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TRACT MEGILLA.

CHAPTER I.

REGULATIONS CONCERNING THE TIME WHEN THE BOOK OF ESTHER MUST BE READ ON THE RABBINICAL FEAST OF PURIM IN OPEN TOWNS AND WALLED CITIES, ETC.

MISHNA: The Megilla is read sometimes on the 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, or on the 15th of the month Adar, neither earlier nor later. Cities which, from the time of Joshua the son of Nun, were surrounded with walls, read it on the 15th. Villages and large open towns should read it on the 14th, and inhabitants of villages may read it in advance on the day of assembly. [1](#) How is this to be understood? When the 14th fell on Monday, inhabitants of villages and of large open towns used to read it on that day, and those of walled cities on the day following. When it fell on Tuesday or Wednesday, the inhabitants of villages used to read it in advance (the preceding Monday) on the day of assembly, those of large open towns on that day (the 14th), and those of walled towns on the morrow. When it fell on Thursday, inhabitants of villages and large open towns used to read it on that day, and of walled towns on the following day. If it fell on the eve of Sabbath, inhabitants of villages read it in advance on the preceding day of assembly, and those of large open towns and of walled towns on that day (14th). When it fell on Sabbath, inhabitants of villages and large open towns read it in advance on the preceding Thursday, the day of assembly; and of walled towns on the morrow (the Sunday). When it fell on Sunday, in villages they read it on the preceding day of assembly (Thursday), and in large open towns on that day (14th), and in walled cities on the morrow.

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GEMARA: The Megilla was read on the 11th day. Whence do we deduce this? Whence do we deduce this! (Is this, then, a biblical commandment, which you want to deduce from the passages of the Bible? This is only rabbinical), and as it will be explained further on, the sages made it easier for the inhabitants of villages, who usually came to the towns on Mondays and Thursdays, that they should read then the Book of Esther, and should have time to provide their brethren of the towns with water and with food? We meant to say so: let us see. The reading of the Megilla, the men of the Great Assembly have ordained. Now, at the first glance, if the men of the Great Assembly had ordained it should be on the 14th and 15th, have then the sages the power to abolish the ordinances of the Great Assembly? Have we not learned in a Mishna that a Beth Din is not able to abolish the ordinances of its colleagues unless they are greater than they in wisdom and in members? Therefore we must say that all the mentioned days were ordained by the Great Assembly. Where, then, is the hint in the Bible for it? Said R. Shamen bar Abba in the name of R. Johanan: It is written [Esther, ix. 31]: "To confirm these days of Purim in their times." In their *times*: this signifies that many times are to be ordained. But if so, say even the 16th and 17th? Nay, it is written [ibid. 27]: "So that no one should trespass it." That means, it must never be after the appointed time. R. Samuel bar Na'hmani, however, said: It is written

[ibid. 22]: "like those days whereon the Jews had rest from their enemies." And those "days" are plural, meaning two; "like the days" means to add also the 11th and the 12th. But perhaps it is the 12th and the 13th? Said R. Samuel 'bar Itz'hak: The 13th day was the time when all Israel in all places were assembled to take revenge on their enemies, and it is certain that such a day must not be added from the verse, because this day was the day of the main miracle; and therefore if you add something, it can be only the 11th and the 12th. But again, perhaps it is the 16th and 17th? That is already explained by the verse: "He shall not trespass." Said Rabba bar bar Hanah in the name of R. Johanan: This is only according to R. Aqiba, according to whom are many anonymous Mishnas; but the sages say that in our time, (when the messengers are no longer sent) and the people look to the reading of the Megilla as to a sign of the coming feast-day (of Passover), therefore it must be read only in its main time (14th). And so we have learned also in a Boraitha:

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[paragraph continues] R. Jehudah said: The old ordinance was only when the years were fixed (by the court in Palestine), and Israel dwelt on its own land; but in our time, when they look to make the feast only when the Megilla is read, it must be read only in its time. Did R. Jehudah say so? Did not we learn in another Boraitha that *R. Jehudah* said that the ordinance was only in those places where the people from the villages came to the towns on Mondays and Thursdays; but in the places where they do not come, it must be read only in its main time? From this we see that where they come, even in our time, they can read it not in its appointed time, and this contradicts his teaching above. This contradiction was made by R. Ashi, and he answered it: That one Boraitha is not according to R. Jehudah, but according to R. Jose his son.

"*Cities which, from the time of Joshua b. Nun,*" etc. How do we deduce this from the Book of Esther? Said Rabba: It is written [ibid. ix. 19]: "Therefore do the Jews of the villages that dwell in the unwalled towns," etc. Now, when the inhabitants of the unwalled towns read on the 14th, it is self-evident that the inhabitants of the walled towns read on the 15th. But perhaps the inhabitants of unwalled towns read on the 14th, but of walled towns do not read at all? Do not read at all! Are they not Israelites? And furthermore, it is written [ibid. 30]: "And he sent letters unto all the Jews, to the hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus," [1](#) and that means all Israel? But perhaps it means the inhabitants of open towns should read on the 14th only, and those of walled towns should read on both the 14th and 15th, as it is written [ibid. 21]: "To take it on themselves as a duty that they should celebrate the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same, in each and every year." If it would read, "the fourteenth *and* the fifteenth," it would be right as you said; but when it is written, "the fourteenth day," separately, and "the fifteenth," separately, that means that the inhabitants of open towns should celebrate on the fourteenth, and those of walled towns on the fifteenth. But this is only about the celebration, which means the eating and the drinking; but the reading of the Megilla, which is only a memorial, whence do we deduce that this is also different? It is written [ibid. 28]:

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[paragraph continues] "And these days are remembered and celebrated." And we compare the celebration to the remembering; as the celebration is different, so is the remembering.

But what is the reason of the Tana of our Mishna, who says "walled towns from the time of Joshua b. Nun"? He makes an analogy of expression: it is written here, "therefore the Jews of

the unwall'd towns"; and it is written [Deut. iii. 5], "besides the unwall'd towns." As thereby unwall'd towns are meant those from the time of Joshua, so also is it meant here.

Our Mishna will not be in accordance with R. Joshua b. Kor'ha of the following Boraitha: R. Joshua b. Kor'ha said: The inhabitants of towns surrounded with walls from the times of Ahasuerus should read on the 15th. What is his reason? It shall be as in Shushan? As in Shushan they read on the 15th, so all towns surrounded with a wall shall read on the 15th. But the inhabitants of Shushan itself act according to whom? It is certainly not in accordance with the sages, because it was not surrounded with a wall in the time of Joshua b. Nun? Said Rabba, and according to others Kdi: The case with Shushan is different, for there was the miracle, and they feasted on the 15th. R. Joshua b. Levi said: A large city, and its neighborhood, and all the places around that can be seen with it, must be considered like the large city itself. But how much distance is meant? Said R. Jeremiah, according to others R. Hyya bar Abba, as the distance from Hamtn to Tiberia, which was a mile. The same says again: The double letters in the Hebrew alphabet--Mem, Nun, Zadik, Pe, Kaph--the prophets have added. Is this possible? Is it not written [Lev. xxvii. 34]: "*These* are the commandments"; from which we infer *these* are the commandments, and no prophet has the power to make new ones from that time? And furthermore, did not R. Hisda say that the Mem (when it is the last letter of the word) and Samekh (which is round), which were chased through the tables of Moses, were held in only by a miracle? This is so, but it was not before known which letter must be in the middle of the word and which at the end; and the prophets ordained that the open one should be at the middle and the closed one final. ¹ But even that much had they then the right to do? Therefore we must say that it was forgotten and the prophets only restored them. The same

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authority says again: The Targum (translation) of the Pentateuch was made by Unkelas the Proselyte under the supervision of R. Eliezer and R. Joshua; the Targum of the Prophets--by Jonathan b. Uziel under the supervision of the three prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, Then the ground of Palestine trembled (as if shaken by an earthquake) four hundred Parsaoth square, and a heavenly voice was heard: Who are these who have revealed My Mystery to man? Then Jonathan b. Uziel arose and said: "I am the one who hath revealed Thy Mystery to man, but it is known unto Thee that not to my honor, nor in honor of the house of my father I did this, but for Thy glory, to prevent controversies in Israel." He intended to do the same with the Hagiographa, when a heavenly voice was heard: "Refrain from doing this." Why, so? Because in the Hagiographa the time of Messiah's arrival would be known if it should be translated (and this must be hidden).

Why at the translation of the Pentateuch did not the ground tremble, and at the translation of the Prophets it trembled? Because the Pentateuch is almost all explained; but in the Prophets there are many things not explained at all. As it is written [Zechariah, xii. 11]: "On that day will the lamentation be great in Jerusalem, like the lamentation at Hadad-rimman in the valley of Megiddon." And R. Joseph said, but for the translation of this verse, I would not know at all what it means. The translation is: "On this day will the mourning in Jerusalem be as it was over Ahab b. Amri, that was killed by Hadad-rimman b. Tabrimon in the city of Ramoth Gilead, and as they mourned over Joshia b. Aman, who was killed by Pharaoh Necho (the lame one) in the valley of Megiddon."

It is written [Dan. x. 7]: "And I, Daniel, saw alone this appearance, but the men that were with

me did not see the appearance; nevertheless a great terror fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves." Who were these men? Said R. Jeremiah, according to others R. Hyya b. Abba: They were Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. They were better than he, because they were prophets, and he, Daniel, was not a prophet. And he was better than they because he saw it, and they, did not see it. But if they did not see, why fell a terror upon them? Although they did not see literally, they saw it clairvoyantly. Said Rabbina: From this we may infer that whoso is terrified, although he does not himself see, he sees clairvoyantly.

We have learned in a Boraitha: The priests during their service,

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[paragraph continues] Levites from their balcony, and the Israelites standing around, all must leave their places to go and hear the reading of the Book of Esther. And so also said R. Jehudah in the name of Rabh. This the houses of learning took as their support when they stopped the learning of the Law, and went to hear the reading of the Megilla. They draw an *à fortiori* conclusion from the Temple service: as the Temple service, which was very vigorous, they stopped for the sake of the Megilla, the learning of the Law so much the more. But did not R. Samuel bar Unia say that the learning of the Law is greater than the daily sacrifices? It presents no difficulty; the learning of an individual is not greater than Temple service, but the learning of a congregation together is greater.

Rabha said: It is certain to me that of the Temple service and the reading of the Megilla the latter has the preference, as it is said above. Between the studying of the Law and the reading of the Megilla the latter has the preference, as did the houses of learning. Between the studying of the Law and the burying of a dead man who has no friends the latter has the preference. Between the Temple service and the burying of a dead man the latter has the preference. But what is doubtful to me is, if a man has to read the Megilla and to bury a man who has no friends, which has the preference? Shall we assume the Megilla has the preference, because it proclaims the miracle; or the burying has preference, for the honor of man? After he had considered, he himself decided that the burying has preference, as the Master said (Sabbath, p. 85): Great is the honor of man, which supersedes even a negative commandment of the Torah. The text says: R. Joshua b. Levi said that "a large city and its neighborhood," etc., are considered as the city itself. We have learned in a Boraitha, in addition to this: If it is in the neighborhood, even if it cannot be seen from a distance together with the city; and when it can be seen with the city, although it is not near the city. (This is explained, when the city is in a valley or on a mountain.)

R. Joshua b. Levi says again: A city where the inhabitants had resided before, and later it was surrounded with a wall, must be considered as a village. Why so? Because it is written [Lev. XXV. 29]: "And if a man sell a dwelling-house in a walled city." Whence we may infer that the city was walled before he dwelt in it, but not if he had dwelt in it and afterward it was walled. He says again: A city where there are not ten

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unemployed men 1 who devote all their time to the study of the Law must be considered as a village. What does he come to teach us? Did we not learn this in the following Mishna: What is called a great city? If there are ten unemployed men and less than this it is a village? His

teaching is needed to tell us that, even if it was a great city and men came thither from the whole world, if there are fewer than ten men unemployed there, it is considered as a village. The same says again: A large city that was destroyed, and afterward was rebuilt, must be considered as a large city. What is meant by destroying? Shall we assume it is meant that the walls were destroyed? Then if they were only rebuilt it is considered a large city, and not otherwise? Did we not learn in a Boraitha, R. Eliezer b. R. Jose said: It is written [ibid. 30]: "The house in the city which has a wall," from which we infer, which has had a wall previously, even though it has not now? Nay, what is meant by the expression "destroyed" is, that it has not now ten unemployed men (who learn the Law). R. Joshua b. Levi says again: It is obligatory for women to hear the reading of the Megilla, because they benefited also by the same miracle. He says again: If the Feast of Purim falls on Sabbath, it may be lectured about the duties of this day (Purim). Why only the Feast of Esther? Is this not a rule for all festivals? Did we not learn in a Boraitha: Moses ordained that the Israelites should lecture on the duties of each day: the Halakthoth of Passover on Passover, those of Pentecost on Pentecost, and those of Tabernacles on the Feast of Tabernacles? One might say, we shall take a precautionary measure not to lecture about the Megilla, lest one carry it four ells in public ground. As Rabha explains further on, he comes to teach us that such a precautionary measure is not taken about lecturing. The same says again: So also said R. Helbu in the name of Ulla: One is obliged to read the Megilla in the evening, and to repeat it in the daytime, as it is written [Ps. xxx. 13]: "To the end that my glorious soul may sing praise to thee, and never be silent. O Lord my God! forever will I give thanks unto thee." (As this psalm in the Pesiqtha is interpreted; to refer to Mordecai and Esther, he explains "may sing praise to thee" means to read the Megilla in the night, and "never be silent" means to read it in the day.)

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"Inhabitants of villages shall read," etc. R. Hanina said: The sages made it easier for the inhabitants of villages to read on the days of assembly, because they usually supply with water and food the inhabitants of towns on those days.

"How is to be understood? 'If it falls on Monday,'" etc. Why, in the first part of the Mishna, does it begin with the order of the days of the month and when it comes to explain it, it begins with the order of the days of the week? (It does not say "read on the 15th," but "on the morrow.") Because confusion between the numbers of the days in the month and in the week would have arisen, therefore it begins with the dates of the month alone.

"If it fell on the eve of Sabbath," etc. According to whom is this Mishna? According to Rabbi, or according to R. Jose? Which Rabbi and R. Jose? Of the following Boraitha: If it falls on the eve of Sabbath, villages and large open cities used to read it on the day of assembly, and inhabitants of walled towns read it on that same day. Said Rabbi: *I* say that the large open towns must not have the appointed time postponed, and must be equal to walled towns, and both read the same day. And which R. Jose? From the following Tosephta: If it falls on the eve of Sabbath, the inhabitants of walled towns and villages read on the day of assembly, and the large open cities read on the appointed day. R. Jose, however, said: The inhabitants of walled towns do not read in advance of those of the large cities, but both read on the appointed day. But does Rabbi hold that for the inhabitants of large cities we do not change for the day of assembly? Did we not learn in another Boraitha: If the Feast of Purim falls on Sabbath, the inhabitants of villages read in advance on the previous assembly day, and the inhabitants of large open cities read on the eve of Sabbath, and those of walled towns on the day following? As the appointed day has already

been changed for the inhabitants of large cities for the previous day, (I say) it shall be fixed on a day before, which is the assembly day? What comparison is this? In case of the above Boraitha the right-time was on Sabbath, and as they had it changed it was set two days before; but in the previous Boraitha the right-time was the eve of Sabbath, why should it be changed? According to whom is what R. Helbu said in the name of R. Huna, as follows: If the Feast of Purim fall on Sabbath all is postponed for the day of assembly (Thursday). [What is meant by "all"? Is it possible, "all"? Do not the inhabitants

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of a walled town read it on the Sabbath itself? It means, for those for whom it has to be postponed, it shall be set on the assembly day.] This will be according to Rabbi.

We see, however, that all agree that the Megilla must not be read on the Sabbath. Why so? Said Rabha: All are obliged to read the Megilla, but not all are able to read it; and this is a precautionary measure, lest one take the Megilla in his hand and go with it to an expert to learn to read it, and at the same time he will carry four ells in public ground. (Therefore it must not be read on Sabbath at all.) And the same is the reason why we do not blow the cornet on the New Year's day when it falls on Sabbath, and do not use the Lulab on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles when it falls on Sabbath. R. Jose said: Here is another reason: It is because the poor hope only for the day when the Megilla is read to receive gifts, a thing which cannot be done on Sabbath. We have learned the same also in the following Boraitha: Because it was said that the inhabitants of villages read in advance on the day of assembly, the charity that must be given on that feast shall be collected and distributed on the same day, because the poor hope only for the day when the Megilla is read. The enjoyment of eating and drinking, however, must be only on the appointed time.

Rabh said: If the Megilla is read in the right-time, it may be read even by an individual; but if not on the right-time, then only when ten men are together. R. Assi, however, said: In both instances it must be read only when ten men are together. It happened once that Rabh had not ten men: he took the trouble to assemble ten men because of R. Assi's decision.

MISHNA: What must be considered as a large town? Any town in which there are ten *Batlonim*. Should there be less than that number, it is legally considered a village. It was said with respect to these, that "it may be done sooner, but not later"; but the day of the delivery of wood for the priests, the fast on the 9th of Abh, the festive sacrifices, and the day of assembly (to fast and pray for rain) are to be postponed to a later day, but must not be kept before their proper time.

Although it was said in respect to the reading of the Megilla that it may be done earlier but not later, it is yet permitted on these days to pronounce funeral orations and to fast, also to give the gifts to the poor. Said R. Jehudah: When is it allowed to read the Megilla before its proper time? In places where it is customary for the country people to assemble in the towns on

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Mondays and Thursdays; but where that does not take place, the Megilla may only be read on its proper day.

GEMARA: We have learned in a Boraitha: By the ten *Batlonim* are meant those who are always in the house of prayer (and must be supported by the congregation, so that at the prayer should never be less than ten men, as is explained in Tract Berachoth).

"*It may be done sooner, but not later.*" Why so? Said Samuel: Because in the Book of Esther it was said, "shall not trespass."

"*Delivery of wood for the priests, the 9th of Abh,*" etc. The 9th of Abh shall not be made sooner, because calamities are not lamented in advance; and concerning the festive sacrifice and the assembly, it cannot be done earlier, because that duty has not arrived yet. And a Boraitha taught: "The festive sacrifice, and all the time appointed for it (if it was not brought in its right time), can be postponed, but not made earlier." It is right, the festive sacrifice itself; if the festival falls on Sabbath, we postpone it till after Sabbath. But what is meant by "its time shall be postponed"? Said R. Ushia: The Boraitha meant to say thus: The feast-offering, when the festival falls on Sabbath, and the burnt-offering which must be brought when the pilgrims visit Jerusalem [see Deut. xvi. 16, 17], even when the festival did not fall on Sabbath, the offering had to be postponed for the time during the seven days after it. And this is according only to Beth Shammai (Betzah, Chap. II., Mishna 3). Rabha, however, said: What is meant by "the time of the feast-offering may be postponed"? Only for the seven days it can be postponed, not later.

R. Eleazar said in the name of R. Hanina: Rabbi used to set out a plant on Purim, and washed himself in the market of Ziporith (publicly) on the 17th day of Tamuz (which is a fast-day), and intended to abolish the fast of the 9th of Abh. But the sages did not agree with him. Said to him R. Abba bar Zabda: Rabbi, this was not so, for it once happened when the 9th of Abh fell on Sabbath, and it was postponed to Sunday, and Rabbi declared: When it has been postponed, it shall not be kept at all. And the sages did not agree with him. And the former then read the verse [in Ecc. iv. 9]: "Two are better than one." (Rashi explains this, that he means to say the second statement was better than the first; but it seems to us the explanation is different. He means to say that if so, both happened twice, and

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Rabbi did not intend to abolish the 9th of Abh, but *did* abolish.)

Hezekiah used to read the Megilla in Tiberia both days--the 14th and the 15th--because it was doubtful to him whether Tiberia had been surrounded with a wall from the time of Joshua b. Nun. But how can this be doubtful? Is it not written [Josh. xix. 35]: "And the fortified cities Ziddim, Zer and Chammath, Rakkath and Kinereth"? And we have a tradition that Rakkath is Tiberia. It was doubtful to him, because on one side the sea was its wall. If so, why is it doubtful? The sea is not a wall, and we have learned in a Boraitha that what is written [Lev. xxv. 30], "the city that has a wall," means a wall, but not if the houses are built around like a wall--and that excludes Tiberia where the sea is the wall? He was not doubtful in respect to the law about houses in a walled town, but in respect to the Megilla, because the expression in the Megilla is "open towns," and he doubted whether the city, having the sea as a wall, is called open or not.

R. Asi used to read the Megilla in the city of Hutzl also on both days, because he doubted whether it was surrounded in the time of Joshua with a wall or not. According to others, R. Asi

said: This Hutzl, which was in the tribe of Benjamin, I am certain was walled in the time of Joshua b. Nun.

R. Johanan said: When I was a child I said a thing, and afterward the elders were asked, and it was found that I was right; namely, Hammath, that is, Tiberia. And why is it called in the Bible Hammath? Because of the hot springs that are in Tiberia. 1 Rakkath is Ziporith, but why is it called in the Bible Rakkath? Because it is situated on the summit of a mountain, as the banks of a river are more elevated than the river. 2 Kinereth, that is, Genoser; but why is it called Kinereth? Because the fruit of this city is agreeable as the sound of a violin. 3 Said Rabha: Is it possible a man exists who says that Rakkath is not Tiberia? It is known to us that if a great man dies here in Babylon, they in Tiberia, in the funeral oration, say thus: The man was great in Sheshakh (Babylon,--Rashi explains this because Sheshah is, by the alphabet of Athbash, Babel) and his name has reached Rakkath. And if the coffin is brought thither, they say in the funeral oration so: Ye lovers of Israel, inhabitants

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of Rakkath, go and receive the man who was killed in the valley of Babylon. And when R. Zera died, in the lamentation was mentioned Rakkath (see Moed Katan, p. 44.) Therefore said Rabha: Hammath means Hammei-Grar, Rakkath is Tiberia, Kinereth is Genoser. And why is it called Rakkath? Because even the common men there are full of religious merits as a pomegranate. 1

R. Jose bar Hanina said: It is written [Zechariah, ix. 7]: "And I will remove their blood out of their mouth, and their abominations from between their teeth; and their land also shall be left for our God." I will remove their blood out of their mouth,--that means, their *Beth Bamia*; 2 "and their abominations from between their teeth"--that is, their *Beth Galia*; 2 "and the land also will be left to our God" means, the houses of prayer and of learning which are in Edom (meaning Rome); "and it shall be as a prince's dwelling in Judah, and Ekron shall be like Jebusi"--that means the theatres and circuses which were in Edom, but in the future the princes of Judah will teach the Torah publicly in them. R. Itz'hak said: Leshem is Pamias, Ekron is Cesaria--why is it called the daughter of Edom? Because it was the metropolis of kings. Some said because there kings were reared, and according to others because from the inhabitants of that city were made kings. Of Cesaria and Jerusalem--if one will say to thee, Both are destroyed, thou shalt not believe; if one will say, Both are in their splendor, do not believe; but if one will say, Cesaria was destroyed and Jerusalem is in its glory, or *vice versa*, you may believe, as it is written [in Ezek. xxvi. 2]: "I shall be made full, now she is in ruins"--that means, if one is full the other is destroyed, and if one is destroyed the other is full. R. Na'hman bar Itz'hak says, we infer it from the following passage [Gen. xxv. 23]: "one people shall be stronger than the other" (Israel and Edom, *i.e.*, Rome). And R. Itz'hak said: It is written [Is. xxvi. 10]: "If favor be shown to the wicked, he will not learn righteousness." Isaac our father said before the Holy One, blessed be He: Creator of the Universe! let Esau be favored. And He said: "He is wicked." Said Isaac again: "It is because he has not learned righteousness." And the Lord said again: "(It is known before me that even) in the land of

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uprightness he will deal unjustly." Rejoined Isaac: "If it is so, (then) he shall not regard the majesty of the Lord." R. Itz'hak says again: It is written [Ps. cxl. 9]: "Grant not, O Lord, the

longings of the wicked: suffer not his wicked device to succeed: lest they exalt themselves. Selah." Said Jacob before the Holy One, blessed be He: Creator of the Universe! do not grant to Esau the wicked longing of his heart; "his wicked device to succeed," meaning Germamia of Edom, for if they would go out they would destroy the whole world. He says again: If one will say to you: I have exerted myself, and not found, do not believe him; if one will say, I have not exerted myself, and have found, do not believe him. But if he will say, I have exerted myself, and have found, then believe him. This is all in the studying of the Law, but in business it is a matter of fortune sent from Heaven. And even in studying the Law you must not believe in his sagacity; but if he says what he has learned he has retained without much trouble, you may believe him, because this can be a help from Heaven. He says again: If you have seen a wicked man on whom fortune smiles, do not provoke him, as it is written [Ps. xxxvii. 7]: "Do not fret thyself because of the evil-doers"; so much the more when in his ways he is successful, as it is written [ibid. x. 5]: "Prosperous are his ways at all times." And not only this, but he always wins in a lawsuit, as it is written [ibid., ibid.]: "Far in the height remain thy punishments from him;" and not this only, but he sees vengeance on his enemies, as it is written [ibid.]: "All his assailants, he puffeth at them." This is not so? Did not R. Johanan say in the name of R. Simeon b. Yochi, that one may provoke the wicked in this world? As it is written [Prov. xxviii. 4]: "They that forsake the law praise the wicked; but such as observe the law contend with them." And we have learned also in a Boraitha: R. Dusthai bar Mathun said: A man may provoke the wicked in this world? [And lest one say: "Do not fret thyself because of the evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity," this can be said only about him whose heart trembles. But the interpretation of this passage is thus: "Do not strive to be like the wicked, neither be thou envious to be like the workers of iniquity," as it is written [Prov. xxiii. 17]: "Let not thy heart be envious against sinners."] (Hence we see that the wicked may be provoked?) It presents no difficulty, for if it is in his own interest he shall not do so; but if in heavenly things, he may. And if you like, I can say: Both are

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in his own interest; yet when he is a really upright man he may do so, but when he is not really upright he shall not do so. As R. Huna said: It is written [Habakkuk, i. 13]: "Wherefore wilt thou look upon those that deal treacherously; and be silent when the wicked swalloweth up him that is more righteous than he?" From this we may infer that the wicked swallows him who is more righteous than he, but him who is really upright he cannot swallow. And if you wish, I can say: with him whom fortune favors it is different.

MISHNA: If the Megilla had been read in the first Adar, and the year declared (by the Sanhedrin) to be intercalary, it must be again read in the second Adar. There is no difference between the first Adar and second, but in the reading of the Megilla and the gifts to the poor.

GEMARA: The Mishna says that the two Adars do not differ; that is to say, in the order of the portions that must be read from the Bible on the Sabbaths of the four weeks of Adar, the two Adars are equal. According to whom is the Mishna?

Not according to the first Tana, and not according to R. Eliezer b. R. Jose, and not according to R. Simeon b. Gamaliel of the following Boraitha: If they have read only the Megilla in the first Adar, and the year becomes intercalary, it must be read again in the second Adar, because all the duties that are obligatory in the second Adar are so also on the first Adar, except the reading of the Megilla. R. Eliezer b. R. Jose said: It must not be read in the second Adar, because all the

duties customary in the second are so also in the first. R. Simeon b. Gamaliel in the name of R. Jose said: It must be read also in the second Adar, because all the duties obligatory in the second must not be done in the first. And we asked there, is R. Simeon b. Gamaliel not saying the same as the first Tana? And R. Papa answered: The order of the portions is different between them. Hence our Mishna is not in accordance with the first Tana, because of the gifts to the poor, which according to the Tana of the Boraitha must be given in the first Adar also; and not in accordance with R. Eliezer, who says the Megilla must not be repeated at all in the second Adar; and not in accordance with R. Simeon b. Gamaliel, as according to him there is a difference in the order of the portions (as R. Papa explained). The Mishna is in accordance with R. Simeon b. Gamaliel, but is not completed, and must read thus: There is no difference between the fourteenth day of the first Adar and the fourteenth day of

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the second Adar, except in the reading of the Megilla and gifts to the poor. But the next day, in respect to mourning and fasting, they are equal. Concerning the order of the portions, the Mishna does not speak about it. Said R. Hyya bar Abin in the name of R. Johanan: The Halakha prevails according to what Rabban Simeon b. Gamaliel said in the name of R. Jose. Said R. Tabi: The reason why R. Simeon b. Gamaliel declares so is, that one redemption (from Haman) should be near to another redemption (from Egypt, Passover). R. Elazar said: The reason of R. Simeon b. Gamaliel is, because it is written in Esther [ix. 29]: "To confirm this letter of Purim the second time." "The second" means in the second Adar.

R. Samuel bar Jehudah said: Esther sent to the sages the request: "Establish me for the later generations." And they answered: "You want to excite the envy of other nations against us." She rejoined: "My history is already written in the chronicle of the kings of Media and Persia." Rabh and R. Hanina, R. Johanan and R. Habiba (see Sukka, page 5), taught: Esther sent to the sages: "Write about me for later generations." And they answered to her: It is written [Prov. xxii. 20]: "Have I not written for thee thrice?" 1 (thrice means, three times shall be mentioned in the Torah the war with Amalek--in Exodus, in Deuteronomy, and in I. Samuel): only thrice, and not four times. Finally, they found a passage in the Pentateuch [Ex. xvii. 14]: "Write this for a memorial in the book"; and they interpreted the passage thus: "Write this"--what is written here and in Deuteronomy; "for a memorial"--*i.e.*, what is written in the Prophets (Samuel); "in the book"--*i.e.*, what is written in the Book of Esther. We have learned in a Boraitha: R. Eliezer said: The Book of Esther was dictated by the Holy Spirit, as it is written [Esther, v. 16]: "And Haman said in his heart"; and if it were not by the Holy Spirit, how could we know what he said in his heart? R. Aqiba said: "Esther" was dictated by the Holy Spirit because it is written [ibid. ii. 15]: "And Esther found favor in the eyes of all those that beheld her" (this also could not be known, but for the Holy Spirit). R. Meir said: "Esther" was dictated by the Holy Spirit, because it is written [ibid. 22]: "And the thing became known to Mordecai" (and who told him? We must say that it

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was the Holy Spirit). R. Jose b. Durmaskes said: From this passage [ix. 10]: "But to the spoil did they not stretch forth their hands" (and it could not be known what was done in the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces by everyone). Said Samuel: If I had been there, I would have said a thing better than all these sayings: It is written [ibid., ibid. 27]: "The Jews confirmed it as a duty, and took it upon themselves." That means, they confirmed in Heaven what they took upon themselves below. Said Rabha: To all the above sayings I have objections, except to Samuel, to

whom it cannot be objected. What R. Eliezer said--that was common sense. Haman knew there was not a man in the king's court that was so respected as he himself, and it is self-evident that thus he thought. What R. Aqiba said--perhaps it was as R. Elazar explains farther on, that every nation thought Esther was of its race; and what R. Meir said--perhaps it was as R. Hyya bar Abbi will explain farther on, that Mordecai understood the language of Righthau and Theres; and what R. Jose b. Durmaskes said--perhaps they may have sent messengers to the king; but to what Samuel said there is no objection. Said Rabbina: That is as people say, it is better to have one pungent pepper-grain than a full basket of cucumbers. R. Joseph said: From this passage [ix. 28]: "And these days of Purim will not pass away" (and how can this be known? Only from the Holy Spirit). And R. Na'hman b. Itz'hak said (from the end of the verse): "Nor will their memorial cease from their seed."

"*Gifts to the poor.*" R. Joseph taught: It is written [ix. 22]: "Sending portions one to another." "Portions" in plural--two portions should be sent to one man; "and gifts to the needy"--needy is in plural: that means, no less than two portions to two men. R. Jehudah the Second 1 sent to R. Oshyia a leg of a third-born calf and a pitcher of wine, and the latter sent to him the message: "The Master has confirmed both duties to send portions one to another; and to give gifts to the needy." Rabha sent to Mari bar Mar through Abayi a bag of dates and a goblet full of flour of dried wheat. Said Abayi to him: Now Mari will say: When a countryman becomes a king, he is still unable to remove the basket from his shoulder. And it is the same with you: now you are the Head of the College, and send

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to him commonplace articles. R. Mari bar Mar returned to Rabha through Abayi a pouch (*tasca*, Lat.) of ginger and a goblet full of long pepper. Said Abayi: Now the Master will say: I had sent him sweets, and he has sent to me pungent things. Said Abayi again: When I went out from the house of my Master, I was sated. When I arrived there, they furnished the table with sixty diverse dishes, and they ate all; and the last dishes were called "roast of Kedar," and it was so good that I wanted to eat up the dish with it. And this is what people say: "The poor does not know even when he is hungry." Or, as people say: "The stomach is wide enough for sweet things."

Abayi bar Abbin and R. Hanina bar Abbin used to change their meals on Purim. Said Rabha: A man is obliged to intoxicate himself on Purim, till he cannot distinguish between "cursed be Haman" and "blessed be Mordecai." Rabha said again: If one has eaten the festive meal in the night, he has not fulfilled his duty, because it is written, "*days* of entertainment and joy."

R. Ashi was sitting in the presence of R. Kahana. It became dark, and the rabbis had not yet come. Said R. Kahana to him: Why have not the rabbis come yet? And he answered him: Perhaps they are engaged with the festive meal? And he rejoined: Could they not have the festive meal in the evening? Said R. Ashi: Has the Master not heard what Rabha said, that if one has eaten the meal of Purim in the night, he has not fulfilled his duty. And he rejoined: Did Rabha indeed say so? And he answered: Yea. And he learned it from him forty times, and afterward it was as if he had put it into his pocket.

MISHNA: There is no difference between Sabbath and festivals, except in the preparation of food. There is no difference between the Sabbath and the Day of Atonement, excepting that those who knowingly and wilfully profane the Sabbath are punished by man, while those who

wilfully profane the Day of Atonement are punished with *Karoth* (by Heaven).

There is no difference between one who by a vow has interdicted himself from receiving a benefit from another man and one whose vow was confined to the interdiction of accepting any food from another, except that it is not lawful for the first to set his foot in the house (or property) of the other and to borrow vessels (of the other) which are not used for the preparation of food, There is no difference between vows and voluntary offerings,

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except that in the case of the first-mentioned the person who thus vows is liable for the risk, but he is not liable for the last-mentioned.

GEMARA: "*Except in the preparation of food.*" But in the preparations for the preparing of food, they are equal.

"*He is punished with Karoth.*" But in paying of damages, both are equal. And the Mishna is in accordance with R. Nehunia b. Hakana of the following Boraitha: He decided that the Day of Atonement is equal to Sabbath with regard to damages: as on Sabbath, because it is a capital punishment, no damages are to be paid, so on the Day of Atonement, as the punishment is Karoth, he is exempt from damages.

"*Vessels which are not used,*" etc. But in regard to vessels which are used for the preparation of food, they are equal.

"*He is not liable for the last-mentioned.*" But with regard to the commandment, "Thou shalt not delay," they are equal. (This is explained in Tract Rosh Hashana, page 5.)

MISHNA: There is no difference between a person laboring under an involuntary emission of semen who has experienced it twice (on the same day, or on the two following days) and one who has experienced it thrice (in the same time, or within three days), excepting that the last-mentioned must bring a sacrifice. There is no difference between a leprous person who has only been shut up and one whom the priest has declared as leprous, excepting that the latter must go with rent clothes, and suffer the hair of his head to grow wild. There is no difference between the leper declared clean after being shut up and one who has been cured of that disease, excepting that the latter must be shaved, and bring offerings of birds.

There is no difference between the Holy Books and Thephilin and Mezuzoth, except that the first-mentioned may be written in any language, but the latter in Assyrian characters only. Rabban Simeon b. Gamaliel says: The permission to write the Holy Books in another language was limited to the Greek language only.

There is no difference between a high-priest anointed with the sacred oil and one whose dignity was marked by additional sacerdotal vestments only, except the bull which the first-mentioned is to offer, in case he gave a wrong decision which led to a transgression of a precept. There is no difference between an officiating high-priest and his late substitute, except the bull offered on the Day of Atonement, and the

tenth of the ephah of flour(which the real high-priest alone might offer).

There is no difference between a large high place 1 and a small one, except the Paschal offering. This is the rule: All offerings which are brought in consequence of vows, and all peace-offerings, may be offered on a small high place, but not sacrifices of another kind.

There was no, difference between the Tabernacle of Shiloh and the Temple of Jerusalem, except that at the former place it was lawful to eat of sacrifices having a minor degree of holiness, and of the second tithe, in any place from whence Shiloh might be seen; but in Jerusalem it was lawful to eat these within the walls only. In both places, however, sacrifices which were most holy might be only eaten within the hangings (of the court of the sanctuary). The holiness of Shiloh had subsequently a period in which it became lawful (to offer sacrifices elsewhere), but the holiness of Jerusalem has no such period.

GEMARA: "*Excepting that the last-mentioned must bring a sacrifice.*" But in respect to their lying, sitting, and the seven days which they have to wait till it is allowed to take a legal bath, both are equal (all this will be explained in Tract Zabim).

"*There is no difference between a leprous person,*" etc. But in regard to sending him away outside of the assembly and in respect to defilement they are both equal (as will be explained in Tract Negaim).

"*There is no difference between the Holy Books,*" etc. But to sew it with dried veins of a clean animal and to make unclean the hand (see Appendix, Sabbath) both are equal.

"*May be written in any language.*" There is a contradiction to the following Boraitha: If one wrote a Targum instead of portions of the Holy Book (in the original); or, *vice versa*, if he wrote the translation in characters of the original, and also if he wrote it not in Assyrian but ancient Hebrew (square) characters, it is not holy to make unclean the hand, until it should be written in Assyrian characters, in a book and with ink (and there it has been said the *Holy Books* can be written in all languages). It presents no difficulty: the Boraitha meant, not Holy Books, but the Thephilin and Mezuzoth, and the Mishna means Scripture. What is the reason that Thephilin and Mezuzoth if written in

another tongue are not holy? Because it is written [Deut. vi. 8]: "*They shall be as frontlets between thy eyes.*" They shall be as originally.

What is meant, if the Targum was written in the original characters? If in the Torah, it is right. The words "Yegar Sahadutha" [Gen. xxxi. 47] are Aramaic; but what Aramaic words are in the Thephilin? Therefore we must answer the [contradiction](#) thus: The Boraitha refers to the Book of Esther. Why must it not be written in other languages? Because it is written [Esther, viii. 9]: "According to their writing, and according to their language." But what Aramaic words are in the Book of Esther? Said R. Papa [in Chapter I., verse 20], "The king's *decree*" (Pithgam), which

is not a Hebrew word, but Aramaic. R. Na'hman bar Itz'hak said [ibid., ibid.]: The last word, "will show *respect*" (Yekar), is not Hebrew. R. Ashi, however, said: That the Boraitha means, not the Holy Scrolls (Pentateuch), but the Prophets and Hagiographa. And this is in accordance with R. Jehudah of the following Boraitha: Thephilin and Mezuzoth must be written only in Assyrian characters; and our sages have not allowed they shall be written in any language, only in Greek. And in addition to this Boraitha it is stated: Said R. Jehudah: The sages allowed to write in Greek only the Pentateuch, but not anything else. And this was also allowed only because of what occurred with Ptolemy the king, as follows: It happened to Ptolemy the king that he took seventy-two elders from Jerusalem, and placed them in seventy-two separate chambers, and did not inform them to what purpose he had brought them. And afterward he entered to each of them, and said to them: Translate me the Torah of Moses from memory. And the Holy One, blessed be He, sent into the heart of each of them a counsel, and they all agreed to have one mind, and changed as follows: Instead of "In the beginning God created the world," they wrote, "God created the world in the beginning"; instead of Gen. i. 26 they wrote, "I will make a man in an image"; instead of Gen. ii. 2 they wrote, "And God finished on the sixth day, and rested on the seventh day"; instead of Gen. v. 2 they wrote, "created *him*"; instead of Gen. xi. 7 they wrote, "Let *me* go down"; [xviii. 12]: "And Sarah laughed among her relatives"; instead of xlix. 6, "In their anger they slew an ox, and their self-will lamed a fattened ox." And instead of Ex. iv. 20, "Set them on a porter (man-carrier)"; instead of ibid. xii. 40, "Dwelt in Egypt and in *other lands*"; and ibid. xxiv. as ibid.,

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[paragraph continues] "Against the *respectable* men of Israel." Instead of Num. xvi. 15, "Not one precious thing I took away"; and instead of Deut. iv. 19 they wrote, "assigned to light for all nations"; instead of ibid. xvii. 3, "which I have not commanded to worship"; and instead of Lev. xi. 6, "the hare," which is expressed in the Bible "Arnebeth," as Ptolemy's wife was named so they wrote, "and the beast that has small feet."

"*Rabban Simeon b. Gamaliel says,*" etc. Said R. Abahu in the name of R. Johanan: The Halakha prevails according to R. Simeon b. Gamaliel. And he says again: What is the reason of R. Simeon b. Gamaliel? Because it is written [Gen. ix. 27]: "May God enlarge the boundaries of Japheth, and may he dwell in the tents of Shem." That means to say, the most beautiful thing which Japheth has--that is, the Greek language--shall dwell in the tents of Shem.

"*There is no difference between a high-priest,*" etc. But in respect to the bullock of the Day of Atonement, and the tenth of an ephah, which the high-priest must bring, both are equal.

"*There is no difference between Shiloh and Jerusalem.*" Said R. Itz'hak: I have heard that one may sacrifice in the Temple of Honin in Egypt, even at this time. He holds that the Temple of Honin is not a temple for idolatry, but for God, and also that the sanctitude of Jerusalem was only while the Temple existed, but is not so for the future, since its destruction. As it is written [Deut. xii. 9]: "For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance." "To the rest," *i.e.*, the Tabernacle of Shiloh; "to the inheritance," *i.e.*, the Temple of Jerusalem: and we see that the Tabernacle of Shiloh is compared to the Temple of Jerusalem, as Shiloh, after the Tabernacle was destroyed, ceased to be holy, and it was lawful to sacrifice elsewhere, the same was with Jerusalem. The sages then said to R. Itz'hak: Do you say so? And he answered: No. Said Rabha: I swear by God that he has said so, and I have learned it from him. But what is the reason that he himself receded from this? Because R. Mari objected to this, from a Boraitha which states that

the sanctitude of Shiloh was gone after the Tabernacle was destroyed, but of Jerusalem the sanctitude was not gone even after the Temple's destruction.

It is written: "And it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus." R. Levi, according to others R. Jonathan, said: This is a tradition among us from our ancestors--the men of the Great Assembly--that wherever it is written •••• (it came to pass),

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was some disaster. Here there was Haman. In Ruth: "And it came to pass in the days of the judges." There was hunger. Genesis, vi. 1: "And it came to pass when men began to multiply," and soon after is written: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great"; [ibid. xi. 2]: "And it came to pass as they journeyed toward the east." And there was the dispersion. And ibid. xiv. 1. "And it came to pass in the days of Amrophel." There was a war. In Joshua, v. 13: "It came to pass when Joshua was by Jericho," it is written he saw a man with a drawn sword in his hand; ibid. vi. 27: "And the Lord *was* with Joshua" (the Hebrew expression is the same); and soon it is written: "And the children of Israel committed a trespass"; I Samuel: "There *was* a certain man"; and afterward it is written: "Hannah he loved, but the Lord had shut her womb." Ibid. viii. 1: "It came to pass when Samuel was old." His sons walked not in his way. Ibid. xviii. 14: "And David *was* successful in all his ways," and soon comes: "Saul was in dread of him." II Samuel, vii. 1: "And it came to pass when the king dwelt in his house." And he was not allowed to build the Temple. But is it not written [Gen. xxix. 16]: "When Jacob saw Rachel," and in Genesis [i. 5]: "And it was evening, and it was morning, the first day"--and so in many other instances, and no disaster happened? Wherever it is said, "it came to pass," there may or may not be a calamity; but whenever it is said, "and it came to pass in the days," there surely happened a misfortune. There are five expressions, "it came to pass in the days"; viz., in the days of Ahasuerus, the judges, Amrophel, Ahaz [Is. vii.], and Yoiakim [Jerem. i.], and in all instances there were troubles.

R. Levi says again: We have a tradition from our ancestors that Amuz and Amaziah were brothers. What does he come to teach us? It is similar to what R. Samuel b. Nahmani said in the name of R. Jonathan: A bride who is chaste in the house of her husband's parents deserves that kings and prophets should descend from her, and this we infer from Tamar, as it is written [Gen. xxxviii. 15]: "And Judah saw her and thought her to be a harlot, because she had covered her face." Because she had covered her face he took her for a harlot? That means, she had covered her face when she had been in his house, so that he did not know her. Therefore she was rewarded that from her descended kings and prophets--kings from David; and prophets, as R. Levi said above. Amuz

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and Amaziah were brothers, and Isaiah the son of Amuz was a prophet.

R. Jonathan, when he came to lecture about the Book of Esther, began with this passage [Is. xiv. 22]: "I will rise up against them," etc., "and I will cut from Babylon name and remnant, and son and grandson, saith the Lord." Name, *i.e.*, they will not have their own writing; "remnant," they will not have their own language; "son," they will not have any kingdom; "grandchild," that means Vashti.

R. Simeon b. Nahmani, when he came to lecture, began his lecture with the passage [Is. lv. 13]: "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the nettle shall come up the myrtle." "Instead of the thorn," *i.e.*, instead of Haman the wicked, who made himself an idol, as it is written [ibid. vii. 19]. "All thorn-hedges"; "shall come up the fir-tree," *i.e.*, Mordecai, who was the essence to all the spices, as it is written [Ex. xxx. 23]: "And thou, take unto thyself principal spices, of pure myrrh"--this is translated in the Aramaic Mor-decai; "instead of the nettle," *i.e.*, Vashti the wicked, who was granddaughter of Nebuchadnezzar the wicked, who had burnt the house of God, shall rise Esther the upright, who was called Hadassa (Myrtle), as it is written: "And he had brought up Hadassah--that is, Esther" [Esther, ii. 7]; "And it shall be unto the Lord for a name," *i.e.*, the reading of the Megilla; "for a sign of everlasting that shall not be cut off," *i.e.*, the Days of Purim.

R. Joshua b. Levi began his lecture from this passage [Deut. xxviii. 63]: "And it shall come to pass that as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you, so will the Lord rejoice over you to bring you to nought, and to destroy you." Let us see. Does the, Holy One, blessed be He, rejoice when the wicked are in misfortune? It is written [II Chron. xx. 21]: "As they went out before the armed array, and said: Give thanks unto the Lord. for unto everlasting endureth his kindness." Said R. Johanan: Why is it not here said, as usually, "for He is good"? Because the Holy One, blessed be He, rejoices not at the misfortunes of the wicked. And R. Johanan said again: It is written [Ex. xiv. 20]: "And the one came not unto the other all the night." That means, the angels of heaven wanted to sing the usual song, and the Holy One, blessed be He, said to them: My creatures are drowning in the sea, and you want to sing songs! Said R. Elazar: He Himself does not rejoice, but He makes others rejoice. And it seems to be

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so, because it is not written: "As *he* rejoiced," etc., "so will he rejoice" (others). [1](#)

R. Abba bar Kahana began his lecture with this passage [Ecc. ii. 26]: "For to a man who is good in His presence He giveth wisdom and knowledge and joy"--this means Mordecai the Upright; "but to the sinner he giveth employment to gather up and to bring together"--that means Haman; "that he may give it to him that is good before God," *i.e.*, Mordecai and Esther, as it is written afterward [Esther, viii. 2]: "And Esther appointed Mordecai over the house of Haman."

Rabba bar Upbron began his lecture with the following passage [Jerem. xlix. 38]: "And I will set up my throne in Elam, and I will destroy thence kings and princes." By kings is meant Vashti, and by princes Haman and his ten sons.

And R. Dimi b. Itz'hak begins to lecture from this passage [Ezra, ix. 9]: "For we are bondmen; yet in our bondage hath our God not forsaken us, but hath extended unto us kindness before the kings of Persia." And that was in the time of Mordecai.

R. Hanina bar Papa begins his lecture from this passage [Ps. lxvi. 12]: "Thou hast caused men to ride on our heads: we entered into fire and into water." "Into fire," in the time of Nebuchadnezzar; "into water," in the time of Pharaoh. "But thou broughtest us to the enjoyment of overflowing plenty." That was in the time of Haman.

R. Johanan began his lecture from this passage [Ps. xcvi. 3]: "He hath remembered his

kindness and his truth to the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God." When did all the ends of the earth see it? In the time of Mordecai and Esther.

Resh Lakish began his lecture with this passage [Prov. xxviii. 15]: "As a roaring lion and greedy bear, so is a wicked ruler over an indigent people." "The roaring lion"--that is, "Nebuchadnezzar, as it is written [Jeremiah, iv. 7]: "The lion is come up from his thicket." "A greedy bear" is Ahasuerus, about whom it is written [Daniel, vii, 5]: "And behold, there was another, a second beast, like a bear." And R. Joseph said: The Persians are meant, who eat and drink like a bear, and are corpulent like a bear, and let their hair grow like a bear, and

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have no repose, like a bear. "Wicked ruler," *i.e.*, Haman; "indigent people," *i.e.*, Israel, who are poor in merits.

"R. Elazar begins his lecture with this passage [Ecc. x. 18]: "Through slothful hands the rafters will sink, and through idleness of the hands the house will become leaky." That means to say, because Israel became idle, and did not observe the Law, the enemy of the Holy One, blessed be He (meaning Him), becomes sunk, *i.e.*, poor.

R. Na'hman b. Itz'hak begins his lecture with this passage [Ps. xxiv. 2]. "If it had not been the Lord who was for us, when men rose up against us." Men, and not a king (that is Haman).

Rabha begins his lecture with [Prov. xxix. 2]: "When the righteous are in authority, the people will rejoice; but when the wicked beareth rule, the people groan." When the righteous rule, *i.e.*, Mordecai and Esther, the people rejoice, as it is written [Esther, viii. 15]: "And the city of Shushan was glad and joyful." And when the wicked rule, *i.e.*, Haman, the people groan, as it is written [ibid. iv. 15]: "But the city of Shushan was perplexed."

R. Mathna begins with the following passage [Deut. iv. 7]: "For what great nation is there that hath God so nigh unto it?"

R. Ashi begins with the following passage [ibid., ibid. 34]: "Or hath God essayed to go to take to himself a nation from the midst of a nation?" (What they lectured is not written.)

"*And it came to pass in the time of Ahasuerus.*" Said Rabh: Woe! woe! This is what is written [ibid. xxviii. 68]: "And there ye will offer yourselves for sale unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen without anyone to buy you." Samuel said: It is written [Lev. xxvi. 44]: "I will not cast them away, neither will I loathe them, to destroy them utterly." I have not cast them away--in the times of the Greek, and I have not loathed them--in the time of Nebuchadnezzar; "to destroy them"--in the time of Haman; "to break my covenant with them"--in the time of the Persians; "for I am the Lord their God"--in the time of Gog and Magog. A Boraitha stated: "I will not cast away"--in the times of the Chaldeans, as in that time I raised for them Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; and have not loathed men in the times of the Greeks, when I gave them Simeon the Upright and the Maccabees; "to destroy them"--in the time of Haman I gave them Mordecai

and Esther; "to break my covenant"--in the time of Rome I gave them the House of Rabbi and the sages of that generation; "for I am the Lord their God"--in the future no nation or tongue will dominate over them.

R. Levi said: From this verse [Num. xxxiii. 55], and R. Hyya from *ibid.* 56. (What they lectured is unknown.)

"*Ahasuerus*." Said Rabh: He was the brother of a head 1 and the companion of a head. "The brother of a head," *i.e.*, brother of Nebuchadnezzar the wicked, who was called "head," as it is written [Daniel, ii. 38]: "Thou art the head of gold." "And the companion of a head"--what Nebuchadnezzar did, *he* intended to do. Nebuchadnezzar killed, *he* intended; Nebuchadnezzar destroyed, *he* had the intention. As it is written [Ezra, iv.]: "In the beginning of the reign of Ahasuerus, they wrote slanders on the inhabitants of Judea and Jerusalem." Samuel said: Ahasuerus signifies "black," 2 *i.e.*, in his time the faces of the Jews were black as the bottoms of pots. R. Johanan says: Ahasuerus signifies "woe to his head" (*ah, rosh*); and R. Hanina says it signifies "poor" (*rash*)--his taxes were so heavy that men became poor.

It is written [Esther, i. 1]: "The same Ahasuerus"--he was the same in his wickedness from beginning to end. (Similarly) it is written [in Gen. xxxvi. 43]: "This is Esau," *i.e.*, the same in wickedness from beginning to end; and [Num. xxvi. 9]: "These are Dathan and Abiram," *i.e.*, they were the same in wickedness always; and [II Chron. xxviii. 22]: "He, King Ahaz," *i.e.*, the same in wickedness always; and on the contrary, also [I Chron. i. 27]: "Abram--the same is Abraham," *i.e.*, Abraham was the same in his righteousness from beginning to end; [Ex. vi. 26]: "These are Aaron and Moses," *i.e.*, were the same in righteousness from beginning to end; [I Samuel, xvii. 14]: "And David was the youngest," that means, he was as in his youth from beginning to end: as in his youth he humbled himself before one greater than he, so also when he was a king he was modest before a man superior to him in wisdom.

"*Who reigned*." Said Rabh: He was a self-made king. Some say, it was in his praise, there was none so fit to be a king as he; and some say it is to his disgrace--he was not fit to be a king, but he had much money, and the money made him king.

The rabbis taught: Three kings reigned over the whole world--Ahab, Ahasuerus, and Nebuchadnezzar. Ahab, as it is written [I Kings, xviii. 10]: "As the Lord thy God liveth . . . he caused that kingdom and nation to take an oath . . ."; and if they would not be under his dominion, how could he cause them to take an oath? Nebuchadnezzar, as it is written [Jerem. xxvii. 8]: "And it will come to pass that the nation or kingdom which shall not serve Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and not place its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylonia." Ahasuerus, as stated in Sanhedrin, was king of the whole world. Are these all? Was not Solomon also king of the whole world? Solomon was not a king to the end of his life.

This is right, according to those who hold he was first a king and then a common man; but according to those who say he was a king, a common man, and then again a king, what can be said? Solomon is different. He reigned over the beings above 1 and below, as it is written [I

Chron. xxix. 23]: "Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord." (He is not reckoned with them.) But there is Sennacherib? As it is written [Is. xxxvi. 19]: "Which of all the gods of the lands have saved their countries from my hand?" There was Jerusalem, which was not subject to him. But there is Darius? As it is written [Dan. vi. 26]: "Darius the king wrote to all peoples, nations, and tongues that live on the whole earth: Your peace shall be great." There were seven countries not under his dominion; as it is written [ibid. 2]: "It pleased Darius, and he raised over his kingdom 120 satraps" (while Ahasuerus reigned over 127). But there is Cyrus? As it is written [Ezra, i.]: "So said Cyrus, king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord hath given unto me." He only vaunted.

"When the king sat," and, "in the third year of his reign." That is a contradiction? Nay, it is when he became firmly seated on the throne.

R. Na'hman b. Hisda lectured: It is written [Is. xlv. 7]: "Thus hath said the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, 'Whom I have taken hold of by his right hand.'" Was then Cyrus a Messiah? It is meant that God had said to Messiah: I complain of Cyrus; I have thought he would build my House, and gather all my people that were in exile, and he only says [Ezra, i. 3]:

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[paragraph continues] "Whoever among you that is of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem" [but did not command all to return].

It is written in the first chapter: "The army of Persia and Media"; and [x. 2] "The kings of Media and Persia." Why is Media here mentioned first, and in the other verse Persia? Said Rabha: They made this agreement between them: When one of our nation will be king, the governors will be of your nation, and *vice versa*; [ibid. i. 5]: "And when these days were completed." Rabh and Samuel say, one that he was a wise king, and the other that he was a foolish king. One says he was a wise king, because he made the feast first for the remote subjects, because for his townsmen he could make it at any time; and the other says he was a fool, for he should have made it first for his townsmen, so that if those would rebel, these at least would defend him.

The disciples of R. Simeon b. Yochi asked their Master: By what sins had the Israelites incurred the decree of Haman in that age? Answered he: What is your opinion? They said: Because they enjoyed the feast which Ahasuerus the wicked man made. If so, only those of Shushan should have suffered. Why did those of all provinces? They said to him: Let the Master explain. So he answered: Because they kneeled to the image. Said the disciples to him: If so, they were guilty, and why were they not killed? And he answered: They bowed to the image not because they wanted, but only for appearance; so the decree against them was also for appearance not carried out. And this is what is written [Lam. iii. 33]: "He doth not afflict of his own will."

"In the court of the garden of the king's palace." Rabh and Samuel--one says every one was placed in the place he fitted: the court, garden, and king's palace; and one says he first tried to place them in the court, and it could not contain them; he then placed them in the garden, and it also could not contain them, until he placed them in the king's palace. A Boraitha, however, states that he placed them in the court from which two doors opened, one into the garden and another into the palace.

"And the royal wine was in abundance" [Esther, i. 7]. Said Rabh: We infer from this that he gave to each to drink wine that was older than he.

"And the drinking was according to the order" [ibid. 8]. What is meant by "according to the order"? R. Hanan said

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in the name of R. Meir: It was according to the order of our Torah. As in our Law eating precedes drinking, so he gave more to eat than to drink.

"Without compulsion." Says R. Elazar: From this it can be learned that to each was given to drink wine that grew in his country.

"On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine." And till then, what did he do? Was he not till then merry with wine? Said Rabha: The seventh day was Sabbath. When Israelites eat and drink on Sabbath, they begin with sayings of the Law and praises to God; but the nations, when they feast, speak about women. These said the Medians are beautiful, and those said the Persian women are more fair. And Ahasuerus said to them: The one that I have is neither Median nor Persian, but Chaldean, and she is fairer than they all; and if you wish you can see her. They said: Yea, we wish to see her, but she must be naked. And the same measure which one uses, is used against one: as Vashti used to take Israelite maidens, and make them work nude, on Sabbath, so also it was decreed that she should be brought nude. And this is what is written [Esther, ii. 1]: "After these events, as the king's fury was appeased, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what had been decreed concerning her"; *i.e.*, the decree had been the same as what she had done. "And the king was very wroth." What was the cause? Said Rabh: She sent to him this message: "Thou groom of my father, my father used to drink wine as a thousand persons, and never had he committed such follies when he was drunk as thou." And therefore he was so wroth.

"Then said Memuchan." We have learned in a Boraitha: Memuchan was Haman. Why was he called Memuchan? Because he was *destined* 1 for the troubles that befell him afterwards. R. Kahana said: From this we see that usually an ignorant man comes forward first (as he is mentioned last in verse 14).

"That every man should bear rule in his own house." Said Rabha: But for the first letters, there would have been left no remnant of Israel; because the men laughed at such a decree, that every man should rule in his own house. For even a tanner is in his own house a prince, and therefore they did not pay so much attention to the second decree in the later letters.

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"And let the king appoint officers." Said Rabh: It is written [Prov. xiii. 16]: "Every prudent man acteth with knowledge, but a fool spreadeth abroad his folly." "Every prudent man acteth with knowledge"--that was David, as it is written [I Kings, i. 2]: "Wherefore his servants said unto him, Let them seek out for my lord the king a young virgin." Everyone who had a daughter, brought her himself to the king. "But a fool spreadeth abroad his folly," *i.e.*, Ahasuerus, who had to appoint officers, for whoso had a beautiful daughter hid her from him,

"There was a certain Jew in Shushan the capital a Benjamite." What is meant by "he was a Benjamite? If it is meant to give his genealogy, let it have been traced to Benjamin; otherwise, why were the first three of his ancestors mentioned? In a Boraitha it is explained that all the three names are not those of his ancestors, but are his own. The son of Yair, *i.e.*, the man who made the eyes of the Jews *light* 1 with his prayer; the son of Shimi, the man whose prayer God *heard*; 1 the son of Kish, *i.e.*, the man who *knocked* on the gates of *Mercy*, and they were opened to him. 1 Said R. Na'hman: Mordecai was crowned with these fair names. It is written, "a Judean man," and then, "a Benjamite." Which was he? Said Rabba bar bar Hana in the name of R. Joshua b. Levi: His father was a Benjamite and his mother was a Judean. The sages, however, said: The tribes disputed with each other. Judah said: Through me Mordecai was born, for if David had killed Shimi b. Gera, he could not have been born; and Benjamin said, he belongs to me, because he is of my tribe. Rabha says: On the contrary, the Kneseth (congregation) of Israel said: See what Jehudah did to me, and see what the Benjamites have done to me: Judah, because David did not kill Shimi, made possible the birth of Mordecai, of whom Haman became jealous; and because Saul had not killed Agag was born Haman, who caused troubles to Israel.

R. Johanan said: He was a Benjamite. Why is he called a Judean? Because he did not want to worship idols, and every Israelite who rejects idols is called a Judean, as it is written in Daniel x. 12: "There are certain *Judean* men," etc. "Thy gods they do not worship."

R. Simeon b. Pazzi, when he wanted to lecture about Chronicles,

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began thus: All the names which are mentioned in the Chronicles without any explanation, we are nevertheless able to explain them. It is written [I Chronicles, iv. 18]: "And his wife the Judean bore Jered the father of Gedor, and Cheber the father of Socho, and Jekuthiel the father of Zanoach. And there are the sons of Bithya the daughter of Pharaoh, whom Mered had taken (for wife)." Why was she called "the Judean"? Because she denied idolatry, as it is written [Ex. ii. 5]: "And the daughter of Pharaoh went down to wash herself at the river." And R. Johanan said: She went to cleanse herself of the idolatries of her father's house.

"Bore Jered." Did she bear him--she only reared him? From this we may infer that whoso rears an orphan is the same as if she bore him. Jered--that is, Moses. Why is he called Jered? Because in his day manna *descended* 1 from heaven to Israel. "Gedor," 1 *i.e.*, he fenced up the breaches of Israel. "Cheber," 1 *i.e.*, he *joined* the Israelites to their Heavenly Father. "Socho" 1--he was to Israel as a tabernacle (protection). "Jekuthiel"--the Israelites *hoped* to God in his days. 2 Zanoach," *i.e.*, he *abandoned* 2 or atoned for the sins of Israel in his days. It is written three times "Abi" (father), *i.e.*, he was the father of Torah, the father of Wisdom, and the father of Prophets. And these are the sons of Bithya the daughter of Pharaoh, whom Meret had taken. Was, then, his name Meret--it is known that his name was Kaleb? The Holy One, blessed be He, said: "Kaleb, who *rebelled* 2 against the advice of the spies, shall take the daughter of Pharaoh, who had rebelled against the idolatries of her father."

"Who had been carried away into exile from Jerusalem" [ii. 6]. Said Rabha: He had not been exiled, but came by his own will.

"And he had brought up Hadassah." Is she called Hadassah and called Esther? We have learned in a Boraitha, R. Meir said: Her right name was Esther, but she was called Hadassah, because the upright are called thus, as it is written [Zechariah, i. 8]: "He was standing among the *myrtle-trees*." 2 R. Jehudah said: Her right name was Hadassa. Why was she called Esther? Because she *concealed* 2 her words, as it is written [ii. 10]:

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[paragraph continues] "Esther told nothing." R. Nehemiah said: Her right name was Hadassah. Why was she called Esther? Because the nations called her for her beauty "star" (αστηρ). B. Azzai said: Esther was not tall or short, but of moderate size, like a myrtle. R. Joshua b. Kar'ha said: Esther's complexion was yellow, but she had grace.

"For she had neither father nor mother. And when her father and mother were dead, Mordecai had taken her to himself as a daughter." Why this superfluous repetition? Said R. Aha: To tell us that when the mother became pregnant her father died, and when she was born the mother died.

"And the seven maidens who were selected to be given to her" [ibid. 9]. Says Rabha: By them she counted the days to know when Sabbath was.

"In the evening she went and in the morning she returned" [ibid. 14]. Said R. Johanan: Among the blameworthy actions of that wicked man, it can be said in his praise that he had intercourse with women only by night.

"And Esther found favor" [15]. Said R. Elazar: Every nation thought her to belong to itself.

"And the king made a great feast" [ibid. 18]. And Esther still did not tell her nation; he lightened the taxes of all nations, and she did not tell; he sent presents to his governors, and she still did not tell; so he asked the advice of Mordecai how to discover it; and he told him that a woman becomes jealous only of another woman, and when he will take other women she will tell (as a favor to him). But this availed not either, as it is written: "And Esther had not yet told of her descent or her people."

R. Elazar said: It is written [Job, xxxvi. 7]: "He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous." In reward of the modesty of Rachel, King Saul descended from her; and in reward of Saul's modesty Esther descended from him. Wherein was Rachel modest? It is written [Gen. xxix. 12]: "And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's brother." Was he her father's brother? He was the son of her father's sister! That means, he asked her: Will you marry me? And she answered: Yes, but my father is a trickster, and he will deceive you. To this he answered: I am his brother in trickery. And she asked him: May an upright man do it? And he answered: Yea, it is written in "Samuel, xxii. 27: "With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure, and with the perverse thou wilt wage a contest." And he asked Rachel: How can he cheat me? And

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she replied: I have an elder sister, and he will not let me marry before her. So he confided to her some signs by which to distinguish her. And when Leah was brought in her stead, Rachel said:

My sister will be put to shame. So she confided to her the signs. And this is what is written: "And it came to pass that in the morning, Behold, it is Leah." That means, till the morning he knew it not. And therefore she was rewarded by Saul's being descended from her.

And what was Saul's modesty? It is written [II Sam. x. 16]: "Of the matter of the kingdom, whereof Samuel had spoken, he told him not." For this he was rewarded by Esther's being descended from him. R. Elazar said again: When the Holy One, blessed be He, decrees greatness for a man, it is for him and his descendants to the end of ages; as it is written [Job, xxxvi. 7]: "He doth establish them forever, and they are exalted." But if they become proud, he humbles them, as it is written [ibid. 8.]: "If they be bound in fetters."

"In those days, while Mordecai was sitting in the king's gate, Bigthan and Theresh . . . became wroth" [Esther, ii. 21]. Said R. Hyya bar Abba in the name of R. Johanan: The Lord makes the masters wroth against their servants, in order to do good to the upright; as it was in the case of Joseph, as it is written [Gen. xli. 12]: "And there was with us a Hebrew lad," etc. And he makes slaves wroth against their masters, to perform a miracle for the good of the upright. And who is it? Mordecai, as it is written: "And the thing became known to Mordecai." R. Johanan said Bigthan and Theresh were *Tarsees*, and spoke their own language, and said among themselves: "Since Esther has come into the court, we know no sleep. Therefore let us put poison into the king's drink, in order that he should die." And they knew not that Mordecai was of the Great Sanhedrin, every one of whom knew seventy languages. Then Bigthan said to Theresh: Our watches are not the same. He answered: I will watch for you too (and say you are sick). "And the thing was inquired into, and found true." What was found? That he had not been at his post.

"After these events" [ibid. iii. 1]. What events? Said Rabha: After the Holy One, blessed be He, had created a cure to their woe. Because Resh Lakish said: The Holy One, blessed be He, afflicts not Israel before He has prepared the cure for them in advance. As it is written [Hosea, viii.]: "Should I desire to heal Israel, then would the iniquity of

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Ephraim be laid open." But with idolatrous nations it is different. First He smites them, then He heals them, as it is written [Is. xix. 12]: "And the Lord will thus strike Egypt, striking and healing."

"But it appeared too contemptible in his eyes to lay his hand on Mordecai alone" [6]. Said Rabha: In the beginning he wanted to lay hand on Mordecai alone, and later on the people of Mordecai, *i.e.*, the scholars, and later on all the Jews.

"Some one cast the Tur, that is the lot" [7]. We have learned in a Boraitha: When the lots fell on the month of Adar, Haman rejoiced very much, for he said: It is the month in which Moses died. But he did not know that on the 7th of Adar Moses had died, and also had been born.

"There is one people" [ibid. 8]. Said Rabha: There was no man who could calumniate so well as Haman. He said to the king: Let them be destroyed. And he answered: I am afraid of their God, lest he act toward me as toward others that did evil to Israel. Then Haman replied: They no longer observe their God's commandments. Then the king said: But there are among them rabbis, who observe them. Then he rejoined: They are one people, all are the same, no one

observes. And if thou shouldst think I shall leave a void in thy kingdom, thou must know that they are scattered among all nations, and their extermination will not be perceptible. And perhaps thou wilt say, thou derivest a benefit from them. Know that they are like mules, 1 that are unproductive. And if thou shouldst imagine there is one country in which they dwell together, know that they are scattered in *all* the provinces of thy kingdom.

"And their laws are different from those of every people," *i.e.*, they do not eat with us, and do not intermarry with us.

"They do not execute the laws of the king." The whole year they find excuses not to give the taxes, saying: Now is Sabbath, now is Passover.

"It is no profit for the king to tolerate them." Because they eat and drink in a manner to disgrace the king, for if a fly fall into a goblet of wine, they will take it out and drink it; but if the king should touch the goblet of wine, they will pour it Out.

"If it be pleasing to the king, let it be written to destroy them, and ten thousand talents of silver will I weigh out. Said

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[paragraph continues] Resh Lakish: It was known to Him who said one word, and the world was created, that in the future Haman would give talents of silver to buy Israel. Therefore He had commanded that in the same month they should give Shekalim of silver to the Lord, as we have learned in a Mishna that on the first day of Adar it was heralded that the Shekalim be given. And the king said to Haman: The silver is given to thee; that people also, to do therewith as it seemeth good in thy eyes.

Said R. Abba: The parable of Ahasuerus and Haman resembles what? Two men, one of whom had a hillock in his field and the other a valley (or pit); he who had the valley, when he saw the hillock, said: If one would sell it to me, I would buy it to fill tip the valley. Then it happened they met, and he who had the valley said: Sell me the hill. And he answered: Take it for nothing, so that you remove it. (So Ahasuerus also had wanted to get rid of the Israelites, and when Haman came to him he gave them away for nothing.)

"And the king drew his signet ring from off his hand." Said R. Abba bar Kahana: The removal of this ring had a greater effect than forty-eight prophets and seven prophetesses, who preached that Israel should better its ways; but this made them really better.

The rabbis taught: Forty-eight prophets and seven prophetesses preached to Israel, and subtracted or added nothing, save the reading of the Megilla, which was instituted by the prophets alone. What basis had they for that? Said R. Hyya bar Abbin in the name of R. Joshua b. Kar'ha: They drew an *a fortiori* conclusion: if when Israel was delivered from slavery to freedom they sang, so much the more when they were saved from death to life. Why, then, do we not say Hallel on Purim? Because we do not say Hallel for the miracles that happened outside of Palestine. But the exodus from Egypt was also a miracle outside of Palestine? This is in accordance with the teaching of the following Boraitha: Till Israel entered Canaan, they said praises for all miracles, but since they occupied Palestine they sang praise only for miracles in

Palestine. R. Na'hman, however, said: The reading of the Megilla, that is the same as Hallel. Rabha said: There, when they went out of Egypt, it was right to say Hallel, because it is said: "Praise, O ye servants of the Lord," and not Pharaoh's; but now, how could they say so on Purim, since they continued to be slaves of Ahasuerus?

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Who were the seven prophetesses? Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Abigail, Huldah, Esther.

Sarah, as it is written [Gen. xi. 29]: "The father of Milcah and the father of Yiscah." And R. Itz'hak said: By Yiscah is meant Sarah. Why was she called Yiscah? Because that signifies *seeing*, and she was a *seer* through the Holy Spirit. Miriam, as it is written [Ex. xv. 26]: "Then took Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron." Aaron's, and not Moses' sister? Said R. Na'hman in the name of Rabh: She had prophesied even when she had been yet but Aaron's sister, before Moses' birth, and she said: In the future my mother will give birth to a child that will deliver the Israelites. Finally, when Moses was born, the whole house was filled with light. And her father rose, and kissed her on her head, and said: Daughter, thy prophecy is fulfilled. Afterward, when he was cast into the river, the father asked: Daughter, what has become of thy prophecy? And this is what is written [ibid. ii. 4]: "And his sister placed herself afar off, to ascertain what would be done to him," *i.e.*, to know what would be the end of her prophecy.

Deborah, as it is written [Judges, ix. 4]: "And Deborah, a prophetess."

Hannah, as it is written [I Sam. ii. I]: "And Hannah prayed and said, My heart is glad in the Lord, my horn is exalted through the Lord." My *horn* is exalted, and not my *flask*. David and Solomon, who were anointed with the horn, their dynasty endured; but Saul and Jehu, who were anointed with a flask, their dynasties did not last.

"There is none holy like the Lord, for there is none beside thee" [ibid. 2]. The expression for "none beside thee" is ••••. Said R. Jehudah b. Menassia: 'Do not read ••••, but ••••••, because not as a human being is the Holy One, blessed be He: a human being is survived by his own work, but God survives all His works. [1](#)

"There is not any rock like our God," *i.e.*, there is no sculptor like our God. Do not read ••• (rock), but •••: [2](#) a man makes a statue, and cannot endow it with a soul; but the Holy One, blessed be He, makes an image within an image, and endows it with a soul and life, entrails, etc.

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Abigail, as it is written [I Sam. xxv. 31]: "And when the Lord will do good unto my lord." She prophesied that he would be king.

Huldah, as it is said [II Kings, xxii. 14]: "Huldah the prophetess."

And Esther, because it is written [Esther, v. 7]: "Esther put on royalty." [1](#) It should be written, "royal apparel"? That means, she clothed herself in the Holy Spirit, and this is inferred from an analogy of expression; here it is written, "she put on," and in I Chron. xii. 18, "a spirit invested [2](#)

Amassoi." As there the Holy Spirit is meant, so here.

Said R. Na'hman: Pride does not become women. Two women were proud, and they both had unlovely names: one was called Bee (Deborah) and one Cat (Huldah). Of Deborah it is written [Judges, iv. 6]: "And she sent and called Barak and went not herself"; and of Huldah it is said [II Kings, xxii. 15]: "Say unto the man that hath sent you to me"; and she did not say, "unto the king."

"And Mordecai ascertained all that had been done" [Esther, iv. I]. What had been done? Said Rabh: That Haman had persuaded Ahasuerus.

"Then called Esther for Hathach Said Rabh: Hathach is Daniel. Why was he called Hathach? Because he was *cut* from, or deprived of, his office. [3](#) Samuel says: On the contrary, he had the office, but he was called Hathach because all laws were *decided* [4](#) by him.

"And they told Mordecai the words of Esther" [12]. But he went not himself to her? From this is inferred that an evil tiding must not be brought personally.

"And Mordecai went about" [17]. Said Rabh: What is meant by "went about"? He transgressed [5](#) by fasting on the first day of Passover; he fasted three days, and the third was Pesach. And Samuel says: It means "he passed." There was a piece of water between the court and Shushan, and he crossed it.

"And it came to pass on the third day that Esther put on royalty" [iv. 1]. Said R. Elazar in the name of R. Hanina: From this we infer that she clothed herself in the Holy Spirit, as explained above [66].

The same says again: The blessing of a common man shall

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never be held light, because we find that two who were the greatest in their generations were blessed by two common men, and the blessings have been fulfilled, and they are David and Daniel. David, whom Araunah blessed, as it is written [II Samuel, xxiv. 23]: "And Araunah said unto the king, may the Lord thy God receive thee favorably." And Daniel, whom Darius blessed, as it is written [Dan. vi. 17]: "May thy God, whom thou worshippest, continually, truly deliver thee." The same authority says again: Do not hold light the curse of a common man. For Abimelech cursed Sarah, saying [Gen. xx. 16]: "This is to thee a covering to the eyes," and it happened to her children as is written: "And Isaac's eyes became dim" [Gen. xxvii. 1]. The same says again: He who repeats something said by another, in that person's name, brings salvation to the world, as it is written: "And Esther said it to the queen in the name of Mordecai." And thus Israel was saved. He says again: When an upright man is lost, he is lost to his generation; but not he himself. He is like to a pearl, which may be lost to the owner, but is and remains a pearl.

"Yet all this profiteth me nothing" [v. 13]. Said R. Elazar in the name of R. Hanina: That was because Mordecai once had a $\pi\rho\epsilon\sigma\beta\epsilon\upsilon\tau\alpha$, and Haman had sold himself to him as a slave, as said R. Hisda. The same said again: In the future, the Holy One, blessed be He, will be Himself

a crown on the head of every upright man, as it is written [Is. xxviii. 5]: "On that day will the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty." What is meant by "a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty"? It is to those who do His will, and hope for His glory. But shall we assume, to all of them? Therefore it is written: "Unto the residue of his people." That means, to those who are so modest that they consider themselves like the remnant of the people.

"And for a spirit of judgment" [ibid. 6]. To those who judge their own resolutions. "To him that sitteth in judgment." It is the judge who does justice. "And for strength." It is to those who conquer their own desires. "To those that drive back the battle." That means, the disputing about the Law. "To the gate." That means, the scholars who come to the gate of the houses of prayer and learning in the morning and the evening. The Severity of justice said to the Holy One, blessed be He: Creator of the world, what is the difference between the Israelites and other nations? And He answered:

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Israel studied the Torah, and the idolaters did not. To this justice replied [ibid. 7]: "But these also are now stumbling through wine, and reeling through strong drink."

"And placed herself in the inner Court of the king's house" [Esther, v. 1]. Said R. Levi, as she came to the house of idols, the Shekhina left her; so she began to say [Ps. xxii. 2]: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Canst thou hold guilty one who does a thing unintentionally as if she did it intentionally, and what she is forced to do as if she did it voluntarily?"

"And it happened when the king saw Esther the queen" [2]. Said R. Johanan: Three angels came to her help at the same time: one angel raised her head, that the king might see her; one, who gave her grace; and one who made longer the sceptre which the king stretched out to her. How much did it become longer? Says R. Jeremiah: It was two ells long, and became twelve ells long. And others say sixteen, and others say twenty-four; and in a Boraitha we have learned sixty. Rabba bar Uphran said in the name of R. Eliezer, who had heard it from his Master, and his Master from *his* Master: It became longer two hundred ells.

"Let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet" [v. 5]. The rabbis taught: Why did Esther invite Haman to the feast? R. Elazar says: She spread for him a net, as it is written [Ps. lxxix. 23]: "May their table become a snare before them." R. Joshua says: She learned it in her father's house, as it is written [Prov. xxv. 21]: "If thy enemy be hungry, give him bread." R. Meir said that at the time when Ahasuerus would be at the feast, Haman should not get wind of the matter, and rebel. R. Jehudah said: She did it that it should not be noticed she was a Jewess. R. Nehemiah said: That the Israelites say not, We have a sister in the king's court. Therefore we need not pray to God. And R. Jose said: He should be near, if she wanted him. R. Simeon b. Menassia said: That He above should see that she was so humbled as to be forced to flatter her enemy, and should perform a miracle. R. Joshua b. Korba said: She meant to make herself agreeable to Haman, that the king might become jealous, and should kill both him and her, whereby Israel would be saved. R. Gamaliel said: Because she knew Ahasuerus was very fickle (and if she told him to kill Haman, he might repent; but if he should be in her house, it would be executed immediately). Said R. Gamaliel:

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[paragraph continues] After all, we must still hear what the Median has said. As we learn in the following Boraitha, R. Elazar of Media said: She had intended to make Haman jealous of Ahasuerus, and Ahasuerus jealous of Haman. Rabha said: As it is written [in Prov. xvi. 18]: "Before downfall goeth pride." Abayi and Rabha both said: She intended to do as is written [in Jeremiah, li. 39]: "When they are heated I will prepare their drinking feasts and will make them drunken." Rabba bar Abahu once found Elijah the prophet, and asked him: What did Esther intend to do? And he answered: As all the Tanaim and all the Amoraim opined.

"In that night sleep fled from the king" [vi.]. He thought, What could be the meaning of Esther's invitation of Haman? Perhaps they conspired against him to kill him? Then he considered that some friend of his would be found to inform him. But then he said: Perhaps there are men who have rendered me services, and I have not rewarded them. Therefore people do not care to do me a kindness. As soon as this struck him, he commanded to bring to him the Chronicles. "And they were read" by themselves; *i.e.*, that place in the Chronicles turned up accidentally.

Said R. Ashi: R. Shila of the village Tamratha lectured: If what is recorded about Israelites below is not erased, so much the more what is written about them in Heaven above.

"There hath nothing been done with him" [3]. Says Rabha: They said so, not because they loved Mordecai, but because they hated Haman.

"Do this to Mordecai" [10]. And Haman asked: Who is Mordecai? And the king answered: The Jew. And he said again: There are many Jews by the name of Mordecai. And he answered: The one that sits at the gate of the king. He said: For this man it will suffice if thou wilt give him a village, or the tolls of a river. And the king said: Give him this too. Therefore it is written: "Leave out nothing of all that thou hast spoken." "And Haman then took the apparel and the horse" [11]. As Mordecai saw that Haman came to him on the royal horse, he trembled, and said to the rabbis who sat near him: This man probably comes with an order to put me to death. Go away from here, that you may not get harmed through me. Mordecai wrapped himself, and stood up to pray. When Haman entered, he sat down and waited till Mordecai ended the prayer. Then Haman asked Mordecai: What was

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your occupation when I entered? He replied: We studied the laws of a handful [Lev. vi. 8]. We deliberated what a handful should be. Haman answered: Your handful, which you have offered to God, has outweighed the ten thousand talents that I had proposed to the king, for your destruction. Then said he to him: Put on the royal apparel and mount the horse, for the king wants you. Mordecai said: I must not put on the royal garments before I wash myself. Haman took him himself to the bath, and washed him, and cut his hair. Thereafter, he bade him mount the horse. He replied: I cannot; I am too weak from fasting. So Haman bent himself, and helped him to climb the horse, by letting him step on his back.

"And proclaimed before him: Thus shall be done unto the man," etc. [11]. Haman's daughter heard this, and saw from a distance a man riding on a horse. She thought her father sat on the horse, and Mordecai led him. When they came nearer, and she perceived her mistake, she threw herself from the balcony, and died. And this is what is written: "Haman hastened to his house, mourning, and having his head covered"--mourning over his daughter, and his head covered,

because of the disgrace.

"And Haman related to Zeres his wife and to all his friends" [13]. And afterward it is written: "Then said unto him his wise men and Zeres his wife." First they are called friends, and then wise men? Said R. Johanan: A man even of the nations who says an intelligent thing may be called wise.

"If Mordecai be of the seed of the Judeans." They said: If Mordecai is descended from other tribes, you will get the better of him; but if he be descended from one of these tribes--Jehudah, Benjamin, Ephraim, Menasseh, then you cannot overcome him. From Jehudah because it is written [Gen. xlix. 8]: "Thy hand shall be on the neck of thy enemies"; and the other three, because it is written [Ps. lxxx. 3]: "Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Menasseh, awaken thy might."

"But thou wilt surely fall before him." R. Jehudah b. Ilai lectured: What is meant by "surely fall"? His wise men and wife said to him thus: This nation [Israel] resembles earth, and resembles stars; when they sink they sink to the dust, and when they rise they rise to the stars.

"When the king's chamberlains arrived" [Esther, vi. 14]: "and they hastened." From this we infer that they brought him in a hurry,

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"For we have been sold, I and my people . . . for the adversary regardeth not the damage of the king." She said to him: This enemy is not worth the damage he causes to the king: when he became jealous of Vashti, he killed her; and now he becomes jealous of me, and wants to kill me too.

"And the king arose in his fury . . . and when the king returned" [vii. 7, 8]. From this we may infer that as he had gone out in fury, so he returned in fury. "Haman was fallen upon the couch." It is not written "fell," but "was fallen," from which we may infer that an angel came and pushed him. And the king said: Woe inside, and woe outside!

"Then said Harbanah" [9]. Said R. Elazar: Harbanah the wicked had been among those who had given the advice to make a gallows for Mordecai; but as he saw his plan not fulfilled, he deserted Haman and went over to Mordecai's friends, and this is written [Job, xxvii. 22]: "And will cast upon him, and have no pity; out of his hand will surely escape."

"And the fury of the king was appeased" [xii. 10]. The expression is •••, which is plural. (What signifies the plural? His anger about Vashti and about Esther was appeased.)

It is written [Gen. xiv. 22]: "To all of them he gave to each changes of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave . . . five changes of raiment." Is it possible that what gave trouble to Joseph's father, as Rabba bar Me'hassia said in the name of Rabh (Sabbath, p. 19), *he* (Joseph), the righteous man, should do? Said R. Benjamin b. Jepheth: That was a hint that from him would descend a man who would wear five royal garments, as it is written [Esther, viii. 15]: "And Mordecai went out in a royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a cloak of fine

linen and purple."

"And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck 1 . . ." [Gen. xlv. 14]: "How many necks had he-- he had only one? He wept for the two Temples, that would be situated in Benjamin's land, and would be destroyed. "And Benjamin wept upon his neck." He wept for the Tabernacle of Shiloh, that would be in Joseph's part of the land, and would be destroyed. "And behold, your own eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin" [Gen. xlv. 12]. Said R. Elazar: Joseph said to them: Just as I have nothing in my heart against Benjamin, who took

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no part in my sale, so I have nothing against you." It is my mouth that speaketh unto you." What I speak with my mouth, I think in my heart. "And to his father he sent after this manner [ibid. 23] . . . with the best things of Egypt." What is meant by the best things of Egypt? Said R. Benjamin b. Jepheth in the name of R. Elazar: He sent him old wine, which when old men drink they have their minds invigorated. "And Israel bowed himself upon the head of the bed" [xxxvii. 31]. The same authority said: When the fox is at the head, the people bow to him. "And he comforted them, and spoke kindly unto them" [l. 21]. Said the same authority again: He told them such things as are agreeable to be heard; namely, ten lights could not extinguish one, much less could one light put out ten.

"For the Jews there was light, and joy and gladness and honor" [Esther, viii. 16]. Said R. Jehudah: By light is meant the Law, as it is written [Prov. vi. 23]: "For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light." "Joy," that is, a holiday, as it is written [Deut. xvi. 14]: "And thou shalt rejoice on thy feast." "Gladness" means circumcision, as it is written [Ps. cxix. 162]: "I am rejoiced over thy promise." And by "honor" is meant Thephilin, as it is written [Deut. xxviii. 16]: "And all the nations of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord, and they shall be afraid of thee." And we have learned in a Boraitha, R. Eliezer the Great said: By this are meant the Thephilin on the head.

"And Parshandatha" [Esther, ix. 7]. R. Adda, from the city of Jopha, said: The names of the sons of Haman and the phrase "and the ten" must be pronounced in one breath. Why? Because their souls left their bodies all at the same time. Said R. Johanan: The Vav of Vayzatha must be made longer, that it look like a gallows, for all ten were hanged on one gallows-tree.

"Words of peace and truth" [30]. Said R. Tanhum, and according to others R. Ashi: We may infer from this that it should be written like the Law of Truth; as that must be written on ruled parchment, so this.

"And the order of Esther confirmed" [32]. Said R. Johanan: Read together the former verse and this: "The matters of the fastings, the prayers, and the order of Esther confirmed."

"For Mordecai the Jew was the second in rank after King Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and acceptable to the

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multitude of his brethren" [x. 3]. To the multitude, but not to all? From this we may infer that a

part of the Sanhedrin turned away from him.

R. Joseph said: The study of the Law is greater than the saving of lives, for before Mordecai was mentioned the fifth, and later the sixth. It is written [Ezra, ii. 2]: "Who came, with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Serayah, Reayah, Mordecai, Balshan;" and later, [in Nehemiah, vii. 7] he is mentioned the sixth. (Rashi explains this thus: From the return of Ezra to the return of Nehemiah twenty years elapsed, and meanwhile Mordecai became of high rank, but before he had been more of a scholar.)

Rabh, and according to others R. Samuel b. Martha, said: The study of the Law is of more importance than the building of the Temple; for so long as Barach b. Neriah lived, Ezra returned not to the land of Israel. Said Rabha in the name of R. Itz'hak b. Samuel the son of Martha: The study of the Law is more important than the honoring of the parents; for in all the years that Jacob passed with Shem and Eber and studied the Law, he was not chastised for failing during that time to honor his father and his mother. [1](#)

Footnotes

[1:1](#) In the time of the Mishna the tribunals of justice kept the courts open on Mondays or Thursdays for the sake of the men who came to the markets, which were usually on these days. The reading of the Holy Scrolls in the synagogues was also on these days, and therefore they were called "days of assembly."

[3:1](#) The text says it is written "from India to Ethiopia" and refers to verse 9, chap. viii., but as there it is written not about the Book of Esther, we have cited the other verse.

[4:1](#) The open one, *e.g.*, • the closed one, as •, So also with the other letters.

[7:1](#) The Hebrew term for this is "Batlonim." The true meaning is that every city must hire ten persons who shall do nothing but study and pray.

[11:1](#) *Ham* is in Hebrew *hot*.

[11:2](#) *Rakkath* in Aramaic means the bank of a river.

[11:3](#) *Kinor* is a violin.

[12:1](#) *Rek* is in Hebrew *empty, idle*.

[12:2](#) Places for the worship of idols in Rome.

[15:1](#) The expression is *Shalishim*, which the Talmud translates literally, "thrice"--though in

Leeser it is different.

[16:1](#) We doubt whether it was the second or the third, as there were also two Oshyias, one in the time of the second and one in the time of the third. See Seder Hadoroth, parag. Oshyia.

[19:1](#) High places are the public altars on which they used to sacrifice before the erection of the Temple at Jerusalem. Small places are altars of private persons.

[24:1](#) The Hebrew is ••••, "he will make rejoice." "He will rejoice himself should have been ••••.

[26:1](#) *Ah* is brother and *Ras* is head, and it is considered as composed of two words.

[26:2](#) *Sha'hor* is "black."

[27:1](#) According to Rashi--"the demons."

[29:1](#) *Muchan* in Hebrew is "prepared," "designed."

[30:1](#) *Our* is "light," *Shema* is "hear," *Kish* is "rap."

[31:1](#) *Jarod* is "to descend"; *Geder*, "fence"; *Habor*, "join"; *Sukka*, a "protection."

[31:2](#) *Jekan*, "hopes"; *El*, "God"; *Zanoach*, "abandon"; *Marod*, "rebel"; *Hadas*, "myrtles"; *Haster*, "conceal."

[34:1](#) "Separated", ••••• and •••• is "a mule."

[36:1](#) ••• is "to rot, fade, dwindle, wear out."

[36:2](#) Which means "painter, sculptor."

[37:1](#) In Hebrew it is so.

[37:2](#) In Hebrew it is the same expression.

[37:3](#) *Hathach*, "cut."

[37:4](#) Which is in Hebrew expressed by cutting.

[37:5](#) *Abor* has all these meanings.

[42:1](#) In the Hebrew text the plural is used.

[44:1](#) The Gemara proceeds to prove this by certain calculations of the ages of Ishmael, Itz'hak, and Jacob, deduced from scriptural passages; the proof being very flimsy and complicated, we have omitted it.

[Next: Chapter II](#)