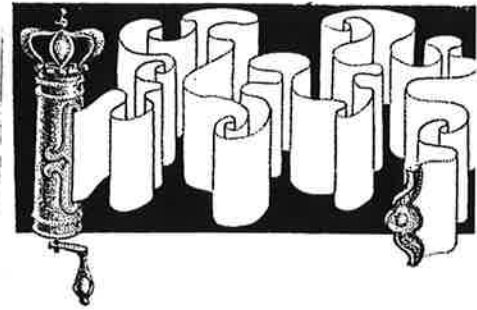


BLESSINGS BEFORE READING THE BOOK OF ESTHER

ברוך אתה, יי אלהים, מלך העולם,
אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצננו על-מקרא מגלה.

ברוך אתה, יי אלהים, מלך העולם,
שעשה נסים לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה.

ברוך אתה, יי אלהים, מלך העולם,
שהחננו וקיימנו והוציטנו לזמן הזה.



וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ הוּא אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ הַמֶּלֶךְ מֵהַדּוֹ וְעַד-כּוֹשׁ
שִׁבְעַת וְעֶשְׂרִים וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה: בַּיּוֹם הַהֵם פְּשַׁבַּת הַמֶּלֶךְ
אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ עַל כֶּסֶף מְלָכוֹתָו אֲשֶׁר בְּשׁוֹשַׁן הַבִּירָה: בְּשַׁנַּת
שְׁלוֹשׁ לְמָלְכוֹ עָשָׂה מִשְׁתֵּה לְכָל-שָׂרָיו וְעַבְדָּיו חֵיל וּפָרָס
וּמְדֵי הַפְּרָתִים וּשְׂרֵי הַמְּדִינֹת לִפְנָיו:

Leader: This all happened in the days of King Ahashverosh of Persia. He had such a large kingdom and was so very rich that he gave a party for half a year for all the important people in Persia.

And then he made a seven-day feast for the common people of his capital city Shushan.

CONGREGATION: There were white and blue curtains tied by cords of linen and purple to silver rings and marble pillars.

Leader: And wine in golden cups, much wine, too much wine. On the seventh day of the feast, when the king was merry with wine, he told seven servants to go and bring Queen Vashti to the men's feast, to show her beauty to all the people.

CONGREGATION: For she was very beautiful.

Leader: But Queen Vashti would not come. The king was very angry. He turned to his seven wise men and asked them, "What shall we do about Queen Vashti, who has not obeyed me?"

CONGREGATION: “What shall we do about Queen Vashti?”

וַיֹּאמֶר
 מוֹמְכָן לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַשָּׂרִים לֹא עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ לְבַדּוֹ עֲוֹתָהּ
 וְשֵׁתִי הַמַּלְכָּה כִּי עַל-כָּל-הַשָּׂרִים וְעַל-כָּל-הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל-
 מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֹׁרוֹשׁ: כִּי-יֵצֵא דְבַר-הַמַּלְכָּה עַל-כָּל-
 הַנָּשִׁים לְהַבְּזוֹת בְּעֲלֵיהֶן בְּעֵינֵיהֶן בְּאִמְרוֹם הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֹׁרוֹשׁ
 אָמַר לְהָבִיא אֶת-וְשֵׁתִי הַמַּלְכָּה לִפְנָיו וְלֹא-בָאָה:

Leader: Memuchan was one of the seven wise men. He said: “Queen Vashti has done wrong not only to the king, but to all men of the kingdom. If she is not properly punished, then from now on no wife will ever listen to her husband. King, you must divorce Vashti and find yourself a better queen.”

So the king did just that. He sent word to all the men of Persia that every man must be ruler in his own house.

But later the king missed Vashti; so his servants suggested he gather beautiful girls from everywhere and from among them pick a new queen.

CONGREGATION: So the king began to search for a beautiful new queen.



אִישׁ יְהוּדִי הָיָה בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה וְשֵׁמוֹ
 מֶרְדֳּכָי בֶּן יָאִיר בֶּן-שִׁמְעִי בֶּן-קִישׁ אִישׁ יְמִינִי: אֲשֶׁר הֶגְלָה
 מִירוּשָׁלַיִם עִם-הֶגְלָה אֲשֶׁר הֶגְלָתָה עִם יְכָנִיָּה מֶלֶךְ-יְהוּדָה
 אֲשֶׁר הֶגְלָה נְבוּכַדְנֶצַּר מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל: וַיְהִי אִמּוֹן אֶת-הַדָּפָה
 הִיא אֶסְתֵּר בַּת-דָּדּוּ כִּי אֵין לָהּ אָב וְאִם וְהַנְּעֻרָה יִפְתֹּ-
 תָאֵר וְטוֹבַת מְרָאָה וּבְמֹזַת אֲבִיָּה וְאִמָּה לְקַחְתָּ מֶרְדֳּכָי לֹו
 לְבַת:

Leader: All this time there lived in Shushan a Jew from Jerusalem, who had been carried away when Jerusalem was about to be destroyed.

CONGREGATION: And his name was Mordechai.

Leader: And his name was Mordechai, and his cousin's name was Hadassah (in Hebrew) or Esther (in Persian). She was a beautiful girl that Mordechai was raising because her parents were dead.

Esther was so beautiful she was chosen to go before the king.

וַיֵּאָהֵב
הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-אֶסְתֵּר מִכָּל-הַנְּשִׁים וַתִּשְׂאֵהוּן וַחֲסַד לְפָנָיו מִכָּל-
הַבְּתוּלוֹת וַיִּשֶׂם כֶּתֶר-מַלְכוּת בְּרֹאשָׁהּ וַיְמַלִּיכָהּ תַּחַת וְשָׂתִי:
וַיַּעַשׂ הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁתֵּה גָדוֹל לְכָל-שָׂרָיו וְעַבְדָּיו אֶת מִשְׁתֵּה
אֶסְתֵּר וַהֲנַחָה לַמְּדִינֹת עָשָׂה וַיִּתֵּן מִשָּׂאת כִּיד הַמֶּלֶךְ:
וּבַהֲקַבֵּץ בְּתוּלוֹת שְׁנֵית וּמַרְדֵּכָי יֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר-הַמֶּלֶךְ: אֵין
אֶסְתֵּר מַגִּידַת מוֹלְדֹתָהּ וְאֶת-עַמָּהּ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה עָלֶיהָ מַרְדֵּכָי
וְאֶת-מֵאֵמֶר מַרְדֵּכָי אֶסְתֵּר עָשָׂה כַּאֲשֶׁר הִיטָה בְּאָמְנָה
אִתּוֹ:

Leader: The king so loved Esther that he made her his queen, and he held a great feast in her honor. All the while Esther told no one she was Jewish. Mordechai told her not to tell. And Mordechai used to sit in the gate of the palace to hear the news.



CONGREGATION: He certainly heard some news.

Leader: Mordechai happened to hear of a plot to kill the king. He told Esther. Esther told the king. The men who wanted to kill Ahashverosh were hanged.

אֶחָד וְהַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה גִּדְּלָה הַמֶּלֶךְ
 אֶחְשִׁירוֹשׁ אֶת־הֶמֶן בֶּן־הַמֶּדְיָה הָאֲגָגִי וַיִּנְשָׂאֵהוּ וַיִּשֶׂם אֶת־
 כִּסְאוֹ מֵעַל כָּל־הַשָּׂרִים אֲשֶׁר אֵתוֹ: וְכָל־עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר־
 בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ כֹּרְעִים וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוִים לְהֶמֶן כִּי־בֶן צֹהֵל לֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ
 וּמִרְדֵּכָי לֹא יִכְרַע וְלֹא יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה:

Leader: After all this, the king picked a new prime minister by the name of Haman, a descendent of Agag, Israel's greatest enemy. All the king's servants bowed down before the great man—all except Mordechai.

CONGREGATION: Mordechai would not bow and would not bend.

Leader: Haman saw it and was very angry. For revenge he decided to kill not just Mordechai, but all the Jews.

He wanted the very best day for murdering the Jews, so he threw lots (which in Persian are called "Purim") and came up with the date 13th of Adar. He had nearly a year to prepare for his horrible revenge.



וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְמַלְכֵי אַחַשְׁוֵרֶשׁ יִשְׁנוּ עִם־
 אֶחָד מִפְּזָר וּמִפָּרָד בֵּין הָעַמִּים בְּכָל מְדִינֹת מְלְכוּתְךָ וּדְתֵיהֶם
 שְׁנוֹת מִכָּל־עַם וְאֶת־דְּתֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵינָם עֹשִׂים וְלַמֶּלֶךְ אֵין־שׁוֹה
 לְהַנִּיחֵם: אִם־עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב יִכְתֹּב לְאַבְדָם וְעִשְׂרַת אַלְפִים
 בְּכַר־כֶּסֶף אֲשַׁקּוּל עַל־יָדוֹ עֹשֵׂי הַמְּלָאכָה לְהָבִיא אֶל־גְּנוּזֵי
 הַמֶּלֶךְ: וַיִּסַּר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־טַבַּעְתּוֹ מֵעַל יָדוֹ וַיִּתְּנָהּ לְהַמֵּן בֶּן־
 הַמֶּדְתָּא הָאֲגָגִי צָרַד הַיְהוּדִים:

Leader: Now Haman went to the king and said: “There is a certain people scattered all over your kingdom. They have different laws from everyone else. They do not keep the king’s laws. You should not let them live. I will pay the expenses for getting rid of them.”

CONGREGATION: The king took off his ring.

Leader: The king took off his ring and gave it to Haman, the enemy of the Jews. “Use the ring to sign any law you want. Do as you wish.”

Haman then sent out the law to every part of the kingdom that on the 13th of Adar every Jew everywhere should be killed—men, women, and children.

CONGREGATION: All to be killed. All to be destroyed.

וּמְרֹדֶכַי
 יָדַע אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשָׂה וַיִּקְרַע מְרֹדֶכַי אֶת-בְּגָדָיו וַיִּלְבַּשׁ
 שָׂק וַאֲפֹר וַיֵּצֵא בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר וַיִּזְעַק וְעָקָה גְדוּלָּה וּמָרָה: וַיָּבֹא
 עַד לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר-הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי אֵין לָבֹא אֶל-שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּלִבּוֹשׁ
 שָׂק: וּבְכָל-מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר-הַמֶּלֶךְ וְדָתוֹ
 מִגִּיעַ אֲבָל גְּדוּלַּ לַיהוּדִים וַעֲזוֹם וּבְכִי וּמִסַּפֵּד שָׂק וַאֲפֹר יֵצֵעַ
 לְרַבִּים:

Leader: When Mordechai heard the news, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes.

CONGREGATION: Mordechai cried out bitterly.

6

Leader: He sent word to Esther, asking her to go to the king and beg for the life of her people.

But Esther was afraid, because she had not seen the king for a month. And everyone knew that a person who went to see the king without being called would be killed—unless the king was in a very good mood and held out his golden sceptre.

Mordechai was angry with Esther: “Do you think we shall all die, but you will live? If you will not help us, help will still come; but your name will die.”

וְתֹאמַר אֶסְתֵּר
 לְהָשִׁיב אֶל-מָרְדֳּכָי: לִךְ כְּנֹס אֶת-כָּל-הַיְהוּדִים הַנִּמְצְאִים
 בְּשׁוּשָׁן וְצוּמוּ עָלַי וְאֶל-תֹּאכְלוּ וְאֶל-תִּשְׁתּוּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים
 לַיְלָה וַיּוֹם גַּם-אֲנִי וְנִעַרְתִּי אֲצִוֶּם כֵּן וּבִכֵּן אָבֹא אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ
 אֲשֶׁר לֹא-כֹדֶת וְכֹאֲשֶׁר אֲבֹדְתִי אֲבֹדְתִי: וַיַּעֲבֹד מָרְדֳּכָי וַיַּעַשׂ
 כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר-צִוְתָהּ עָלָיו אֶסְתֵּר:

Leader: So Esther answered: “Go, tell all the Jews in Shushan to fast for me. And I will fast three days and nights. Then I will go to the king. And if I die, I die.”

CONGREGATION: “I will go. And if I die, I die.”

Leader: On the third day Esther went to the king. When he saw her, he so loved her that he put out his golden sceptre. And Esther, bowing low, touched it with her head.

The king asked, “What is your request?”

CONGREGATION: “Anything you wish I will do for you. Ask for half my kingdom and I’ll give it to you.”

Leader: Esther asked only that the king come to a feast she was making for him, and that he bring Haman to the feast.

At the feast the king asked again, “What is your request?”

CONGREGATION: “Anything you wish I will do for you. Ask for half my kingdom and I’ll give it to you.”

Leader: Again Esther asked only that the king come to another feast the next day—with Haman.

Haman left the palace in a very good mood, but when he saw Mordechai he was filled with rage.

CONGREGATION: Mordechai would not bow and would not bend.

Leader: That night Haman’s wife Zeresh told him: “Look, if this Mordechai, whoever he is, bothers you so much, put up a tall gallows, ask the king for permission, and hang him right away.”

בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא נִדְרָה שְׁנַת
 הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיֹּאמֶר לְהֵבִיא אֶת-סֵפֶר הַזְּכוּרֹת דְּבַרֵי הַיָּמִים וַיְהִי
 נִקְרְאִים לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ: וַיִּמְצֵא כְּתוּב אֲשֶׁר הִגִּיד מֶרְדֵּכַי עַל-
 בְּגַתְנָא וְתָרַשׁ שְׁנֵי סָרִיסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁמַרְי הַסֵּף אֲשֶׁר בִּקְשׁוּ
 לְשַׁלַּח יָד בַּמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֻׁרוּשׁ: וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ מֶה-נַּעֲשֶׂה יִקָּר
 וַיְדוּלָה לְמֶרְדֵּכַי עַל-זֶה וַיֹּאמְרוּ נַעֲרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁדָּרְתִּיו לֹא-
 נַעֲשֶׂה עִמּוֹ דָּבָר:

Leader: That night the king was having trouble sleeping; so he began to look at some old records. In them he read how Mordechai had saved his life by telling of the plot to kill the king.

#9

Leader: The king turned to his servants: “What did we ever do to reward this Mordechai?”

“Nothing,” said the servants.

Just then, in the early morning, Haman came knocking at the door, eager to ask permission to hang Mordechai.

“Just the man I want to see,” said the king. “What should be done for someone the king wants very much to honor?”

Now Haman was thinking, “Whom would the king want to honor, if not me?” So he said: “This should be done for such a man.”

CONGREGATION: “Let him have the king’s robe and wear the king’s crown. Let him ride the king’s horse all over the town. A prince should be leading, shouting loud as he can: ‘The king wants to honor this wonderful man.’ ”



Leader: The king said to Haman, “You be the prince. Take the robe, take the crown, take the horse, and do all that you said—for Mordechai. Do it today.”

Haman did it. And when he came home in the blackest of moods, his wife said, “If this Mordechai is a Jew, you are lost. You will fall.”

At that very moment, the king’s men came to take Haman to the second feast with Queen Esther.

And at the feast the king asked her: “What is your request?”



CONGREGATION: “Anything you wish I will do for you.
Ask for half my kingdom and I’ll give
it to you.”

Leader: Now Esther spoke up: “My wish is for my life. And my request if
for the life of my people. For we have been sold, I and my people, to be
murdered and destroyed!”

“Who,” asked the king, “is doing this to you?” Esther answered: “A
vicious enemy, this wicked Haman!”

וַיֹּאמֶר

הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרֹשׁ וַיֹּאמֶר לְאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה מִי הוּא זֶה וְאֵי-זֶה
הוּא אֲשֶׁר-מָלְאוּ לְבוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת כֵּן: וְתֹאמַר אַסְתֵּר אִישׁ עֵד וְאוֹיֵב
הָמֶן הָרַע הַזֶּה וְהָמֶן נִבְעַת מִלִּפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמַּלְכָּה: וְהַמֶּלֶךְ
קָם בַּחֲמָתוֹ מִמִּשְׁתֵּה הַיַּיִן אֶל-גִּנַּת הַבַּיִתָּן וְהָמֶן עָמַד לְבַקֵּשׁ
עַל-נַפְשׁוֹ מֵאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה כִּי רָאָה כִּי-כָלְתָה אֵלָיו הָרַעָה
מֵאֵת הַמֶּלֶךְ:

Leader: The king was furious. Just then a slave said, "Do you know that Haman has built a huge gallows to hand Mordechai?"

And the king answered: "Hang Haman on it."

CONGREGATION: "Hang Haman on it."

Leader: Then the king took the ring he had once given Haman and gave it instead to Mordechai.

Even with the ring to sign the laws, Mordechai could not change what had been done, because the King of Persia could never admit he had made a mistake. No law of his could ever be changed. Mordechai could not command that the Jews not be killed on the 13th of Adar. But he could make a law that the Jews be given weapons and defend themselves.

So when the day came, the Jews fought a great battle and won. In most of the kingdom it lasted one day, but in Shushan it took two. That is why most Jews observe Purim on the 14th of Adar, but the Jews of Shushan have Purim on the 15th.

Esther ordered that these days of Purim should be a holiday.

CONGREGATION: Every year feasting and joy, the exchanging of gifts, charity to the poor.

כ"ו

מִדָּרְכַי הַיְהוּדִי מִשְׁנֵה לַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוּשׁ וְגָדוֹל לַיְהוּדִים וְרָצוּי
לְרֹב אָחִיו דִּדְשׁ טוֹב לְעַמּוֹ וְדֹבֵר שְׁלוֹם לְכָל-זֶרְעוֹ:

CONGREGATION: And Mordechai the Jew was second only to the king, a great man among his people, working for their peace.

Leader: And Mordechai the Jew was second only to the king, a great man among his people, working for their peace.

AFTER READING THE MEGILLAH

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הָרַב אֶתְרִיבְנוּ, וְהִדֵּן אֶת-
דִּינֵנוּ, וְהַנְּקָם אֶת־נַקְמָתֵנוּ, וְהַנְּפָרֵעַ לָנוּ מִצָּרֵינוּ, וְהַמְשַׁלֵּם גְּמוּלָה
לְכָל-אִיְבֵי נַפְשֵׁנוּ.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי, הַנְּפָרֵעַ לְעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכָּל-צָרֵיהֶם, הָאֵל הַמּוֹשִׁיעַ.



