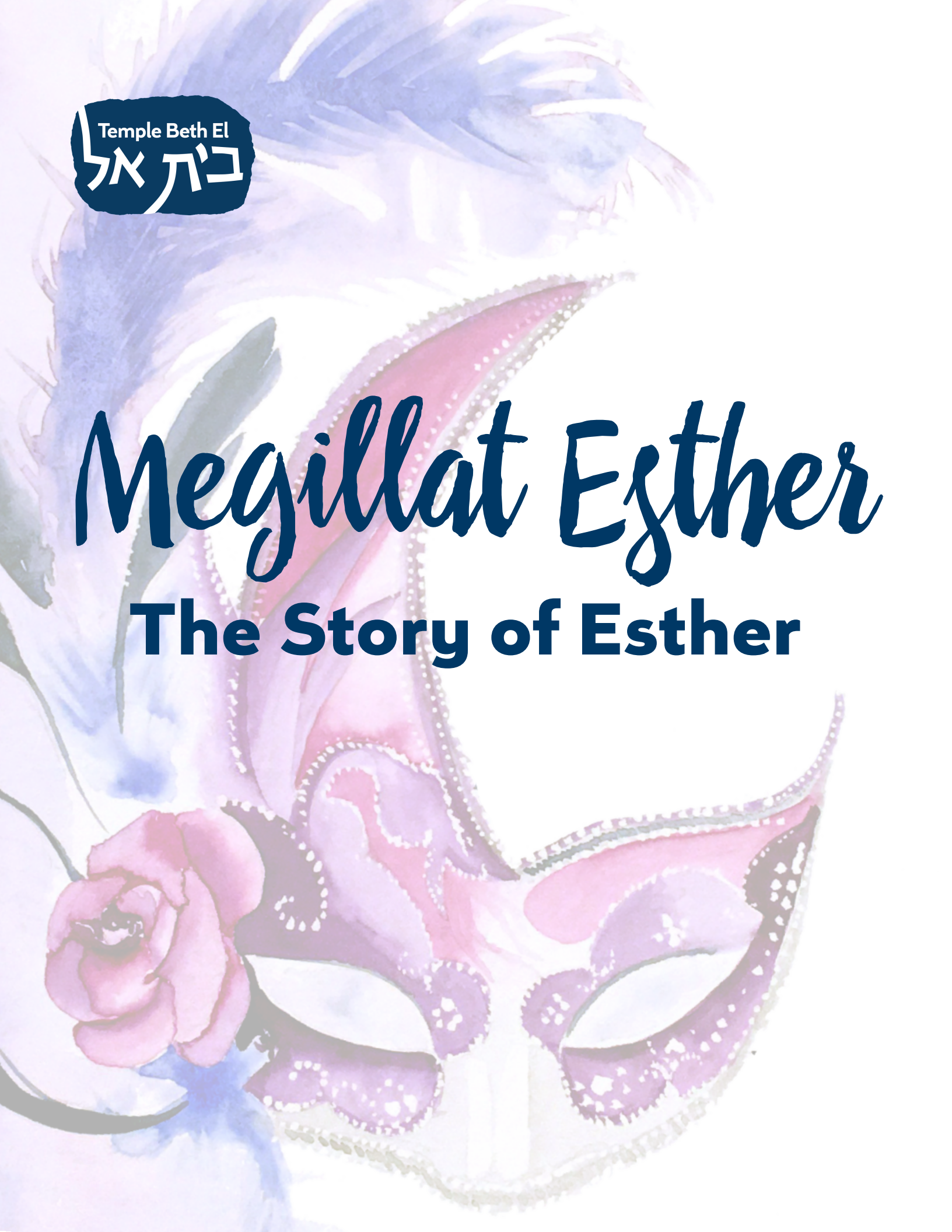


Megillat Esther

The Story of Esther



Introduction to the Megillah

The success of the Purim celebration which slowly spread from Iran westward to Palestine, was due to the Megillah itself. Megillat Esther was most likely composed in the second century BCE .

It is mentioned in II Maccabees 15:36, where it is called “the day of Mordecai.”

The story is set in the reign of the Persian King Ahashuerus. It relates that in the third year of his reign he made a banquet of 180 days' duration. Ahashuerus ordered his queen, Vashti, to appear before his nobles and dignitaries but she refused. He decided to replace his queen through a beauty contest. Through that contest Esther, a Jew, appears in the story. She is the niece and foster daughter of Mordecai who is a dignitary of some rank. It is Haman, son of Hammedatha the Agagite, a descendant of Amalek who becomes the second in command. Mordecai refuses to bow down to him. Haman, decides to avenge and affront Mordecai to his entire people. The date for the Jewish destruction is set by casting lots (hence the name Purim). Mordecai gets an audience with Esther and instructs her to intercede for her people and reveal her identity. Esther brings about Haman's death and the story comes to an end as Mordecai and Esther decree that Jews must “observe these days of Purim at their proper times...”. A festive holiday was decreed and that is precisely the atmosphere we create at Temple during Purim.

Hag Purim Sameach, Celebrate and rejoice with Queen Esther and Mordecai!

The Blessings

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו,
וְצִוָּנוּ עַל מִקְרָא מְגִלָּה:

Blessed are You, Lord our G_d, King of the universe who sanctifies us through mitzvot, and commands us concerning the reading of the Megillah. (Cong.— Amen)

Bo-ruch A-toh Ado-noi E-lo-hei-nu Me-lech Ha-olom A-sheer Ki-de-sho-nu Be-mitz-vo-sov Ve-tzi-vo-nu Al Mikra Megillah.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאֲבוֹתֵינוּ
בְּיָמִים קְדָמָה בְּזֶמַן הַזֶּה:

Blessed are You, Lord our G_d, King of the universe, who performed miracles for our forefathers in those days, at this time (Cong.— Amen)

Bo-ruch A-toh Ado-noi E-lo-hei-nu Me-lech Ha-olom She-o-so Ni-sim La-avo-sei-nu Ba-yo-mim Ho-heim Bi-z'man Ha-zeh

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַחַיָּנוּ וְקִיָּמָנוּ וְהַגִּיעָנוּ
לְזֶמַן הַזֶּה:

Blessed are You, Lord our G_d, King of the universe, who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this occasion. (Cong.— Amen)

Bo-ruch A-toh Ado-noi E-lo-hei-nu Me-lech Ha-olom She-heche-yo-nu Ve-ki-yi-mo-nu Ve-higi-o-nu Liz-man Ha-zeh.

The Megillah

וַיְהִי בַיָּמִי אֲחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ הָיָא אֲחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ הַמֶּלֶךְ מֵהַדֹּד וְעַד-כּוֹשׁ¹
 שֶׁבַע וְעֶשְׂרִים וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה²: בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם כְּשֶׁבַת | הַמֶּלֶךְ
 אֲחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ עַל כֶּסֶּא מַלְכוּתוֹ אֲשֶׁר בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה³: בְּשָׁנָה
 שְׁלוֹשׁ לְמָלְכוֹ עָשָׂה מִשְׁתֶּה לְכָל-שָׂרָיו וְעַבְדָּיו חֵיל | פָּרַס
 וּמְדֵי הַפָּרָתָמִים וְשָׂרֵי הַמְּדִינֹת לְפָנָיו:

Leader: This all happened in the days of King Ahashverosh of Persia. He has 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?

The Megillah

וַיְהִי בַיָּמִי אֲחַשְׁוֶרוֹשׁ הוּא אֲחַשְׁוֶרוֹשׁ הַמֶּלֶךְ מֵהַדּוֹ וְעַד-כּוֹשׁ
 שֶׁבַע וְעֶשְׂרִים וּמָאָה מְדִינָה: בַּיָּמִים הֵּם כְּשֶׁבַת | הַמֶּלֶךְ
 אֲחַשְׁוֶרוֹשׁ עַל כֹּסֶא מַלְכוּתוֹ אֲשֶׁר בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה: בַּשָּׁנָה
 שְׁלוֹשׁ לְמָלְכוֹ עָשָׂה מִשְׁתֶּה לְכָל-שָׂרָיו וְעַבְדָּיו חֵיל | פָּרַס וּמָדִי
 הַפְּרָתִמִּים וְשָׂרֵי הַמְּדִינּוֹת לְפָנָיו:

Leader: This all happened in the days of King Ahashverosh of Persia. He has 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?

The Megillah

וַיֹּאמֶר מְּמֻכָּן מוֹמָכָן לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַשָּׂרִים לֹא עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ לְבַדּוֹ
 עֲוֹתָהּ וְשָׂתִי הַמֶּלֶכָּה כִּי עַל-כָּל-הַשָּׂרִים וְעַל-כָּל-הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר
 בְּכָל-מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֹׁרוּשׁ:
 כִּי-יֵצֵא דְבַר-הַמֶּלֶכָּה עַל-כָּל-הַנָּשִׁים לְהַבְּזוֹת בְּעֲלֵיהֶן
 בְּעִינֵיהֶן בְּאָמְרָם הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֹׁרוּשׁ אָמַר לְהַבִּיא אֶת-וְשָׂתִי
 הַמֶּלֶכָּה 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.

The Megillah

אִישׁ יְהוּדִי הָיָה בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה וּשְׁמוֹ מֶרְדֳּכַי בֶּן יָאִיר
 בֶּן-שֹׁמְעַי בֶּן-קִישׁ אִישׁ יְמִינִי: אֲשֶׁר הִגָּלָה מִירוּשָׁלַיִם
 עִם-הַגָּלָה אֲשֶׁר הִגְלָתָה עִם יְכָנְיָה מֶלֶךְ-יְהוּדָה אֲשֶׁר הִגָּלָה
 נְבוּכַדְנֶצַּר מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל: וַיְהִי אִמֵּן אֶת-הַדָּסָה הִיא אֶסְתֵּר
 בַּת-דָּדּוּ כִּי אֵין לָהּ אָב וְאִם וְהַנַּעֲרָה יִפְתָּת-אֵר וְטוֹבַת מַרְאֶה
 וּבְמוֹת אָבִיהָ וְאִמָּהּ לִקְחָהּ מֶרְדֳּכַי 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 beautiful girl that Mordechai was raising because her parents were dead.

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

The Megillah

וַיֶּאֱהָב הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-אֶסְתֵּר מִכָּל-הַנָּשִׁים וַתִּשָּׂא-חֵן וְחֶסֶד לְפָנָיו
 מִכָּל-הַבָּתוּלוֹת וַיִּשָּׂם כְּתֹר-מַלְכוּת בְּרָאשָׁה וַיְמַלִּיכָהּ תַּחַת
 וְשִׁתִּי: וַיַּעַשׂ הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁתֶּה גָדוֹל לְכָל-שָׂרָיו וְעַבְדָּיו אֶת מִשְׁתֶּה
 אֶסְתֵּר וְהַנָּחָה לַמְּדִינּוֹת עָשָׂה וַיִּתֵּן מִשָּׂאת כִּיד הַמֶּלֶךְ:
 בְּהֶקְבֶּץ בְּתוּלוֹת שְׁנִית וּמֶרְדֳּכָי יָשָׁב בְּשַׁעַר-הַמֶּלֶךְ: אֵין אֶסְתֵּר
 מִגִּדַּת מוֹלַדְתָּהּ וְאֶת-עַמָּה כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה עָלֶיהָ מֶרְדֳּכָי
 וְאֶת-מֵאֵמֶר מֶרְדֳּכָי אֶסְתֵּר עָשָׂה כַּאֲשֶׁר הִיָּתָה בְּאַמְנָה אֶתּוֹ:

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 would always sit at 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 hung.

The Megillah

אַחַר | הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה גָּדַל הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרוֹשׁ אֶת-הָמֶן
 בֶּן-הַמְּדֵתָא הָאֲגָגִי וַיִּנָּשְׂאֵהוּ וַיָּשֶׂם אֶת-כֶּסֶּאוֹ מֵעַל
 כָּל-הַשָּׂרִים אֲשֶׁר אֵתוֹ: וְכָל-עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר-בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ
 כָּרְעִים וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוִים לְהָמָן כִּי-כֵן צִוָּה-לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ וּמֶרְדֳּכַי לֹא
 יִכְרַע וְלֹא יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה:

Leader: After all this, the king picked a new prime minister by the name of Haman, a descendant 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 had a lottery (which in Persian are called "Purim") and came up with the date of 13th of Adar. He nearly had a year to prepare for his horrible revenge.

The Megillah

וַיֹּאמֶר הָמָן לַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֹׁרוּשׁ יִשְׁנוּ עִם-אֶחָד מִפָּזָר וּמִפָּרָד בֵּין
הָעַמִּים בְּכָל מְדִינֹת מַלְכוּתְךָ וְדִתֵּיהֶם שְׁנוֹת מִכָּל-עַם
וְאֶת-דִּתִּי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵינָם עֹשִׂים וְלַמֶּלֶךְ אֵין-שׁוֹה לְהִנִּיחָם:
אִם-עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב יִכָּתֵב לְאַבְדָּם וְעֲשֶׂרֶת אֲלָפִים כֶּסֶף
אֲשָׁקוּל עַל-יְדֵי עֹשִׂי הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַבִּיא אֶל-גִּנְזֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ: וַיֹּסֶר
הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-טַבַּעְתּוֹ מֵעַל יָדוֹ וַיִּתְּנָהּ לְהָמָן בֶּן-הַמֶּדְתָּא הָאֲגָגִי
צִרְרַת הַיְּהוּדִים:

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 expesense 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.

The Megillah

וּמֶרְדֵּכַי יָדַע אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשָׂה וַיִּקְרַע מֶרְדֵּכַי אֶת-בְּגָדָיו
וַיִּלְבַּשׁ שַׁק וָאֶפֶר וַיֵּצֵא בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר וַיִּזְעַק זָעָקָה גְדוֹלָה וַמָּרָה:
וַיָּבֹא עַד לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר-הַמָּלָךְ כִּי אֵין לָבֹא אֶל-שַׁעַר הַמָּלָךְ
בְּלְבוּשׁ שַׁק: וּבְכָל-מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר דְּבַר-הַמָּלָךְ
וְדָתוֹ מֵגִיעַ אֲבֵל גְּדוֹל לַיהוּדִים וְצוּם וּבְכִי וּמִסָּפַד שַׁק וָאֶפֶר
יַצַּע לְרַבִּים:

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

Congregation: Mordechai cried out bitterly.

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 scepter.

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."

The Megillah

וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר לְהָשִׁיב אֶל־מָרְדֳּכָי: לֵךְ כְּנוּס
 אֶת־כָּל־הַיְּהוּדִים הַנִּמְצְאִים בְּשׁוּשָׁן וְצוּמוּ עָלַי וְאֶל־תֹּאכְלוּ
 וְאֶל־תִּשְׁתּוּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים לַיְלָה וַיּוֹם גַּם־אֲנִי וְנַעֲרֹתַי אֲצוּם כֵּן
 וּבֶכֶן אָבוּא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר לֹא־כָדַת וְכֹאֲשֶׁר אֲבַדְתִּי אֲבַדְתִּי:
 וַיַּעֲבֹר מָרְדֳּכָי וַיַּעַשׂ כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר־צִוְּתָהּ עָלָיו אֶסְתֵּר:

Leader: So Esther answered: " Go, tell all the Jews in Shushan to fast for me. And I will fast three days and three 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 scepter. 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: 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.

The Megillah

Leader: That night Haman's wife Zerash 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 נִדְדָה שְׁנַת הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיֹּאמֶר לְהַבִּיא אֶת־סֵפֶר
הַזְּכוֹנוֹת דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים וַיְהִיו נִקְרָאִים לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ: וַיִּמָּצֵא
כָּתוּב אֲשֶׁר הָגִיד מָרְדֳּכָי עַל־בִּגְתָּנָא וְתָרַשׁ שְׁנֵי סָרִיסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ
מִשְׁמֵרֵי הַסֵּף אֲשֶׁר בָּקְשׁוּ לְשַׁלַּח יָד בַּמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרוּשׁ: וַיֹּאמֶר
הַמֶּלֶךְ מַה־נַּעֲשֶׂה יָקָר וּגְדוֹלָה לְמָרְדֳּכָי עַל־זֶה וַיֹּאמְרוּ נַעֲרֵי
הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁרָתָיו 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.

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."

The Megillah

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 darkest 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 that 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 is 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!"

The Megillah

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרוּשׁ וַיֹּאמֶר לְאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה מִי הוּא זֶה
וְאִי־זֶה הוּא אֲשֶׁר־מָלְאוּ לְבוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת כֵּן: וַתֹּאמֶר אַסְתֵּר אִישׁ
צָר וְאוֹיֵב הָמָן הָרָע הַזֶּה וְהָמָן נִבְעָת מִלִּפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמַּלְכָּה:
וְהַמֶּלֶךְ קָם בַּחֲמָתוֹ מִמִּשְׁתֵּה הַיַּיִן אֶל־גֹּנֶת הַבַּיִת וְהָמָן עָמַד
לְבַקֵּשׁ עַל־נַפְשׁוֹ מֵאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה כִּי רָאָה כִּי־כָלְתָה אֵלָיו
הָרָעָה מֵאֵת הַמֶּלֶךְ:

Leader: The King was furious. Just then a slave said, "Do you know that Haman has built a huge gallows to hang 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.

The Megillah

Leader: 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 day 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, and charity to the poor."

כִּי | מֶרְדֵּכַי הַיְּהוּדִי מְשֻׁנָּה לְמֶלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרוֹשׁ וְגָדוֹל לַיְּהוּדִים
וְרָצוּי לְרַב אֶחָיו דִּרְשׁ טוֹב לְעַמּוֹ וְדִבֵּר 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.

The Megillah

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הָרַב אֶת רִיבֵנוּ וְהָדֹן אֶת
 דִּינֵנוּ וְהַנוֹקֵם אֶת נַקְמָתֵנוּ וְהַמְשַׁלֵּם גְּמוּלָ לְכָל אוֹיְבֵי נַפְשֵׁנוּ
 וְהַנִּפְרָע לָנוּ מִצָּרֵינוּ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הַנִּפְרָע לְעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכָּל
 צָרֵיהֶם הָאֵל הַמוֹשִׁיעַ:

Blessed are You, Lord our G_d, King of the universe, who wages our battles, defends our rights, avenges the wrong done to us, punishes our oppressors in behalf, and brings retribution upon all our mortal enemies. Blessed are You Lord, who exacts payment in behalf of His people Israel from all their oppressors; G_d who delivers. (Cong.—Amen)