



PURIM

MY RELIGION, MY CHOICE

Balancing autonomy and faith in a world of endless choices

HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Purim

The jolly festival of Purim is celebrated every year on the fourteenth day of the Hebrew month of Adar (late winter/early spring). It commemorates the salvation of the Jewish people in ancient Persia from Haman's plot "to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the Jews, young and old, infants and women, in a single day," as recorded in the Megillah (biblical book of Esther).

The Persian Empire of the fourth century BCE extended over 127 lands, and all the Jews were its subjects. When King Ahasuerus had his wife, Queen Vashti, executed for failing to follow his orders, he arranged a beauty

pageant to find a new queen. A Jewish girl, Esther, found favor in his eyes and became the new queen, though she refused to divulge her background.

Meanwhile, the Jew-hating Haman was appointed prime minister of the empire. Mordecai, the leader of the Jews (and Esther's cousin), defied the king's orders and refused to bow to Haman. Haman was incensed, and he convinced the king to issue a decree ordering the extermination of all the Jews on the thirteenth day of Adar, a date chosen by a lottery Haman made.

Mordecai galvanized all the

Jews, convincing them to repent, fast, and pray to G d. Meanwhile, Esther asked the king and Haman to join her for a feast. At a subsequent feast, Esther revealed to the king her Jewish identity. Haman was hanged, Mordecai was appointed prime minister in his stead, and a new decree was issued, granting the Jews the right to defend themselves against their enemies.

On the thirteenth of Adar, the Jews mobilized and killed many of their enemies. On the fourteenth of Adar, they rested and celebrated. In the capital city of Shushan, they took one more day to finish the job.



Is religion compatible with liberty, or does it restrict our choices and force us to sacrifice our individuality?

TEXT 1

Esther 1:1-8

א. וַיְהִי בַיָּמֵי אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ הוּא
אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ הַמֶּלֶךְ מֵהַדוּ וְעַד כּוֹשׁ
שִׁבְעָה וְעֶשְׂרִים וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה.

ב. בַּיָּמִים הֵהֵם כָּשְׁבַת הַמֶּלֶךְ
אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ עַל כִּסֵּא מַלְכוּתוֹ אֲשֶׁר
בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה.

ג. בַּשָּׁנָה שְׁלוֹשׁ לְמַלְכוּתוֹ עָשָׂה
מִשְׁתֵּה לְכָל שָׂרָיו וְעַבְדָּיו חֵיל פָּרֶס
וּמְדֵי הַפְּרָתַיִם וְשָׂרֵי הַמְּדִינֹת
לְפָנָיו.

ד. בַּהֲרֵאתוֹ אֵת עֲשָׂר כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ
וְאֵת יָקָר תַּפְאָרַת גְּדוּלְתוֹ יָמִים
רַבִּים שְׁמוֹנִים וּמֵאֵת יוֹם.

1. And it came to pass in the days of Achashverosh—this was the Achashverosh who reigned from India to Ethiopia, over seven and twenty and one hundred provinces—

2. That in those days, when King Achashverosh had established himself upon his imperial throne in Shushan, the capital,

3. In the third year of his reign, he made a feast for all his ministers and servants, the forces of Persia and Media, the nobles, and the provincial ministers before him;

4. When he displayed the wealth of his glorious kingdom and the honor of his splendid majesty many days—one hundred and eighty days.

TEXT 1

Esther 1:1-8

ה. וּבְמִלּוֹאת הַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה עָשָׂה
הַמֶּלֶךְ לְכָל הָעָם הַנִּמְצְאִים בְּשׁוּשָׁן
הַבִּירָה לְמַגְדוֹל וְעַד קָטָן מִשְׁתֶּה
שִׁבְעַת יָמִים בְּחֹצֵר גִּנת בֵּיתוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ.

ו. חוֹר כְּרָפֶס וּתְכֵלֶת אָחוּז בְּחֻבֵּי
בוּץ וְאַרְגָּמָן עַל גְּלִילֵי כֶסֶף וְעִמּוּדֵי
נֶשֶׁשׁ מְטוֹת זָהָב וְכֶסֶף עַל רִצְפַת
בֵּהַט וְנֶשֶׁשׁ וְדָר וְסַחֲרָת.

ז. וְהִשְׁקוֹת בְּכֵלֵי זָהָב וְכֵלִים מְכֻלִּים
שׁוֹנִים וַיֵּין מְלָכוֹת רַב כְּיַד הַמֶּלֶךְ.

ח. וְהִשְׁתִּיָּה כַּדָּת אֵין אִגַּס כִּי כֵן יִסַּד
הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל כָּל רַב בֵּיתוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת
כְּרִצּוֹן אִישׁ וְאִישׁ.

5. And when these days were complete, the king made a feast for all the people present in Shushan, the capital, for great and small alike: seven days, on the grounds of the royal palace's garden.

6. There were drapes of white, of fine cotton, and blue, embroidered with cords of fine linen and royal purple, on silver rods and marble pillars; couches of gold and silver upon a pavement of alabaster, marble, pearl, and black onyx.

7. And he served drink in vessels of gold—vessels of all different types—and the royal wine was in abundance to fit the king's power.

8. The drinking followed the rule: "No coercion!" For the king had established that all his house's officers should do as each man desired.

TEXT 2

Esther 1: 9-17

ט. גם וּשְׁתֵי הַמְּלָכָה עָשְׂתָה מִשְׁתֵּה נָשִׁים
בֵּית הַמְּלָכוֹת אֲשֶׁר לַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ.

י. בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי כָּטוֹב לֵב הַמֶּלֶךְ בִּיָּיִן
אָמַר לְמַהוּמָן בְּזֶתָא חַרְבוּנָא בְּגָתָא
וְאַבְגָּתָא זֶתַר וְכַרְפֵּס שְׁבַעַת הַסְּרִיסִים
הַמְּשָׁרְתִים אֶת פְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ.

יא. לְהָבִיא אֶת וּשְׁתֵי הַמְּלָכָה לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ
בְּכֹתֵר מְלָכוֹת לְהַרְאוֹת הָעַמִּים וְהַשָּׂרִים
אֶת יָפְיָהּ כִּי טוֹבַת מְרָאָה הִיא.

יב. וַתִּמְאַן הַמְּלָכָה וּשְׁתֵי לָבוֹא בְּדַבַּר
הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר בְּיַד הַסְּרִיסִים וַיִּקְצַף הַמֶּלֶךְ
מְאֹד וַחֲמָתוֹ בָּעָרָה בּוֹ.

יג. וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְחַכְמִים יִדְעֵי הָעֵתִים
כִּי כֹן דַּבַּר הַמֶּלֶךְ לִפְנֵי כָּל יִדְעֵי דַת וְדִין.

9. Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women in the royal palace that belonged to King Achashverosh.

10. On the seventh day, when the king's heart was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Bizzeta, Harbona, Bigta, and Abagta; Zetar, and Karkas, the seven eunuchs who served King Achashverosh,

11. To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the royal crown to show the people and the officers her beauty, for she was beautiful.

12. But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command, conveyed by the eunuchs; the king was very angry, and his wrath burned in him.

13. The king said to the wise men who knew the times (for so was the king's way, to consult those who knew law and judgment),



TEXT 2

Esther 1: 9-17

יד. וְהַקְרִיב אֵלָיו כְּרִשְׁנָא שֶׁתָּר אֲדַמְתָּא
תְּרִשִׁישׁ מְרֶס מְרֶסְנָא מְמוּכָן שְׁבַעַת שְׁרִי
פְּרֶס וּמְדֵי רֵאִי פְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ הַיֹּשְׁבִים
רֵאשְׁנָה בַּמְּלָכוֹת.

טו. כְּדַת מַה לַעֲשׂוֹת בַּמְּלָכָה וְשִׁתִּי עַל
אֲשֶׁר לֹא עָשְׂתָה אֶת מֵאֲמַר הַמֶּלֶךְ
אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ בְּיַד הַסְּרִיסִים.

טז. וַיֹּאמֶר מְמוּכָן לְפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַשָּׂרִים
לֹא עַל הַמֶּלֶךְ לְבַדּוֹ עָוְתָה וְשִׁתִּי הַמְּלָכָה
כִּי עַל כָּל הַשָּׂרִים וְעַל כָּל הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר
בְּכָל מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ.

יז. כִּי יֵצֵא דְבַר הַמְּלָכָה עַל כָּל הַנְּשִׁים
לְהַבְזוֹת בְּעֵלֵיהֶן בְּעִינֵיהֶן בְּאֶמְרֵם הַמֶּלֶךְ
אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ אָמַר לְהַבִּיא אֶת וְשִׁתִּי
הַמְּלָכָה לְפָנָיו וְלֹא בָּאָה.

14. And those close to him were Carshena, Shetar, Admata, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, who saw the king's face and sat first in the kingdom;

15. "According to law, what shall we do to Queen Vashti since she has not done the bidding of King Achashverosh conveyed by the eunuchs?"

16. And Memucan answered before the kings and the princes, "Not against the king alone has Vashti the queen sinned, but also against all the princes, and all the peoples in all the provinces of the King Achashverosh.

17. "For the queen's deed will be known to all women and will cause them to view their husbands with contempt, saying, 'King Achashverosh commanded to bring Queen Vashti before him, but she did not come.'"

QUESTION 1

Why is King Achashverosh—a ruthless, absolute monarch—unsure about how to respond to Vashti's disobedience?

TEXT 3

Esther 4:11

כָּל עֲבָדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְעַם מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ יִדְעִים אֲשֶׁר כָּל אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר
יָבוֹא אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל הַתְּצַר הַפְּנִימִית אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִקְרָא אַחַת דָּתוֹ לְהַמִּית
לְבַד מֵאֲשֶׁר יוֹשִׁיט לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת שַׁרְבִיט הַזָּהָב וְחָיָה וְאֲנִי לֹא נִקְרָאתִי
לְבוֹא אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ זֶה שְׁלוֹשִׁים יוֹם.

All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that every man or woman who comes to the king, to the inner court, who is not called, there is but one law for them—to be killed. Only those to whom the king extends his golden scepter will live. And I have not been called to come to the king these thirty days.

Achashverosh's advisors justified Vashti's execution on the basis that wives will disobey their husbands—was a common husband's honor worth more than the king's?



TEXT 4A

*Rabbi Chaim ibn
Atar, Rishon LeTzion,
Esther 1:14*

יש להבין . . . מהו אומרו "לא על המלך לבדו עושה וכו'" דנראה
שלא יספיק להמיתה אם עושה על המלך לבדו, ואחר האמת לא
תתחייב המיתה זולת בדבר הנוגע למלך? וכמעט דברי ממוכן אין
להם הבנה.

"And those close to him were . . ." One may ask . . . what does Memucan mean when he says, "Not against the king alone has Vashti [the queen] sinned." It implies that her sinning against the king alone is insufficient to justify her execution, yet, in truth, it is only because of her actions toward the king that she might be executed. Memucan's words are almost incomprehensible.

TEXT 4B

*Rabbi Yaakov
Lorberbaum, Megilat
Setarim, Esther 1:14*

וגם קשה מה שאמר "לא על המלך לבדו עושה
ושתי כי גם על כל השרים", וזהו מרידה נגד המלך
שהחשיב השרים יותר מהמלך.

It is hard to understand why he said, "Not against the king alone has Vashti the queen sinned, but also against all the princes." This itself constituted rebellion against the king—that he considered the ministers more important than the monarch.



Why doesn't
Rashi address
these questions?

RASHI RULE

When Rashi leaves an obvious, basic question unaddressed, it's either because (a) the answer is self-evident, or because (b) one of Rashi's previous comments—on the same verse or a preceding verse—has already resolved the question.

QUESTIONS

- Why does the *Megillah* use the word *yisad*, which means founded, instead of *tzivah*, commanded? Was Achashverosh merely instructing his waiters, or was he establishing an entire system of etiquette?
- The verse says the king instructed his “house’s officers,” not just the cupbearers. Why involve them in a command about drinking?

TEXT 5

Rashi, Esther 1:8

"עַל כָּל רַב בֵּיתוֹ". עַל כָּל שָׂרֵי הַסְּעוּדָה,
שָׂר הָאוֹפִים וְשָׂר הַטְּבָחִים וְשָׂר הַמְּשָׁקִים.

"All his house's officers." Over all the officials of the feast, the chief of the bakers, the chief of the butchers, and the chief of the cupbearers.

QUESTION

Why does the *Megillah* repeat itself by first saying that, “The drinking followed the rule: ‘No coercion,’” and then adds: “the king had established that all his house’s officers should do as each man desired.”?

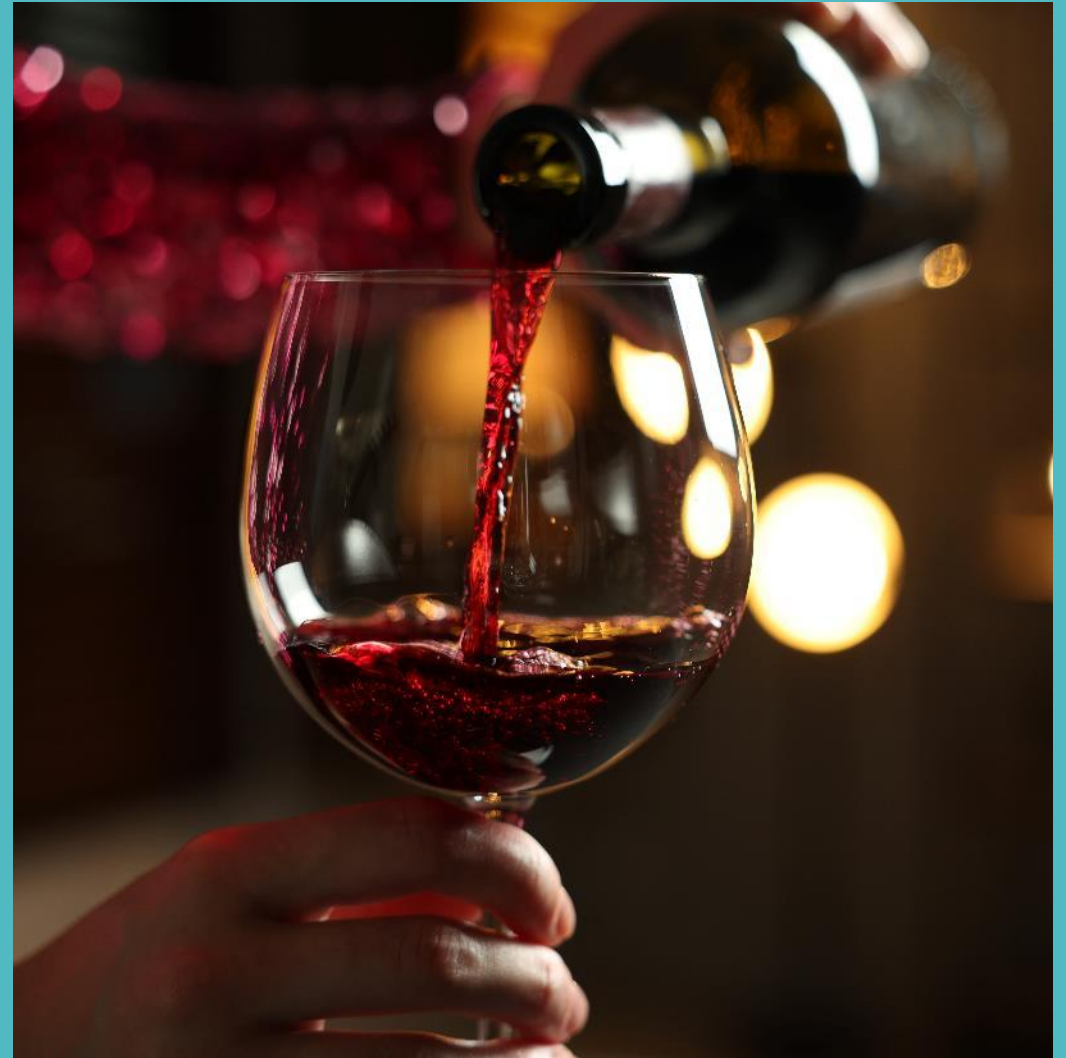
TEXT 6

Rashi, Esther 1:8

"כֶּדֶת". לְפִי שְׂיֵשׁ סְעוּדוֹת שְׁכּוֹפִין אֶת הַמְּסֻבִּין
לְשָׂתוֹת כְּלֵי גָדוֹל, וַיֵּשׁ שְׂאִינוֹ יָכוֹל לְשָׂתוֹתוֹ כִּי
אִם בְּקוֹשִׁי, אֲבָל כֵּאֵן: "אֵין אֹנִים".

"The drinking followed the rule." Some feasts force guests to drink from a large vessel, and some are only able to drink it all with difficulty, but here: there was "no coercion."

Usually, guests were expected to drink what they were served and finish the cup or risk offending the host. At his feast, King Achashverosh chose to break this social norm.



TEXT 7

*Rabbi Tuvia ben
Eliezer Hagadol,
Midrash Lekach Tov,
Esther 1:8*

אמר רבי לוי כך היה מנהג הפרסיים, שהיו משקין בכוס גדול, מחזיק
חמשה שמטות, ונקרא פיתקא, ואפילו הוא מת, או משתגע, לא היה
מחזירו, אלא שותהו. ושרי המשקים היו מתעשרין מאותן המסובין,
שהיו נותנין להם ממון שלא יצערנו, אבל אחשורוש לא הכניס אותו
הכוס לתוך סעודתו שנאמר "אין אונס".

Rabbi Levi says the Persians had a custom of serving wine in an enormous cup holding five measures—called a pitka. Even at the risk of death or madness, you could not return it; you had to drink it. The cupbearers grew rich from this, as guests would bribe them to avoid such distress. Achashverosh, however, let no such cup appear at his feast, as it says: “No coercion.”



Along with this drinking rule, all other social customs were dispensed at Achashverosh's party.

ANSWERS

- The verse uses *yisad*—"established"—because Achashverosh wasn't just issuing an order (*tzivah*); he was creating a space where only unrestricted personal indulgence mattered.
- The verse isn't repetitive: It first highlights the drinking freedom, then reveals the feast's broader goal: indulging every guest's desires.
- Rashi shows that the decree extended beyond cupbearers—all officers, from butchers to bakers, were instructed to maximize guest satisfaction. Bread and meat are central to any meal, so Rashi highlights them, but the rule applied to the entire staff.

ANSWER 1

Achashverosh hesitated because the feast promoted unrestrained freedom, where all choices were accepted. Vashti's refusal aligned with this spirit, raising a dilemma—was her defiance legitimate under the feast's rules?

Achashverosh's advisors reframed the issue, arguing that her disobedience threatened the broader social order, forcing the king to act.

Why does the *Megillah* tell us all of this?
What is the deeper meaning?



TEXT 8

Rabbi Moshe Isserlis,
Mechir Yayin,
Introduction

ולזה אומר גם כן לא ימלט מהיות תוך ופנים לסיפור מגילת אסתר
שאמרו ז"ל עליה פרק קמא דמגילה שנאמרה ברוח הקודש כשאר
כתבי הקודש. כי מאיש אחד ילקח ראייה לכל המין, וכמו ששאר
כתבי הקודש יש להם נגלה ונסתר, כן בוודאי קרה לנו במגילה זו.

In my opinion, it's impossible for Megilat Esther to not contain both an inner and outer meaning, as our sages say (Talmud, *Megillah*, 7a), "Esther was told with the Divine Spirit," just like all other holy scriptures. From one example you can prove the nature of the entire category; if the other holy scriptures contain both hidden and revealed meanings, surely this is true of this *Megillah* as well.

A HIDDEN MEANING

“הַמֶּלֶךְ”

hamelech

“The king”

→ Whenever the *Megillah* employs the word “king,” it’s referencing **G-d**, the **King** of kings.

TEXT 9A

Midrash, Esther
Rabah, 3:10

רַבִּי יוּדָן וְרַבִּי לֵוִי לֹוִי בְּשֵׁם רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן, כָּל מְקוֹם שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר
בְּמִגִּלָּה זֶה לְמֶלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ, בְּמֶלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ הַכָּתוּב
מְדַבֵּר, וְכָל מְקוֹם שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר לְמֶלֶךְ סֵתָם, מִשְׁמֵשׁ קֹדֶשׁ וְחָל.

Rabbi Yudan and Rabbi Levi said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: Every time the *Megillah* says “the King Achashverosh,” it refers to King Achashverosh. But every time it says simply “the king,” it can be read as referring to G-d or Achashverosh.

TEXT 9B

Zohar III, 109a

וּבְכֹל אֶתֶר הַמְּלֶךְ סִתְּמָם, דָּא קוּדְשָׁא
בְּרִידָה הוּא.

In every instance of just “the king,” it refers to the Holy One, Blessed be He.

TEXT 10

Halachot Gedolot,
Laws of Megillah

עדיף יום פורים כיום שניתנה
בו תורה.

Greater is the day of Purim than the
day the Torah was given.

The overwhelming Divine revelation at the Giving of the Torah compelled the Jews to accept G-d's Torah.

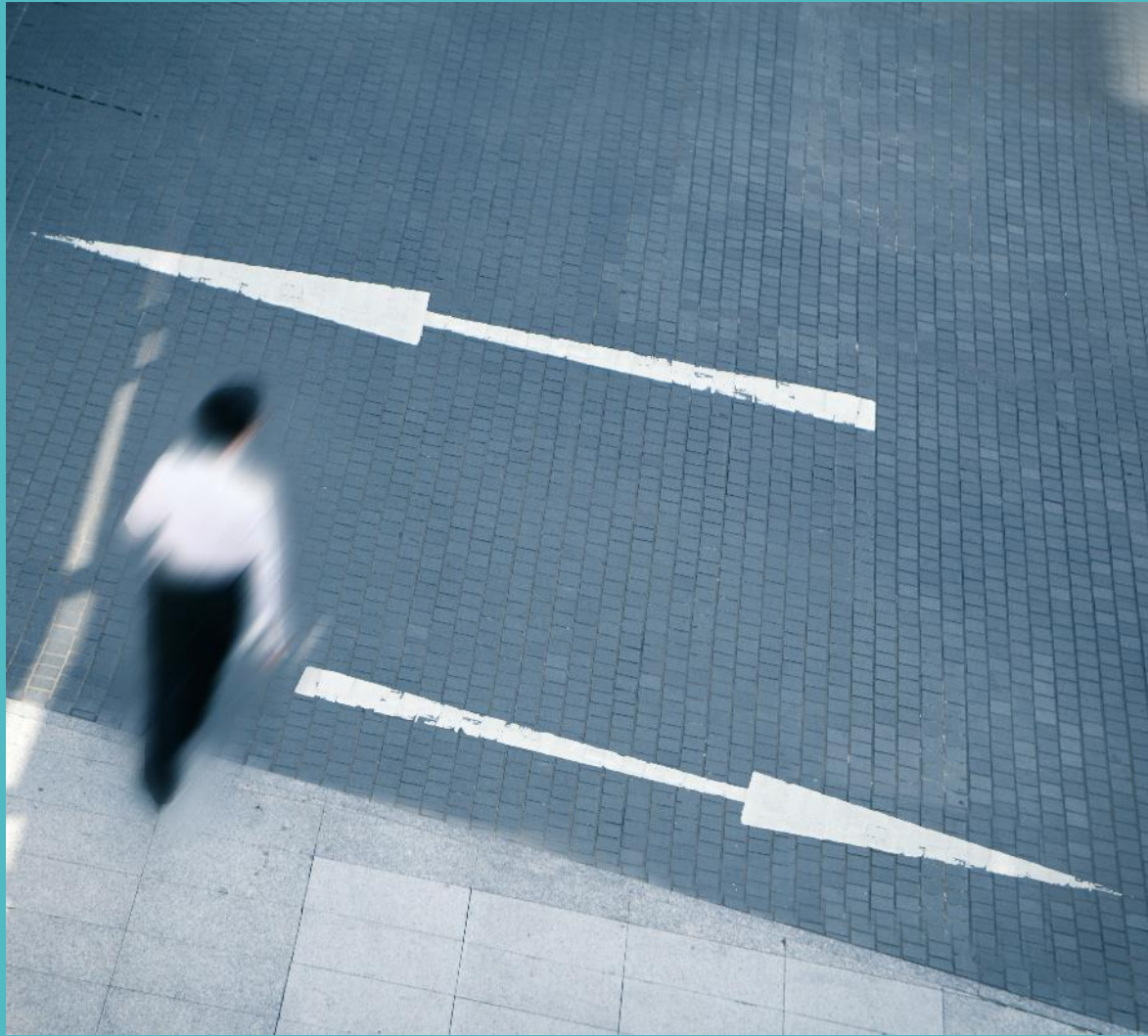


TEXT 11

*Rabbi Shneur
Zalman of Liadi,
Torah Or, 98d*

"וימינו תחבקני"—דהיינו התגלות אהבה העליונה מלמעלה על ישראל, כמו שכתוב "אהבתי אתכם אמר השם"... שאהבה זו תחבקני לכנסת ישראל ומקפת אותו מכל צד, אפילו לבחינת אחוריים, עד שאינו מניחו לפנות ממנו ומוכרח להיות עומד עמו פנים בפנים. דהיינו, שעל ידי אהבה עליונה זו נתעורר גם כן האהבה בנשמות ישראל, עד שבאו למעלה ומדרגה שהקדימו "נעשה" וכו'.

"His right hand embraced me"—this refers to the revelation of Divine love from above, unto the Jewish people. As is written, "I love you, says G-d" (Malachi 1:2). G-d's love embraced the Jewish people, completely enveloping them, even their lowest aspects, until He left them no space to turn; they could only stand face-to-face with Him. Meaning, this Divine love called forth a reciprocal love in the Jewish souls until they came so high as to immediately say, "We will do, etc."



G-d orchestrated the Purim story because He wanted the Jewish people to choose their commitment to Judaism freely: “No coercion!”

TEXT 12

Esther 9:26-27

כו. על כֵּן קָרְאוּ לַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה פּוּרִים עַל־שֵׁם הַפּוּר עַל־כֵּן עַל כָּל־דְּבַרֵי הָאֲגֵרֶת
הַזֹּאת וּמָה רָאוּ עַל־כִּכָּה וּמָה הִגִּיעַ אֲלֵיהֶם.

כז. וְקִבְּלוּ הַיְהוּדִים עָלֵיהֶם וְעַל זֶרְעָם וְעַל כָּל הַנְּלוּיִם עָלֵיהֶם וְלֹא יַעֲבוֹר לְהִיּוֹת
עֲשִׂים אֵת שְׁנֵי הַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה כְּכַתְּבָם וְכַזְּמָנָם בְּכָל שָׁנָה וְשָׁנָה.

26. Therefore they called these days Purim, after the *pur*. Therefore, on account of all this letter's words, and what they had seen, and what had happened to them.

27. The Jews established and accepted upon themselves and upon their offspring, and upon all who join them, that they would not cease to observe these two days, as written, and in their appointed time, every year.

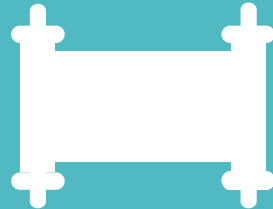
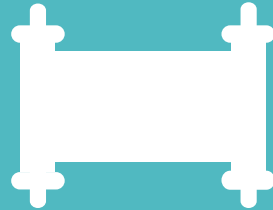
TEXT 12B

Talmud, Shabbat 88a

אָמַר רַבָּא: אַף עַל פִּי כֵן הֵדוּר קִבְּלוּהָ בְּיָמֵי
אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ, דְּכָתִיב: "קִיְּמוּ וְקִבְּלוּ הַיהוּדִים"
— קִיְּמוּ מַה נִּשְׁקִיבְּלוּ כְּבָר.

Rava said: The Jewish people accepted the Torah again in the time of Achashverosh, as it says, "The Jews established and accepted upon themselves": they reaffirmed what they had already accepted at Mount Sinai.

THE JEWS' ACCEPTANCE OF THE TORAH



On Purim, the Jews freely accepted the Torah, making their commitment truly authentic and complete.

TEXT 13

Deuteronomy 30:15-16

טו. רֹאֵה נָתַתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ הַיּוֹם אֶת הַחַיִּים וְאֶת הַטּוֹב וְאֶת הַמָּוֹת וְאֶת הָרָע.
טז. אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם לְאַהֲבָה אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְלַכֵּת בְּדַרְכָּיו
וּלְשָׁמֵר מִצְוֹתָיו וְחֻקֹּתָיו וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו וְתַיִתּוֹ וְרַבִּיתָ וּבִרְכָךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ
בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה בָּא שָׁמָּה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ.

15. Look, I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil.

16. I command you this day to love G-d your G-d, to walk in His way, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His ordinances, that you may live and multiply, and G-d your G-d may bless you in the Land to which you go to possess it.

G-d wants us to choose
Judaism on our own
just as the Jews did in
the story of Purim.



TEXT 14

*Rabbi Moshe Isserlis,
Mechir Yayin, Esther
1:8*

"והשתיה כדת וכו'". ואל תאמר כי האדם מוכרח במעשיו, וזה אינה, כי השתייה הנזכרת היא כדת, אין אונס כלל, והבחירה היא ביד האדם לעשות טוב או רע כי כן יסד מלך מלכי המלכים יתעלה על כל רב ביתו, רוצה לומר שר העולם...
כי העולם בכללו הוא בית א-ל, והוא צוה עליו שיניח לעשות כרצון איש ואיש, כמו שאמרו ז"ל, "הכל בידי שמים חוץ מיראת שמים". ולכן, אין אדם מוכרח כלל רק שמידו היתה לו כל מה שעושה.

"The drinking followed the rule." Don't say your actions are forced upon you: it isn't true. The drinking mentioned was gracious, with no coercion at all. Choice lies in your hand, to do good or bad, for so the King of kings, may He be exalted, established it this way upon all the officers of His house—meaning the world's administrators. . . .

The whole world is G-d's home, and He commanded that everyone may do as they desire, as our sages say, "All lies in Heaven's hand but the fear of Heaven." And so, you are not coerced at all; all that you do is your own doing.

TEXT 15

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Likutei
Sichot, vol. 36, p. 165*

וזהו גם הרמז בפסוק דידן—בנוגע להסעודה שעשה המלך "לכל העם הנמצאים בשושן הבירה", דקאי על ישראל שהם עם קרובו (ונמצאים בבירתו של מלך מלכי המלכים הקב"ה) – שהקב"ה מזמין לסעודה, דהיינו לימוד התורה וקיום המצות, שזוהי סעודתו והנאתו של איש ישראל; והקב"ה נותן בחירה הפשית, "אין אונס", ואדרבה, "לעשות כרצון איש ואיש".

וזה הי' העילוי דימי הפורים שאז "קיימו מה שקיבלו כבר", לא מתוך אונס אלא דוקא מתוך בחירתם החפשית.

This is also the deeper hint in the verse describing the feast that the king made "for all the people present in Shushan, the capital." It refers to the Jewish people, who are "His close nation," dwelling in the "capital" of the King of kings, G-d. G-d invites them to His feast—a metaphor for Torah study and mitzvah observance, which are the true "feast" and source of joy for a Jew. Crucially, G-d extends this invitation with complete freedom of choice: "there is no coercion," but rather, "to act according to each one's desire."

This highlights the greatness of Purim, when the Jewish people "reaffirmed what they had already accepted"—not out of coercion, but from their own free will.



Judaism enhances our individuality, inviting us to refine and elevate it in a unique relationship with G-d.

KEY POINTS

1. Achashverosh's feast featured a unique "no coercion" policy that suspended typical social norms and allowed guests complete freedom of choice.
2. When Rashi leaves an obvious question unaddressed, it means either the answer is self-evident, or he has already, in an earlier comment, laid the groundwork for understanding it.
3. When the *Megillah* uses the term "the king" (without specifying Achashverosh), it can be read as referring to G-d.
4. While the Jews accepted the Torah at Mount Sinai under the overwhelming influence of Divine revelation, during Purim they chose Judaism freely, without compulsion.

KEY POINTS

5. The inner meaning of Achashverosh's creating a space of true freedom at his feast is that it reflects G-d's granting the Jewish people genuine free choice during the Purim story.
6. The Jewish people's commitment to Judaism during Purim—arrived at without miracles or Divine revelation—was ultimately more special to G-d than their accepting it at Mount Sinai.
7. G-d deeply values our individual free choice. He wants us to embrace the Torah and *mitzvot*, but to do so out of authentic choice and desire rather than compulsion.

