

AHASUERUS

1. "In the third year of his reign, he gave a banquet for all the officials and courtiers – the administration of Persia and Media, the nobles and the governors of the provinces in his service."

(Esther 1:3)

"At the end of this period, the king gave a banquet for seven days in the court of the king's palace for all of the people who lived in the fortress city of Shushan, high and low alike." (Esther 1:5)

Rav and Samuel – One says: He was a clever king. And one says: He was a stupid king.

The one who says he was a clever king - He acted well in that he called together those who were distant at the beginning, because the inhabitants of his own city were subject to him; whenever he wanted he could win them over.

And the one who says he was stupid – He ought to have called together the inhabitants of his own town at the beginning, so that if those rebelled against him, then these would stand by him.

(Megillah 12a)

2. "This is Ahasuerus." (Esther 1:1)

He remained in his wickedness from the beginning to the end.

(Megillah 11a)

3. "This is Ahasuerus." (Esther 1:1)

R. Judah and R. Nehemiah explained differently. One said:

Ahasuerus - who put his wife to death on account of his friend.

This is Ahasuerus – who put his friend to death on account of his wife. R. Nehemiah said: Ahasuerus – who stopped the building of the Temple. This is Ahasuerus – who ordered that it should be built. (Esther Rabbah 1:1)

4. "Aḥasuerus" Rabbi Levi and the Rabbis: Rabbi Levi said, "Aḥasuerus was Artahshasta" and the Rabbis say "Aḥasuerus - because anyone who remembers him has an ache (ḥoshesh) in

his head (rosho)." Why did Scripture call him "Artahshasta"? Because he would rage (ratah) and then calm (tash).

"Ahasuerus": Rabbi Yitzhak and the Rabbis explained differently. Rabbi Yitzhak said, "Ahasuerus- that all the troubles came in his time, as it is said "A great mourning for the Jews" (Esther 4:3). This is Ahasuerus - that all the good things came in his time, as it is said: "The Jews had gladness and joy, a feast and a good day." (Esther 8:17). The Rabbis say 'Ahasuerus' - until Esther came to him. This is Ahasuerus' - once Esther came to him he would not lie with menstruating women." (Esther Rabbah 1:3)

5. "Who reigned." (Esther 1:1)

Rav said: This comes to teach that he reigned on his own. Some say this to his credit, and some say it to his disgrace. Some say this to his credit, that there was no other man as fit as him to be king. And some say to his disgrace, that he was not fit to be king, but he distributed large amounts of money and in that way rose to the throne. (Megillah 11a)

6. "In the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for all the officials and courtiers." (Esther 1:3)

R. Samuel ben Imi said: There were four good points in Ahasuerus. He allowed three years to elapse before he assumed the crown or ascended the throne, he waited four years before he found a suitable wife, and he did nothing without taking counsel.

R. Phinchas said: Moreover, if anyone did him a good turn, he recorded it in writing; and so it says: "There was found written that Mordecai had told" (Esther 6:1) (Esther Rabbah 1:15)

7. "When he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom." (Esther 1:4)

Rabbi Yose bar Hanina said: This teaches that Ahasuerus wore the priestly vestments.

"And they gave them drink in vessels of gold, the vessels being diverse from one another." (Esther 1:7)

Rava said: A Divine Voice issued forth and said to them: The early ones (Belshazzar and his people) were destroyed because they used the vessels of the Temple. And yet you use them again. (Megillah 12a)

8. "That every man should wield authority in his own home and speak the language of his own people." (Esther 1:22)

R. Huna said: Ahasuerus was utterly devoid of sense. If a man wants to eat lentils and his wife wants to eat beans, can he force her? Surely she does as she likes. R. Pinchas said: Nay more, he made himself a laughing stock. If a Median marries a Persian woman, is she to speak Median? If a Persian marries a Median woman, is she to speak Persian? (Esther Rabbah 4:12)

9. The actions of Ahasuerus and Haman can be understood with a parable; to what may they be compared? To two individuals, one of whom had a mound in the middle of his field and the other who had a ditch in the middle of his field. The owner of the ditch said to himself: Who will give me this mound for money? And the owner of the mound said to himself: Who will give me this ditch for money?

One day, they happened to meet one another. The owner of the ditch said to the owner of the mound: Sell me your mound. He said to him: Take it for free. If only you had done so sooner. (Megillah 14a)

10. "Thereupon the King removed his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman." (Esther 3:10)

Our Rabbis say: Ahasuerus hated Israel more than the wicked Haman. Usually the buyer gives a pledge to the seller, and here the seller gave the pledge. (Esther Rabbah 7:20)

11. "Then the king said to her." (Esther 5:3) "What is your wish, even to half the kingdom, it shall be performed." (Esther 5:6) Only half the kingdom, but not the whole kingdom, and not something that would serve as a barrier to the kingdom. And what is that? The building of the Temple. (Megillah 15b)

12. "That night sleep deserted the king." (Esther 6:1)

A thought occurred to him and he said to himself: What is this before us that Esther invited Haman? Perhaps they are conspiring against that man (me) to kill him. He then said again to himself: If this is so, is there no man who loves me and would inform me of this conspiracy? Perhaps there is some man who has done a favor for me and I have not rewarded him, and due to that people refrain from revealing to me. Immediately, "And he

ordered the book of records, the annals, to be brought.” (Esther 6:1) (Megillah 15b)

The heavens, the throne of the Supreme King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, were shaken when He saw Israel in such distress... King Ahasuerus’s sleep was also disturbed because he saw in a dream Haman seizing a sword to kill him, and he awoke in terror from his sleep and told his scribes to bring the book of chronicles to see what events had occurred, and they opened the book and found how Mordecai had informed against Bigthan and Teresh. So when they said to the king “Behold Haman stands in the court” (Esther 6:5), the king said: What I saw in my dream is true; this fellow has only come at this time of day to kill me. (Esther Rabbah 10:1)

13. “The adversary and enemy,” replied Esther, “is this evil Haman.” (Esther 7:6)

Rabbi Elazar said: This teaches that she was in fact pointing toward Ahasuerus and an angel came and pushed her hand toward Haman. (Megillah 16a)

14. “The king said to Queen Esther: In the fortress of Shushan alone the Jews have killed a total of 500 men, as well as the 10 sons of Haman. What then must have they done in the provinces of the realm! What is your wish now? It shall be granted to you. And what else is your request? It shall be fulfilled.” (Esther 9:12)

Rabbi Abbahu said: This teaches that an angel came and slapped him on his mouth. (Megillah 16b)