְהוּדִים  
מֵאִיְבֵיהֶם, וְהַחֲדָשׁ אֲשֶׁר נִהְפָּד לָהֶם  
מִיָּגוֹן לְשִׂמְחָה, וּמֵאֵבֶל לְיוֹם טוֹב;  
לַעֲשׂוֹת אוֹתָם, יְמֵי מְשֻׁתָּה וְשִׂמְחָה,  
וּמְשַׁלַּח מְנוֹת אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ, וּמִתְּנוֹת  
לְאֶבְיָנִים.

22 the days wherein the Jews had rest from their  
enemies, and the month which was turned unto  
them from sorrow to gladness, and from mourning  
into a good day; that they should make them days of  
feasting and gladness, and of sending portions one  
to another, and gifts to the poor.

#### Rav Yonatan Grossman:

In comparing these feasts with each other, a sharp difference arises between the feasts of the Jews and all the feasts held in the palace of the gentile king: **in addition to "feasting," the Jewish feasts are also characterized by "joy."** ...In contrast, in all the previous feasts in which Achashverosh participates, joy is absent. This discrepancy emphasizes Achashverosh's consumption of wine, aimed simply at inebriation; it is in no way an expression of joy, related to an elevated inner psychological experience. While Achashverosh's feasts lead to drunken revelry, the Jewish feasts lead to the mutual sending of food portions and gifts to the poor.

(See Source 9, 8:17 - Source 11, 9:17-18 - Source 12)

*There seems to be a pattern of the pairing of the feasts throughout the Megilah. Rav Grossman notes that sometimes the pairs are obvious and clearly visible; at other times the connection between them is only hinted at.*

### Identifying the pairs

**Feasts V & VI (Esther-initiated).** Note the difference as to how the party is described in each of these two scenes.

וַיִּבְּא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּן, אֶל-הַמְּשֻׁתָּה אֲשֶׁר-עָשְׂתָה אֶסְתֵּר.  
וַיִּבְּא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּן, לְשָׂתוֹת עִם-אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה.

- ✧ Why the two different ways of describing the feasts?
- ✧ What did Esther feel she could accomplish, given the way that the second feast is described?

**Feasts VIII & IX :** Celebrated outside of Shushan and inside of Shushan, respectively, following their revenge against Haman's minions.

**Feasts IV and VII -** Haman and Achashverosh celebrating the initial decree vs. the 'reversal' - the Jews' permission to defend themselves:

#### Feast IV

טו הָרָצִים יָצְאוּ דְחוּפִים, 15 The posts went forth in haste by the  
בְּדַבַּר הַמֶּלֶךְ, וְהִדְתָּ נִתְּנָה, king's commandment, and the decree was  
בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה; וְהַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּן given out in Shushan the castle; **and the**  
יָשְׁבוּ לְשָׂתוֹת, וְהָעִיר שׁוֹשָׁן king and Haman sat down to drink; but  
נְבוֹכָה. {ס} the city of Shushan was perplexed. {S}

#### Feast VII

טו וּמֶרְדֵּכַי יָצָא מִלְּפָנֵי 15 And Mordecai went forth from the  
הַמֶּלֶךְ, בְּלְבוּשׁ מַלְכוּת תְּכָלֵת presence of the king in royal apparel of blue  
וְחוּר, וְעִטֶּרֶת זָהָב גְּדוּלָּה, and white, and with a great crown of gold,  
וְתַכְרִיז בּוּץ וְאַרְגָּמָן; וְהָעִיר and with a robe of fine linen and purple; **and**  
שׁוֹשָׁן, צָהֲלָה וְשִׂמְחָה. the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad.



### Other elements of this parallel that convey the turn of events:

- ✧ After the first decree the King sits with Haman while Mordechai "went out into the city," crying a great and bitter cry; after this decree is canceled "Mordechai came out from before the King."
- ✧ After the first decree Mordechai tears his clothes and wears sackcloth and ashes; after its cancellation he emerges "in royal garb – blue and white, with a great golden crown, and a cape of fine linen and purple."

### Feasts (I) and (III) The coronation feasts

#### Feast I

<p>ג בַּשָּׁנָה שְׁלוֹשׁ, לְמַלְכוֹ, עָשָׂה          מִשְׁתֵּה, לְכָל-שָׂרָיו          וְעַבְדָּיו : חֵיל פָּרַס וּמְדֵי,          הַפְּרָתִים וְשָׂרֵי הַמְּדִינוֹת--          לְפָנָיו.</p>	<p>3 in the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the army of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him;</p>
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#### Feast III

<p>יח וַיַּעַשׂ הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁתֵּה          גְּדוֹלָה, לְכָל-שָׂרָיו וְעַבְדָּיו--          אֵת, מִשְׁתֵּה אֶסְתֵּר; וַהֲנַחָה          לְמְדִינוֹת עָשָׂה, וַיִּתֵּן מִשְׂאֵת          כֶּיֶד הַמֶּלֶךְ.</p>	<p>18 Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Esther's feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the bounty of the king.</p>
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**Source 13: Esther Rabba Ch. 1** - For some reason, until then he lacked a throne and/or a crown....

טו בַּשָּׁנָה שְׁלוֹשׁ לְמַלְכוֹ עָשָׂה מִשְׁתֵּה, ר' יהודה ור' נחמיה, ר' יהודה אמר  
 בַּשָּׁנָה שְׁלוֹשׁ לְמַלְכוֹ עָשָׂה מִשְׁתֵּה, כִּיּוֹן שֶׁגָּמַר מְלַאכְתָּהּ הַכֶּסֶף, עָשָׂה מִשְׁתֵּה לְכָל שָׂרָיו  
 וְעַבְדָּיו... א"ר שְׁמוּאֵל בַּר אִימִי ... עָשָׂה שְׁלוֹשׁ שָׁנִים בְּלֹא כֶּתֶר וּבְלֹא כֶּסֶף  
 וְהַמְתִּין אַרְבַּע שָׁנִים עַד שֶׁמָּצָא אֵשֶׁת הַהוֹגֵנֶת לוֹ

*These are the only two feasts arranged by Achashverosh whose effect is felt by all the provinces under his reign, and at both a certain economic aspect is emphasized.*

### Which feasts remain?

- ✧ The party held by Achashverosh for the people of Shushan after his coronation (Feast II)
- ✧ The establishment of the days of feasting and joy by Mordechai and Esther for all future generations of Jews (Feast X)

**Recall that earlier we cited the view** that the Jews' participation in Feast II was the trigger for the Divine decree that allowed Haman's plan to develop; even without this view, it is still a key element in the story as it paves the way for Vashti's removal and the entry of Esther. Which party parallels this one?

### The turning point of the story: THE FAST

**Part I: The fast of Mordechai & the other Jews who hear of the decree:**  
**Source 14: Esther 4:1-3**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>א</b> וּמְרֹדֶכַי, יָדַע אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשָׂה, וַיִּקְרַע מְרֹדֶכַי אֶת-בְּגָדָיו, וַיִּלְבַּשׁ שָׂק וַיֵּצֵא; וַיֵּצֵא בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר, וַיִּזְעַק זַעֲקָה גְדוֹלָה וּמְרָה.</p> | <p>1 Now when Mordecai knew all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry;</p>                |
| <p><b>ב</b> וַיָּבֹא, עַד לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר-הַמֶּלֶךְ: כִּי אֵין לָבֹא אֶל-שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ, בְּלְבוּשׁ שָׂק.</p>  | <p>2 and he came even before the king's gate; for none might enter within the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.</p>  |
| <p><b>ג</b> וּבְכָל-מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה, מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר-הַמֶּלֶךְ וַדָּתוֹ מִגִּיעֵ--אֲבָל גְּדוֹל לַיהוּדִים, וְצוּם וּבְכִי וּמְסָפָד; שָׂק וַיֵּצֵא לְרַבִּים.</p>                | <p>3 And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.</p> |

**Part II: The fast that Esther decrees for herself and all of her kinsmen, as preparation for her approach to Achashverosh:**

**Source 15: Esther 4:15-16**

**טו** ותאמר אסתר, להשיב אל-  
מרדכי. **15** Then Esther bade them return answer unto  
Mordecai:

**טז** לך כנוס את-כל-היהודים  
הנמצאים בשושן, וצומו עלי  
ואל-תאכלו ואל-תשתו שלשת  
ימים לילה ויום--גם-אני ונערתי,  
אצום כן; ובכו אבוא אל-המלך,  
אשר לא-כדת, וכאשר אבדתי,  
אבדתי. **16** 'Go, gather together all the Jews that are  
present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and  
neither eat nor drink three days, night or day; I  
also and my maidens will fast in like manner;  
and so will I go in unto the king, which is not  
according to the law; and if I perish, I perish.'

A closer reading of the text of Megilat Esther reveals that the fast parallels the celebration of Achashverosh's coronation in Shushan. Here is the series of parallels:

**The Clothing and the Refusal and the Second Refusal**

**Source 16: Esther 1:11**

**יא** להביא את-ושתי המלכה, לפני  
המלך--בכתר מלכות: להראות  
העמים והשרים את-יפיה, כי-טובת  
מראה היא. **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.

**יב** ותמאן המלכה ושתי, לבוא  
בדבר המלך, אשר, ביד הסריסים;  
ויקצף המלך מאד, וחמתו בערה  
בו. {ס} **12** But the queen Vashti refused to  
come at the king's commandment  
by the chamberlains; therefore  
was the king very wroth, and his  
anger burned in him. {S}

### אסתר רבה (וילנא) פרשה ג

אמר להם אותו טיפש כלי שאותו האיש משתמש בו אינו לא מדית ולא פרסית אלא כשדית מבקשים אתם לראותה, אמרו לו הן ובלבד שתהא ערומה, אמר להון הן וערומה

ספרי דאגדתא על אסתר - מדרש אבא גוריון (בובר) פרשה א

להביא את ושתי המלכה בכתר מלכות, אמר ר' אבא שלא יהיה עליה כלום אלא הכתר וערומה

### Source 17: Esther 4:4

4 And Esther's maidens and her chamberlains came and told it her; and the queen was exceedingly pained; and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai; and to take his sackcloth from off him; but he accepted it not.

ד ותבואינה (ותבואנה) נְעוּרוֹת אֶסְתֵּר וְסוֹרִיסֵיהָ, וַיִּגִּידוּ לָהּ, וַתִּתְחַלְחַל הַמַּלְכָּה, מְאֹד; וַתִּשְׁלַח בְּגָדִים לְהַלְבִּישׁ אֶת-מָרְדֳּכָי, וּלְהַסִּיר שַׁקּוֹ מֵעָלָיו-- וְלֹא קִבַּל.

### Source 18: Esther 4: 8-11 - Mordechai commands, Esther refuses

8 Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given out in Shushan to destroy them, to show it unto Esther, and to declare it unto her; and to charge her that she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him, for her people.

ח וְאֶת-פִּתְשֻׁגֵן כְּתַב-הַדָּת אֲשֶׁר-נָתַן בְּשׁוּשַׁן לְהַשְׁמִידֵם, נָתַן לּוֹ-- לְהַרְאוֹת אֶת-אֶסְתֵּר, וּלְהַגִּיד לָהּ; וּלְצַוֹת עָלֶיהָ, לָבוֹא אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהִתְחַנֵּן-לוֹ וּלְבַקֵּשׁ מִלְּפָנָיו--עַל-עַמָּהּ.

9 And Hathach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

ט וַיָּבֹא, הַתָּדָן; וַיִּגִּד לְאֶסְתֵּר, אֶת דְּבָרֵי מָרְדֳּכָי.

10 Then Esther spoke unto Hathach, and gave him a message unto Mordecai:

י וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר לְהַתָּדָן, וַתְּצַוֶּהוּ אֶל-מָרְדֳּכָי.

11 'All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law for him,

יא כָּל-עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְעַם-מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ יִדְעוּ, אֲשֶׁר כָּל-אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר יָבֹא-אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל-הַחֲצַר הַפְּנִימִית אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יִקְרָא אַחַת דָּתוֹ לְהִמִּית, לְבַד מֵאֲשֶׁר יוֹשִׁיט-לוֹ

הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-שָׂרְבִיט הַזָּהָב, וְחָזְקָה ;  
 וְאֲנִי, לֹא נִקְרָאתִי לָבוֹא אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ-  
 זֶה, שְׁלוֹשִׁים יוֹם. that he be put to death, except such to  
 whom the king shall hold out the golden  
 sceptre, that he may live; but I have not  
 been called to come in unto the king these  
 thirty days.'

**Rav Grossman:** Esther must surely remember the events surrounding the disgrace of her predecessor, who did not appear when commanded to and was severely punished. If she is to appear without being summoned, a similar fate may await her.

### Other literary parallels (color-coded for your convenience!)

**Coronation feast for people of Shushan (1:5-20):**

"The king made a feast for all the people in Shushan,

from great to small,

in the courtyard of the garden of the king's palace...

over all the princes

and over all the people

that are in all the countries of King Achashverosh...

And the drinking was as customary; no one forced them..."

**Fast of Mordechai and Esther (4:9-17):**

"Gather all the Jews who are in Shushan,

Also I and my maidens;

...who shall approach the king, to the inner courtyard...

All the servants of the king

and the people

## of the countries of the king

**I shall come to the king – not according to the custom."**

### What is the significance of these parallels?

Especially according to the view of R. Shimon Bar Yochai, the fast awakens the Jews of Shushan from their inebriation at Achashverosh's feasts, is indeed related to the first Shushan feast where annihilation is decreed for the Shushan assimilationists...

*We also noted that the last feast - FEAST X - the establishment of the mitzvah of Seudah on Purim for generations to come - was without a "partner". It too, appears to tie into the pivotal event of the fasts.*

### Source 19a: Esther 9:30-32

**ל** וַיִּשְׁלַח סְפָרִים אֶל-כָּל-  
הַיְהוּדִים, אֶל-שֶׁבַע וְעֶשְׂרִים  
וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה--מְלָכוֹת,  
אֲחֻשׁוּרוֹשׁ: דְּבָרֵי שְׁלוֹם,  
וְאֵמֶת.

**30** And he sent letters unto all the Jews,  
to the hundred twenty and seven  
provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus,  
with words of peace and truth,

**לא** לְקַיֵּם אֶת-יְמֵי הַפְּרִים  
הָאֵלֶּה בְּזִמְנֵיהֶם, כַּאֲשֶׁר קִיְּמָה  
עֲלֵיהֶם מֹרְדֳכַי הַיְהוּדִי  
וְאֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה, וּכְאֲשֶׁר  
קִיְּמוּ עַל-נַפְשָׁם, וְעַל-  
זָרְעָם: דְּבָרֵי הַצּוּמוֹת,  
וְזַעֲקָתָם.

**31** to confirm these days of Purim in  
their appointed times, according as  
Mordecai the Jew and Esther the queen  
had enjoined them, and as they had  
ordained for themselves and for their  
seed, the matters of the fastings and  
their cry.

**לב** וּמֵאִמֵּר אֶסְתֵּר--קִיְּמָה,  
דְּבָרֵי הַפְּרִים הָאֵלֶּה; וְנִכְתָּב,  
בְּסֵפֶר. {ס}

**32** And the commandment of Esther  
confirmed these matters of Purim; and it  
was written in the book. {S}

## Source 19b) Rishonim - Rashi and Ritvah

### Commentary of Ritvah on Taanit 10a

כבר קבלו עליהם בימי מרדכי ואסתר, כדכתיב (אסתר ט') ואשר  
קיימו על נפשם ועל זרעם דברי הצומות וזעקתם, שפירושו כי  
כשקבלו עליהם ענין ימי הפורים כך קיימו עליהם ענין הצומות  
שבזמן ההוא

### Siddur Rashi

אלא הכי קאמר על דברי הצומות והזעקות וצרות שעברו עליהם  
בימי המן קבלו עליהם היהודים פורים לדורות זכר לסימן לניסים

*The author of the Megilah is comparing the validity of the days of Purim to that of the fasts mentioned previously – the fast of Mordechai and Esther in Shushan.*

### **Rav Grossman sums up his thesis this way:**

This question starts to become clarified if it was indeed the fast declared and observed by Mordechai and Esther in Shushan that changed the course of events. **Among all the lengthy feasts, in between all the wine that is consumed, there is a fast, appearing as a stark antithesis to the Shushan lifestyle, to the culture of inebriation. It is specifically this fast that stands as the hidden key among the drunkards, exposing the innermost secret of the Megilla.** In the consciousness of the author of the Megilla, the fast stands at the pinnacle of the story of salvation, and it is upon this foundation that the festivity declared for all future generation of Jews rests. As a hint to this, the author compares the validity of the festivity to the validity of the fast. Just as the nation accepted upon itself to fast, so – and because of this – it is appropriate that the nation come to celebrate these days of Purim.

## Source 20: Esther Ch. 4

<p>א וּמֶרְדֵּכַי, יָדַע אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשָׂה, וַיִּקְרַע מְרֻדְכַי אֶת-בְּגָדָיו, וַיִּלְבַּשׁ שָׂק וְאַפֶּר; וַיֵּצֵא בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר, וַיִּזְעַק זְעָקָה גְדוֹלָה וּמְרָה.</p>	<p>1 Now when Mordecai knew all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, <b>and cried with a loud and a bitter cry;</b></p>
<p>ב וַיָּבֹא, עַד לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר-הַמֶּלֶךְ: כִּי אֵין לְבֹא אֶל-שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ, בְּלְבוּשׁ שָׂק.</p>	<p>2 and he came even before the king's gate; for none might enter within the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.</p>
<p>ג וּבְכָל-מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה, מִקּוֹם אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר-הַמֶּלֶךְ וְדָתוֹ מֵגִיעַ--אֲבָל גְּדוֹל לַיהוּדִים, וְצוּם וּבְכִי וּמִסָּפָד; שָׂק וְאַפֶּר, יֵצַע לְרַבִּים.</p>	<p>3 And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; <b>and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.</b></p>
<p>ד וַתְּבוֹאִינָה (וַתְּבוֹאֵנָה) נְעֻרוֹת אֶסְתֵּר וְסָרִיסֶיהָ, וַיִּגִּידוּ לָהּ, וַתַּתְּחַלְחַל הַמַּלְכָּה, מְאֹד; וַתִּשְׁלַח בְּגָדִים לְהַלְבִּישׁ אֶת-מְרֻדְכַי, וּלְהַסִּיר שָׂקוֹ מֵעָלָיו--וְלֹא קִבַּל.</p>	<p>4 And Esther's maidens and her chamberlains came and told it her; <b>and the queen was exceedingly pained;</b> and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai; and to take his sackcloth from off him; but he accepted it not.</p>
<p>ה וַתִּקְרָא אֶסְתֵּר לְהַתֵּךְ מְסָרִיסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ, אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱמִיד לִפְנֵיהָ, וַתְּצַוֵּהוּ, עַל-מְרֻדְכַי--לְדַעַת מַה-זֶּה, וְעַל-מַה-זֶּה.</p>	<p>5 Then called Esther for Hathach, one of the king's chamberlains, whom he had appointed to attend upon her, and charged him to go to Mordecai, to know what this was, and why it was.</p>
<p>ו וַיֵּצֵא הַתֵּךְ, אֶל-מְרֻדְכַי--אֶל-רְחוֹב הָעִיר, אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר-הַמֶּלֶךְ.</p>	<p>6 So Hathach went forth to Mordecai unto the broad place of the city, which was before the king's gate.</p>
<p>ז וַיִּגַּד-לוֹ מְרֻדְכַי, אֶת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר קָרָהוּ; וְאֵת פְּרֻשַׁת הַכֶּסֶף, אֲשֶׁר אָמַר הָמָן לְשָׂקוֹל עַל-גִּנְזֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בִּיהוּדִים (בְּיְהוּדִים)--לְאַבְדָּם.</p>	<p>7 And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, and the exact sum of the money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them.</p>
<p>ח וְאֵת-פְּתֻשָׁן כְּתַב-הַדָּת אֲשֶׁר-נָתַן בְּשׁוֹשָׁן לְהַשְׁמִידם, נָתַן לוֹ--לְהַרְאוֹת אֶת-אֶסְתֵּר, וּלְהַגִּיד לָהּ; וּלְצַוֹת עָלֶיהָ, לְבֹא אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהִתְחַנֵּן-לוֹ וּלְבַקֵּשׁ מִלְּפָנָיו--עַל-עַמּוּהָ.</p>	<p>8 Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given out in Shushan to destroy them, to show it unto Esther, and to declare it unto her; and to charge her that she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him, for her people.</p>
<p>ט וַיָּבֹא, הַתֵּךְ; וַיִּגַּד לְאֶסְתֵּר, אֵת דְּבָרָיו</p>	<p>9 And Hathach came and told Esther the words</p>



<p><b>מְרַדְכַּי.</b></p>	<p><b>of Mordecai.</b></p>
<p><b>י</b> וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר לְהַתֵּךְ, וּתְצַוֶּהוּ אֶל- <b>מְרַדְכַּי.</b></p>	<p><b>10 Then Esther spoke unto Hathach, and gave him a message unto Mordecai:</b></p>
<p><b>יא</b> כָּל-עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְעַם-מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ יִדְעוּ, אֲשֶׁר כָּל-אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר יָבֹא- אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל-הַחֲצַר הַפְּנִימִית אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יִקְרָא אַחַת דָּתוֹ לְהֵמִית, לְבַד מֵאֲשֶׁר יוֹשִׁיט-לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-שֵׁרְבִיט הַזָּהָב, וְחָיָה; וְאֲנִי, לֹא נִקְרָאתִי לָבוֹא אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ--זֶה, שְׁלוֹשִׁים יוֹם.</p>	<p><b>11</b> 'All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law for him, that he be put to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live; but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days.'</p>
<p><b>יב</b> וַיִּגִּידוּ לְמְרַדְכַּי, אֶת דְּבָרֵי אֶסְתֵּר.</p>	<p><b>12</b> And they told to Mordecai Esther's words.</p>
<p><b>יג</b> וַיֹּאמֶר מְרַדְכַּי, לְהָשִׁיב אֶל- אֶסְתֵּר: אֶל-תִּדְמִי בְנַפְשֶׁךָ, לְהִמָּלֵט בַּיִת-הַמֶּלֶךְ מִכָּל-הַיְהוּדִים.</p>	<p><b>13</b> Then Mordecai bade them to return answer unto Esther: 'Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews.</p>
<p><b>יד</b> כִּי אִם-הִחַרְשׁ תִּחְרִישִׁי, בְּעַת הַזֹּאת- רְחוּם וְהַצֵּלָה יֵעָמוּד לְיְהוּדִים מִמְּקוֹם אַחֵר, וְאֶת וּבֵית-אָבִיךָ תֵּאבְדוּ; וּמִי יֹדֵעַ--אִם-לָעֵת כְּזֹאת, הִגַּעַת לַמְּלָכוֹת.</p>	<p><b>14</b> For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then will relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house will perish; and who knoweth whether thou art not come to royal estate for such a time as this?'</p>
<p><b>טו</b> וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר, לְהָשִׁיב אֶל-מְרַדְכַּי.</p>	<p><b>15</b> Then Esther bade them return answer unto Mordecai:</p>
<p><b>טז</b> לֵךְ כְּנוֹס אֶת-כָּל-הַיְהוּדִים הַנִּמְצְאִים בְּשׁוּשָׁן, וְצוּמוּ עָלַי וְאֶל- תֵּאכְלוּ וְאֶל-תִּשְׁתּוּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים לֵילָה וַיּוֹם--גַּם-אֲנִי וְנַעֲרֹתַי, אֲצוּם כֵּן; וּבְכוֹ אָבוֹא אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ, אֲשֶׁר לֹא-כְדָת, וְכִאֲשֶׁר אֲבַדְתִּי, אֲבַדְתִּי.</p>	<p><b>16</b> 'Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day; I also and my maidens will fast in like manner; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish.'</p>
<p><b>יז</b> וַיַּעֲבֵר, מְרַדְכַּי; וַיַּעַשׂ, כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר- צִוְתָהּ עָלָיו אֶסְתֵּר.</p>	<p><b>17</b> So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.</p>

### Source 21: Bereishit Ch. 27

**לד** כִּשְׁמַע עֵשָׂו, אֶת-דְּבָרֵי אָבִיו  
וַיִּצְעַק צָעָקָה גְּדֹלָה וּמְרָה עֵד-מְאֹד;  
וַיֹּאמֶר לְאָבִיו, בְּרַכְנִי גַם-אֲנִי אָבִי.

**34** When Esau heard the words of his father, **he cried with an exceeding great and bitter cry**, and said unto his father: 'Bless me, even me also, O my father.'

### Source 21: Midrash Panim Acherot

[Mordechai] cried a great and bitter cry' – at that time he put ashes upon his head and went to the gate of the king's palace, but then turned back – for 'one cannot approach the king's gate...' etc. Was Mordechai then a simpleton, shouting like that? As if the Holy One, blessed be He, cannot hear whispers, but only shouts! Chana prayed in her heart, and the Holy One heard her whispering, for as the text says – 'Chana spoke in her heart...' and what does it say there: 'May the God of Israel grant your request!' [The following, then, explains Mordechai's behavior:] Mordechai cried out and said, 'Yitzchak, my father, what have you done to me? When Esav cried out before you, you heard his voice and blessed him. We, here, are being sold for slaughter by the sword!' Therefore it is written, 'He cried a great and bitter cry.'"

### Rav Grossman explains:

...it should be emphasized that in both narratives the garment, as a characteristic of identity, plays a most important role. The symbolic reading is one of the cornerstones of concealed writing in the Bible, and a garment is frequently perceived as possessing symbolic meaning, as one of the characteristics of some figure in the narrative. **Esav lost his blessings because Yaakov impersonated him by wearing his clothes**, and Mordechai tears his clothing when he hears of the decree. Because of his torn clothing, Mordechai can no longer walk about at the king's gate, "For one cannot approach the king's gate wearing sackcloth." **In other words, Mordechai relinquishes his Persian identity – the one that sits at the king's gate and plays a role in the Persian regime. By tearing his garment, Mordechai distances himself from Persian, Shushanite existence, and suddenly stands "naked" – allowing his inner, Jewish identity to come to the fore.** Esav cries out an "exceedingly great and bitter cry" when his brother uses his identity in order to receive the blessings meant for himself, and Mordechai cries a "great and bitter cry" when he sheds one national identity and returns to his original, primary national identity.

- Who informed her of what Mordechai has done?
- What does she seem to want Mordechai to do?
- What does she think Mordechai is reacting to?
- By sending fresh clothing to Mordechai, what is Esther showing?
- The miscommunication seems glaring - two different wavelengths!

ג וּבְכָל-מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה, מִקּוֹם אֲשֶׁר  
דָּבַר-הַמֶּלֶךְ וְדָתוֹ מֵגִיעַ--אֵבֶל גְּדוֹל  
לְיְהוּדִים, וְצוֹם וּבְכִי וּמִסָּפָד ; שֶׁקַּ  
וְאֶפֶר, יֵצַע לְרַבִּים.

3 And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; **and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.**

## Source 22: Sefer Yoel Ch. 2

**יב** וְגַם-עֲתָהּ, נְאֻם-יְהוָה, שׁוּבוּ עָדַי, 12 Yet even now, saith the LORD, turn ye unto Me with all your heart, **and with fasting, and with weeping, and with lamentation;**

**יג** וְקָרְעוּ לְבַבְכֶם וְאֵל-בְּגָדֵיכֶם, וְשׁוּבוּ 13 And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God; for He is אֶל-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם : כִּי-חַנּוּן וְרַחוּם, gracious and compassionate, long-suffering, and הוּא--אֶרְךְ אַפַּיִם וְרַב-חֶסֶד, וְנָחַם עַל- abundant in mercy, and repenteth Him of the הַרְעָה. evil.

## Source 23: Sefer Yeshaya 58:5

**ה** הֲכִזָּה, יִהְיֶה צוּם אֲבַחְרָהּ--יוֹם 5 Is such the fast that I have chosen? the day עֲנוּת אָדָם, נִפְשׁוֹ ; הִלְכֶף כְּאֶגְמוֹן for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow רֹאשׁוֹ, וְשָׁק וְאֶפְרוֹ יִצִיעַ--הִלָּהּ sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou תִּקְרָא-צוּם, וְיוֹם רְצוֹן לַיהוָה. call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD?

## Rav Grossman:

The erasure of Hatakh, starting from the middle of the dialogue, demands some explanation. If he is truly unimportant, then why such emphasis on him in the first part of the dialogue? And if there is some significance to the frequent mention of his presence, then why is he suddenly ignored? His disappearance is so disturbing that the Midrash goes to far as to posit that Haman had him killed, when he saw him busy on his errands: "When Haman saw Hatakh entering and leaving [the palace], he assaulted him and killed him. It is for this reason that he is not mentioned again" (*Midrash Abba Gurion, parasha 4*). The author, in fact, does "do away" with Hatakh – but why?

We are forced to conclude that Hatakh's entire purpose is to disappear in the middle of the dialogue. In other words, it is specifically because the narrator emphasizes, at the beginning, the presence of Hatakh as an interlocutor between Mordechai and Esther, that the fact that he suddenly ignores him from the middle of the dialogue and onwards becomes the message itself. The reader looks for him and does not find him, and in not being found, Hatakh fulfills his literary role.

Who is Hatakh? Or – more specifically – what does he represent in the story? The answer lies in the manner in which he is presented at the beginning of the dialogue: **"One of the king's chamberlains, whom he had placed at her disposal" (5). Hatakh represents the palace norms; he is a "chamberlain of the king,"** and Achashverosh has put him at Esther's service. In other words, in the first stage – in which Hatakh is mentioned over and over – **Esther and Mordekhai are engaging in "Persian-Shushanite discourse."** Hatakh facilitates the communications between them; their dialogue is conducted through a Persian channel. Indeed, in the first part of the conversation there is nothing that distinguishes Mordekhai or Esther from any other person, of any national identity. Mordekhai seeks to make use of Esther's connections within the palace, and Esther is afraid for her life.

**Esther, for her part, also moves to a different position – one quite foreign to the norms of the Persian palace. In striking contrast to all the banquets with which the narrative is so replete, Esther declares a fast:** "Fast for me; do not eat and do not drink for three days – night and day – and both I and my maidens shall likewise fast." It is no coincidence that Esther emphasizes, "Do not eat **and do not drink**," for abstinence from drink is unheard of in the lifestyle of Shushan. At this stage of the conversation, Esther openly mentions her preparedness to go against the laws of Persia: "I shall go in to the king - which is against the law." These words testify to a profound psychological shift: at the beginning of the dialogue Esther was afraid of going in to the king without his permission, because if anyone dares to do so, "his sole verdict is to be put to death." Moreover, Esther here expresses great self-sacrifice; she is ready to endanger her life for the sake of the nation: "If I am destroyed (*avadti*), then I am destroyed." Her use of the same verb that Haman used when he sought the king's approval for the destruction of the Jews ("Let it be written to destroy (*le-abad*) them") expresses this most eloquently: Esther is endangering her life, and may die ("be **destroyed**"), in order that the nation of Israel as a whole will not be destroyed.

**Hatakh's disappearance from this stage of the conversation symbolizes the suspension and setting aside of the norms of the Persian palace.** The king's chamberlain cannot serve as the go-between for these two characters when they enter into internal, Jewish discourse. Metaphorically speaking, we might say that the motifs that appear in this dialogue cannot be translated into Persian! Hatakh could never understand them, and therefore the characters' speech is carried, as it were, from Mordekhai's mouth to Esther's ears, and from Esther's mouth to Mordekhai's ears, in unmediated fashion.