

A Scintilla of MEGILLAH



Abridged & Adapted

Beyond Booing H*M*N

When you hear the name **AHASUERUS**, pick up your cup and say "I'll drink to that!"

At **VASHTI**'s name, proclaim, "You Go, Girl!"

For **MORDECAI** shout, "Hurrah!"

At the mention of the *eunuchs* gasp, "OY!"

When **ESTHER**'s name comes up, turn over a playing card (or: cover a dish that is uncovered; or: uncover a dish that is covered.)

Whenever the words **feast, feasting, banquet** or **party** are read, EAT!

Purim Mitzvot:

Listen to the Megillah
Give gifts of food to your friends
Give tzedakah to the poor.
Have a feast

THE SCROLL OF **ESTHER** *abridged & adapted*

1. Now it came to pass in the days of King **Ahasuerus**, who reigned from India as far as Ethiopia, that the king gave two banquets, one to show off for 180 days to all the bigwigs of Persia and Media; the other for all the people in Shushan, both great and small, in his palace garden.

The palace looked gorgeous with gold and silver everywhere—such a display! Wine flowed! The drinking was according to the law: *show no restraint!* For King **Ahasuerus** had commanded all the attendants to do according to every man's pleasure.

Queen **Vashti** also gave a banquet, but it was only for the women in the royal house of King **Ahasuerus**.

2. On the seventh day, when the heart of King **Ahasuerus** was merry with wine—that is, when he was quite skunked—he commanded the *eunuchs* who attended him, "to bring in Queen

Vashti wearing the royal crown, to show her beauty to all the men", for she was beautiful and King **Ahasuerus** wanted to show her off to make himself look good.

But Queen **Vashti** refused to come at the king's command. This enraged King **Ahasuerus** and his anger seethed inside of him. (Or maybe it was heartburn.)

Then the king said to the legal sages, "What law shall be applied to Queen **Vashti**, since she has not obeyed the command of King **Ahasuerus**?"

3. A legal sage answered King **Ahasuerus**: "Queen **Vashti** has not only done wrong to the king, but also to all the nobles, and to all the people in all the 127 provinces of King **Ahasuerus**! For this deed of Queen **Vashti** will be reported to all women. Their husbands will appear contemptible to them when they hear the news: King **Ahasuerus** ordered Queen **Vashti** to be brought before him—and she did not come! This very day, the ladies of Persia and Media who have heard of the deed of Queen **Vashti** will tell it to all the king's nobles. Boy, will there be trouble for us!

If it please the king, let it be written into the laws of the kingdom, which no one can revoke, that **Vashti** come no more before King **Ahasuerus**. And let the king give her crown to someone who is more worthy and less likely to talk back. And when this royal decree is heard throughout all the kingdom, all the wives shall give honor to their husbands, both high and low."

The advice pleased the king and the nobles, and King **Ahasuerus** did what the legal sage had suggested: He sent letters all over the place written very clearly, stating that every man should be master in his own house, say whatever comes into his head and expect to be obeyed and respected.

4. After this, when the wrath of King **Ahasuerus** had subsided, he remembered **Vashti** and what she had done and how beautiful she had been and how warm and comfortable she was when she wasn't in a bad mood and how chilly those Persian nights could be. The king's servants said: "Let beautiful young virgins be sought out for the king and brought together to the harem, into the custody the

king's *eunuch* in charge of the women; and let beauty treatments be given to them. And let the maiden who pleases the king be queen instead of **Vashti**." The advice pleased King **Ahasuerus**.

Now, in Shushan there was a certain Jew whose name was **Mordecai**. **Mordecai** the Jew was raising his orphaned niece, Hadassah, who went by the Persian name **Esther**. She was, of course, young, beautiful, available and Jewish.

5. It came to pass, when the king's get-the-girls command was heard, and when many maidens were brought together to Shushan, that **Esther** was also brought there. The girl pleased the *eunuch* and she received kindness from him. Make of that what you will. He speedily gave her very helpful ointments and moved her into the best place of the harem of King **Ahasuerus**.

Meanwhile, **Esther** had not revealed her people, for **Mordecai** had told her not to reveal it.

Now when the turn of each maiden came to visit King **Ahasuerus**, she went in in the evening, and in the morning she went out to the second harem where King **Ahasuerus** stored used virgins and concubines. She did not again visit the king, unless she was summoned.

When **Esther** went to King **Ahasuerus**, he loved **Esther** above all other women, and she won more grace and favor with him than all the virgins, so that he set the crown upon her head and made her queen instead of **Vashti**.

Esther still didn't reveal her identity. Why bother?

6. While **Mordecai** sat at the palace gate, he overheard a plot by two of the *eunuchs* to do away with King **Ahasuerus**. **Mordecai** told Queen **Esther**; and **Esther** told King **Ahasuerus** in **Mordecai's** name. The matter was investigated, and it was written in the king's chronicles.

After these things, **Ahasuerus** promoted **Haman** (a direct descendant of the evil Amalek) way over the heads of all the other nobles. And all the king's servants bowed before **Haman**; for the king had so commanded concerning **Haman**. But **Mordecai** would

not bow down. Then the king's servants said to **Mordecai**: "Why do you transgress the king's command, are you crazy or something?"

Now, when they spoke to him daily and he did not listen to them, they told **Haman**, to see whether **Mordecai** could get away with this; for he had told them that he was a Jew and that Jews don't bow to people. When **Haman** saw that **Mordecai** would not bow down, **Haman** was enraged; he wanted revenge in a big way. When the *eunuchs* told **Haman** that **Mordecai** was a Jew, **Haman** plotted how to exterminate all the Jews throughout the whole kingdom of **Ahasuerus**, to get back at **Mordecai**. But he wanted to choose an auspicious time. So, he cast pur—which means 'the lot'—and **Haman** settled on the month Adar. Then **Haman** said to King **Ahasuerus**:

7. "There is a certain people scattered among the people of your kingdom; their laws are different from everyone else's, and they do not keep the king's law: therefore, it is not in the king's interest to tolerate them. If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed; and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the king's treasuries." Then King **Ahasuerus** took his ring and gave it to **Haman**, the Jews' enemy. The king then said to **Haman**: "The silver is yours, and the people as well; do with them as you please."

Then the king's scribes were called. On the thirteenth of Nisan, (the first month), a decree was written, just as **Haman** had commanded. He sent letters all over the kingdom stating in the name of King **Ahasuerus**, that they should destroy, kill, and exterminate all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women, on the thirteenth day of Adar and that they should go ahead and plunder their possessions—why not? The couriers hurried at the king's command, so everyone could get ready for the slaughter and sacking at the end of the year.

Then the king and **Haman** sat down to drink. (Plotting genocide is such thirsty work!)

8. When **Mordecai** learned all that had happened, **Mordecai** tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes. He went out into the midst of the city, and cried out loud. He came within sight of the king's gate where no one could enter clothed with sackcloth.

Mordecai wasn't the only one! In every province, wherever the king's decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes. The fashion industry was in tatters!

When **Esther's** maidens and *eunuchs* came and told her, the queen was beside herself! Her uncle was a mess! She sent garments to clothe **Mordecai** so that he could take off his sackcloth; but he would not accept them.

Then **Esther** called for one of the *eunuchs* whom King **Ahasuerus** had appointed to serve her, and gave him a message for **Mordecai**, to find out what was going on. **Mordecai** told of the sum of money that **Haman** had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the destruction of the Jews. Also, he gave the *eunuch* a copy of the decree and told the *eunuch* to show **Esther** and to tell her to go in to the king, to make supplication and to entreat him for her people. The *eunuch* told **Esther Mordecai's** words. **Esther** sent him back to **Mordecai** with the following message: " Everyone in the kingdom knows that there's one law for anyone who comes into the inner court without summons--namely to be put to death--except those to whom the king shall hold out the golden scepter. I have not been summoned for the last thirty days."

And the *eunuch* told **Esther's** words to **Mordecai**. Then **Mordecai** commanded him to answer **Esther**: "Do not think in your heart that you alone of all the Jews will escape because you are in the king's house. Who knows whether you have not become royalty just for this?" Then **Esther** bade the *eunuch* return this answer to **Mordecai**: "Go and gather all the Jews that are in Shushan. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens will also fast. Then I will go in to the king, though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish." So **Mordecai** did just as **Esther** had commanded him.

9. On the third day **Esther** put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king. When **Ahasuerus** the king saw **Esther** the queen standing in the court, she obtained favor in his sight. The king held out to **Esther** the golden scepter that was in his hand. So **Esther** drew near and touched the top of the scepter.

Then the king said to her, "What is your petition Queen **Esther**, and what is your request? Even if it is half the kingdom, it will be given to you." And **Esther** answered: "If it please the king, let the king and **Haman** come today to the banquet which I have prepared." Then the king said: "Tell **Haman** to hurry to do as **Esther** has said." So the king and **Haman** came to the banquet which **Esther** had prepared.

And **Ahasuerus** said to **Esther** during the banquet: "What is your petition, Queen **Esther**? What is your request?" Then **Esther** answered: "If I have obtained favor in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to fulfill my request, let the king and **Haman** come to another banquet which I shall prepare for them, and then I will answer the king's question."

10. **Haman** went out that day with a glad heart. But when **Haman** saw **Mordecai** in the king's gate, and how **Mordecai** did not stand up or even notice him, **Haman** was filled with rage against **Mordecai**. Nevertheless, **Haman** restrained himself. When **Haman** came home, he sent for his friends and his wife. **Haman** recounted the splendor of his wealth and his promotion by the king way above the other nobles. **Haman** said: "Even **Esther** the Queen let no one come in with the king to the banquet that she prepared except me. And tomorrow I am again invited by her with the king. BUT ALL THIS MEANS NOTHING TO ME as long as I see **Mordecai** sitting at the king's gate!" Then **Haman's** wife and all his friends said to him: "Let a gallows be made, 75 feet high, and speak to the king early tomorrow so that **Mordecai** can be hanged. That will lighten your mood so you can go merrily with the king to the banquet." The proposal pleased **Haman**, so he caused the gallows to be made.

11. That night, King **Ahasuerus** could not sleep, so he commanded his scribes to read from the book of the chronicles--which usually put him to sleep. They read the entry stating that **Mordecai** had reported the plot by two of the king's *eunuchs* who had tried to do away with King **Ahasuerus**. And the king said: "What honor has been bestowed upon **Mordecai** for this?" The king's scribes said: "Nothing has been done for him." The king said: "Who is in the court?"

Now **Haman** had entered the outer court of the king's house, to speak to him about hanging **Mordecai** on the gallows which he had prepared. So the king's servants said to King **Ahasuerus**: "Behold, **Haman** is standing in the court." "Let him enter," said the king. So **Haman** came in. And the king said to him: "What shall be done to the man whom the king wishes to honor?" Now **Haman** thought in his heart: "Whom would the king wish to honor more than myself?" So **Haman** answered the king: "For the man whom the king wishes to honor— let royal apparel be brought which the king has worn, and a horse which the king has ridden, with a royal crown set upon its head. And let this garment and horse be given to one of the king's most exalted nobles; and let him clothe the man whom the king wishes to honor and lead him on horseback through the city, proclaiming before him: 'Thus shall be done to the man whom the king wishes to honor!'" Then the king said to **Haman**: "Make haste! Take the apparel and the horse and do all this to **Mordecai** the Jew who sits at the king's gate."

Haman then took the apparel and the horse, clothed **Mordecai**, and led him on horseback through the city, proclaiming before him: "Thus shall be done to the man whom the king wishes to honor!"

12. Then **Haman** hastened home with his hat down around his ears. When **Haman** told his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him, they changed their tune and said to him: "If **Mordecai** is of Jewish seed, you will not prevail against him."

Just then, the king's *eunuchs* came to lead **Haman** to the second banquet which **Esther** had prepared for him and King **Ahasuerus**.

Again, the king said to **Esther**, "What is your petition, Queen **Esther**? It will be granted to you. What is your request? Even if it is half the kingdom, it will be done." Then Queen **Esther** answered: "If I have found favor in your sight, O King, let my life be given to me at my petition, and my people at my request. For we are sold, I and my people, to be exterminated and to perish!"

Then King **Ahasuerus** said to Queen **Esther**: "Who is he who dares to do so?!" And **Esther** said: "The enemy is this wicked **Haman**!"

Haman shrank in terror before the king and queen. The king leapt up in his wrath and went into the garden. **Haman** crawled over to plead for his life from Queen **Esther**, for he saw that the king was determined to kill him. When the king returned to the banquet; he saw that **Haman** had fallen upon the couch where **Esther** was. The king then said: "Will you violate the queen in my presence here in my house?!" One of the *eunuchs* piped up: "See also, in **Haman's** house, there is a gallows 75 feet high which **Haman** made for **Mordecai** who saved the life of the king." "Hang him on it instead," said the king. So they hanged **Haman** on the gallows which he had prepared for **Mordecai**; and the king's wrath abated.

13. On that day Queen **Esther** told the king that **Mordecai** was her uncle, so King **Ahasuerus** took his ring and gave it to **Mordecai**. Then **Esther** spoke again before the king. She implored him to avert the evil plan of **Haman** against all the Jews. Then the king held out the golden scepter to **Esther**. So **Esther** arose, and stood before the king. And she said: "If it please the king, and if I have found favor in his sight, recall the letters of **Haman** which he wrote to destroy all the Jews in all the king's provinces. For how can I endure to see the evil which will come upon my people?" Then King **Ahasuerus** said to Queen **Esther** and to **Mordecai**: "You may write a second edict regarding the Jews in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring; but the first edict which has already been written in the king's name and sealed with the king's ring may not be recalled."

14. The scribes wrote out **Mordecai's** edict in the name of King **Ahasuerus**, sealed it with the king's ring, and sent letters by night couriers on swift horses. In this edict, the king allowed the Jews who were in every city to assemble and fight for their lives against all the people that might "attack them, their little ones and their women and plunder their possessions" in accordance with the first decree of King **Ahasuerus**.

Wherever the king's decree was read, there was rejoicing among the Jews.

A few months later, in the month Adar, on the day when the enemies of the Jews had hoped to have power over them, the Jews gathered throughout all the provinces of King **Ahasuerus** to lay

hands on those who had planned to hurt them. And all the nobles and administrators of the king aided the Jews, for the fear of **Mordecai** had fallen upon them. The man **Mordecai** was now great in the king's house, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces.

15. So the Jews smote all their enemies with sword and destruction, and did what they could to those who hated them. They also slew the ten sons of **Haman**, their enemy; but on the spoil they did not lay hands.

On that day, the king said to Queen **Esther**: "The Jews have slain five hundred men in Shushan and the ten sons of **Haman**. I can only guess what they must have done in the rest of the provinces! And now, what is your petition? It will be done!"

Then **Esther** said: "If it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews who are in Shushan to do tomorrow as they did today; and let **Haman's** ten sons be hanged upon the gallows." The king commanded it to be done. They hanged **Haman's** ten sons (although they were dead already). And the Jews gathered again and slew more men in Shushan; but they did not lay their hands on the spoil.

16. The other Jews who were in the king's provinces had also stood up for their lives. They slew seventy-five thousand of those who hated them; but they did not lay their hands on the spoil. When the triumph was complete, the Jews rested and made it a day of feasting and of gladness and a day of sending gifts to one another.

Then **Mordecai** sent letters to all the Jews throughout the provinces of King **Ahasuerus**, charging them to observe the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar every year, as days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions to one another, and gifts to the poor because on these days the Jews had rest from their enemies. Queen **Esther** established *these* matters of Purim: the commemorative fast and the commemorative feast and the communal sharing of portions and gifts. And the Jews did as it was written by Queen **Esther** and **Mordecai**.