



THE NCSY MEGILLAH COMPANION FOR TEENS

A WORK OF EXPLANATION AND INSPIRATION
BY NCSY'S TEEN LEADERS

חג פורים שמחה!



Introduction

Dear Reader,

Chag Purim Sameach! Happy Purim! On this day of tremendous joy and happiness for the Jewish people, we carve time out of our festivities to sit and listen to the ten chapters of Megillat Esther, the Book of Esther. Sometimes the reading feels long, and the English translation is hard to follow, so we're providing you with this handy dandy Megillah Companion! With chapter by chapter summaries, inspiring insights, and creative activities and images, this booklet will hopefully help this engaging story truly come to life before your very eyes!

Special thank you to all the teens who wrote for this booklet, and a tremendous token of gratitude to the exceptional National Ambassadors of Education who planned, edited, wrote and delegated to make this idea a reality.

May we learn from the courage of Esther, and recognize the message in our days that Hashem is always with us, even in times of hardship.

YPPAH MIRUP!
FROM NATIONAL BOARD

Chapter 1

There was a king named Achashveirosh who was in charge of a lot of provinces. In his third year being king, he threw a huge party for the elite and officials. This party was epic, it lasted 180 days and it was high class. After this party ended, Achashveirosh threw another party for anyone who lived in the capital, Shushan. While Achashveirosh was throwing his party, his wife, Queen Vashti, made a party for all of the women. On the last day of Achashveirosh's party, he was drunk and ordered Vashti to come to his party so he could show her off. She refused, which got Achashveirosh really upset! So the king's advisors told him that he should get rid of Vashti and to make a declaration to the provinces that every woman must listen to her husband.

SPARKS OF INSPIRATION

When Achashveirosh was drunk, he ordered his wife to come to his party in order to show her off. She refused, and he exploded with anger. His advisors told him to get rid of his wife and he listened to his advisors' words. But a while after he listened to his advisors' words, and got rid of Vashti, he missed her. Achashveirosh wasn't thinking rationally when he got rid of Vashti because he was angry and drunk. But at the moment, it made perfect sense to him to discard his brazen wife. Many times in life we feel so upset at our circumstance and we make a rash decision. When we do that, we end up making life more difficult. Therefore if we get angry, we should take a step back, calm ourselves down so we can make an intelligent decision.



Chapter 2

In Perek Bet, Achashverosh wakes up from his drunken stupor and realizes he has no wife. He calls all of the virgins to his palace, in hopes of finding a new wife. Mordechai hears the call and sends Esther to answer the call. Esther follows the King's instructions meticulously and wins his heart, becoming queen. Mordechai finds out that Bigtan and Teresh are trying trying to kill the king, and tells Esther to tell the king, thereby saving the king's life.

SPARKS OF INSPIRATION

When Mordechai is introduced, we are told that he comes from Shevet Binyamin. The Pasuk says **איש יהודי הָיָה** איש יהודי הָיָה - **בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה וְשֵׁמוֹ מֶרְדֵּכָי בֶן יָאִיר בֶּן שִׁמְעִי בֶן קִישׁ אִישׁ יְמִינִי** - There was a Judean man in Shushan the capital, whose name was Mordecai the son of Jair the son of Shimei the son of Kish, a **Benjamite**." Why does the Pasuk specify that? **What's the significance of Mordechai being from Binyamin?**

Perhaps the answer lies in the unbelievable act of Mordechai not bowing down to

Haman later in the story. By not bowing down, Haman became furious, and set out to destroy the Jews. Where does that courage that Mordechai had come from?

Well, let's take a look at his family history. When Yaakov and all of his sons encountered Eisav after 20 years with Lavan, they all bowed down to Eisav and his men, but Binyamin was not born yet. Binyamin has a purity of soul that is passed down through all of his descendants. Mordechai had this trait, which allowed him not to bow down to Haman. Let's take this opportunity to become familiar with our traits and use them for good!

A PUN:

HOW DO WE KNOW MORDECHAI WAS NOT AMBIDEXTROUS?

אִישׁ יְהוּדִי הָיָה בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה וְשֵׁמוֹ מֶרְדֵּכָי בֶּן יָאִיר בֶּן שִׁמְעִי בֶן קִישׁ אִישׁ יְמִינִי
TURNS OUT HE WAS RIGHT-HANDED (BECAUSE 'יְמִינִי' IS HEBREW FOR "RIGHT") ALTHOUGH IN CONTEXT HERE IT'S REFERRING TO MORDECHAI AS A DESCENDANT OF THE TRIBE OF BENYAMIN.

Chapter 3

In this Perek, Haman gets a promotion! He is now the head of all of the king's servants. The only problem is that everyone bows down every time Haman passes through the room, and Mordechai is not about that life. Of course, this does not exactly fly with Haman. In fact, he is pretty furious, so much so that he wants to kill all of the Jews. Naturally, Haman decides to have a lottery that would determine the day that would be best to kill all of the Jews. He then goes to the king and informs him of what he wishes to do, gets his ring and permission, and sends letters to all of the princess informing them of his massive plan to kill of the Jews. Talk about a cliffhanger! What in the world is going on here?

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

Obvious problem: Haman has insane anger problems. Did he really only decide to kill ALL Jews based on ONE Jew not bowing down to him?

Other problem #1: Pasuk Seven basically announces that "a lottery was drawn." By who? Why wasn't it specified whether it was Haman, a servant, or someone else altogether?

Other problem #2: What kind of king just gives someone his ring and lets them make any law they desire??? Trust problems taking on a never-before-seen level!

This is Haman.

Haman looks nice, but he is pretty deceiving.

Haman actually has a plot to kill the entire Jewish population.

Haman has a fancy ring, but he uses it to do mean things.

Every year, we boo when we hear "Haman".

This is Haman.

Don't be like Haman.



Other problem #3: Such a weird date to be chosen, and we have no specific reason as to WHY that particular date.

Other problem #4: On a more serious note- Mordechai is obviously incredibly inspiring by not bowing down to Haman. In retrospect, that could have been terrible. However, if this really was the reason that the entire Jewish population was being antagonized, I wonder if he felt guilty or if anyone else thought it was the wrong thing for him to have done.

Chapter 4

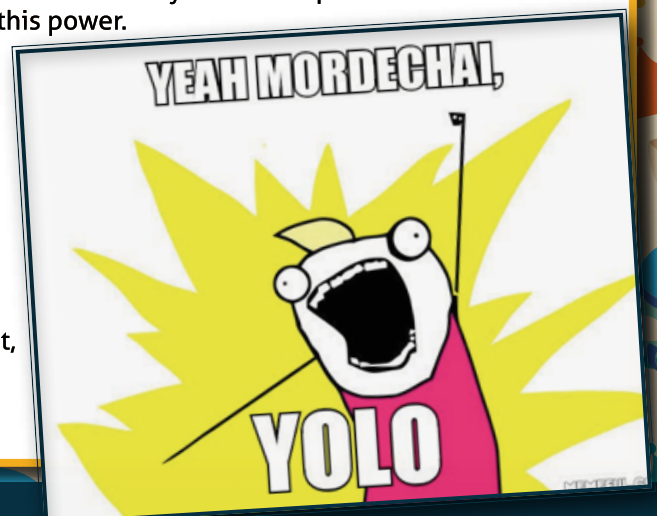
Mordechai finds out about Haman's plot against the Jews, and he begins to mourn. He rips his clothes, covered himself in ashes, and the Jews join in his mourning. Esther finds out about Mordechai and his depression, so she sends her servant, Hatach to find out why. Mordechai tells Hatach all that has transpired, and tells him to ask Esther to plead with Achashveirosh to spare the Jews. Esther replies, that she wasn't called by the king and if someone comes to the King without a summons, and the King does not bow his scepter to that person, than they shall be put to death. Finally she agrees to do Mordechai's request. But she asks Mordechai to tell the Jews to fast for three days, and she will do the same, in the hopes of Achashverosh granting her permission to meet with him.

SPARKS OF INSPIRATION

Mordechai is desperate, he pleads with her, "The Jews need to be saved! You must help us! Talk to the King!" I don't know about you, but if I were the queen of 127 countries (mark my words, I will be queen one day) and I were the only hope for the survival of my people, I would feel pretty obligated to do something about it. But instead of heeding Mordechai's plea and acting swiftly and decisively on the issue, she hesitates. **וְאֲנִי לֹא נִקְרָאתִי** - "But I have not been summoned to the King in thirty days!" Esther is worried that Achashverosh won't accept her meeting, and he will kill her! So Mordechai replies to her, "In one year's time from now, the massacre of the Jews will occur. And in that time, **לְעֵת כְּוֹאֵת הַנֶּעֱתָ לְמַלְכוּת** - Who knows if you keep the kingdom?" After he says this, it is then that Esther listens to him, and agrees to speak with the King.

There is a beautiful idea that can be taught from this. What was it exactly that Mordechai was saying? Essentially, he was saying: **Live in the now. Seize the moment.** Carpe Diem. YOLO. However you want to phrase it. Mordechai was saying to Esther, that she has the kingdom right now, she has this power.

But who knows what will happen in a year? A few months? The next day? At any moment, Achashverosh will decide that he has no interest in her, and he will discard her and maybe even kill her, just like he did with Vashti. So what's the difference if he doesn't find favor in her now, or if he doesn't find favor in her then? The bottom line, is Esther had an opportunity to do something truly great; to save an entire people, HER people, from a genocide. When a moment like that comes, it isn't always the best idea to weigh the pros and cons, contemplate cause and effect, or go through a long and logical mental process, because at any moment, that opportunity will pass. It is up to the opportunist to seize opportunity.



Chapter 5

In a feat of tremendous bravery, Esther enters the King's inner chamber uninvited even though it may result in her death. King Achashverosh however welcomes her by extending his gold scepter. She responds by inviting him and Haman to a banquet she has prepared for later that same day. At the banquet, Esther asks them to attend another feast the next day. Haman leaves the palace after the banquet feeling proud since he was specifically honored with another invitation. On his way home, Haman is enraged to see Mordechai sitting at the gate, so Haman's family suggests that he prepared special gallows to hang Mordechai on when the time comes to kill all the Jews the next year.

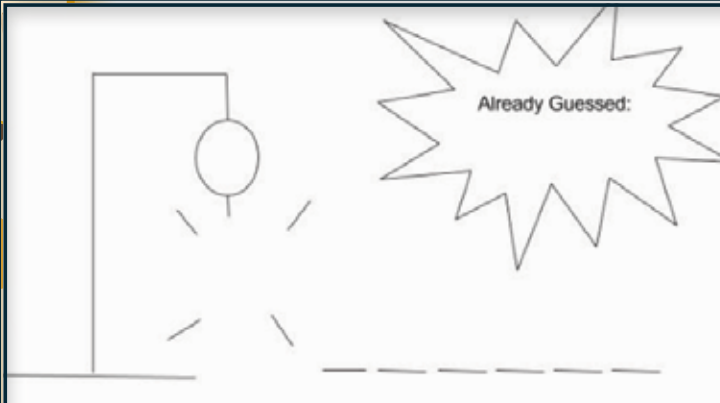
SPARKS OF INSPIRATION

Think about this. You're a Jew, in Shushan, at the time of the Purim story. You know the Queen is an ally, and you're hoping that she does something to retract the horrible decree signed by her husband, the King, to kill all the Jews. Instead of making a radical statement, she invites the enemy to a feast! You would probably lose all faith you had in your Jewish Queen, and feel completely and utterly lost.

The Talmud in Tractate Megillah 15b argues, that **this was exactly Esther's goal**. When the Jews saw that Esther was befriending Haman and feasting with him, they would remember that their ultimate redemption was not going to come in the hands of Esther alone, rather, Hashem would be their savior.

If the Jews had known that they had an ally in the palace, they might have forgotten to pray to Hashem for mercy, nor would they have done teshuva and repented for their misdeeds. In life, we must remember that even when there are capable people at the helm of our endeavours, only Hashem is the ultimate Redeemer, and we must continue to beseech Him for mercy.

<< Some Amusement (You may have to look in the Megillah for the correct answer.)



Instructions: Guess the name of the person who gave Haman the idea punish Mordechai by making him a hang(ed)man. For every incorrect letter, add a feature to the victim. Keep track of the already guessed letters in the provided bubble. Good luck!

Chapter 6

In this perek, Achashveirosh is having a hard time falling asleep so he decides to read through his chronicles. In it he discovers that Mordechai was never honored for having saved the king from Bigtan and Zeres's plot to kill Achashveirosh. At that moment Haman walks in so Achashveirosh asks him "what shall be done to the man whom the king wished to honor?" Haman thinks the king is speaking of him so he describes all the beautiful clothing, the parade, and the respect such a man deserves. As quite a shock to Haman, the king tells him to do all those things to Mordechai! Haman is forced to parade Mordechai around on a beautiful horse, in kingly garments, while the entire city heralds Mordechai, the very man who Haman wishes to kill.

SPARKS OF INSPIRATION

This perek is the beginning of Haman's downfall by, quite ironically, the hands of the very person he thought he would eliminate. Haman had no reason to believe that Achashveirosh was talking about him when he asked what should be done to a man who the king wishes to honor. Yet Haman's ego and desire for power put the notion into his head that he deserved the honor and that he was the man the king was referring to.

Haman is a great example of what can happen when we don't keep our egos in check and let our lofty desires for power get to our heads. The Mishna says that "Jealousy, desire, and honor remove a man from the world."

Haman's insatiable thirst for honor and power ultimately led to his downfall.

[When Achashveirosh starts texting Haman ►](#)



Chapter 7

The seventh Perek of Megillat Esther encompasses the second party Esther throws for Achashveirosh and Haman. Esther finally tells Achashveirosh about Haman's evil plan to wipe out the Jews. Achashveirosh then learns about Haman's gallows and his plan to hang Mordechai on them. Achashveirosh declares that Haman should be hung on them in place of Mordechai.

SPARKS OF INSPIRATION

When the king hears about Haman's plan to destroy the Jews, the brothers and sisters of Esther, he gets extremely angry. After he gets angry, he went into his garden. While the king is in the garden, Haman begs for Esther's forgiveness. However, he falls onto Esther because an angel pushed him. Achashveirosh comes back from the garden and he sees Haman lying on Esther and immediately becomes enraged that Haman, for it looks like Haman was intentionally assaulting Esther. This small part of the Purim story highlights that G-d made sure everything lined up so that in the end, the Jews would end up being victorious against the wicked Haman.

A PURIM RIDDLE:

WHY DIDN'T ESTHER RECEIVE AN IMPORTANT EMAIL FROM MORDECHAI WARNING HER IN ADVANCE OF HAMAN'S PLAN TO KILL THE JEWS?

BECAUSE UNFORTUNATELY SHE HAD THE ACHASH-VIRUS ON HER COMPUTER!

Chapter 8

Perek Chet picks up after Haman and his ten sons are hanged. Since Haman is hanged, Mordechai takes his place as King Achashverosh's right hand man. Even though Haman is dead, the decree he passed to kill the Jewish people in the kingdom was still in effect. Because of this, the King gave his ring that was necessary to make decrees to Esther for her to make a decree to counter Haman's wicked one. . After much deliberating and thinking, Esther and Mordechai came up with a mandate that grants the Jewish people throughout the kingdom the ability to arm and defend themselves from death on the day that Haman decreed for the Jewish people to be killed.

SPARKS OF INSPIRATION

The beginning of Megillat Esther is an extremely dark time for the Jewish nation, as we were constantly fearing persecution due to Haman's decree. Even though Hashem's name is not mentioned once in the entire Megillah, there is a silver lining of Hashem being there for the Jewish people and being the reason for the miracle of the survival of our nation. Hashem was able to make everything work out well, whether it is just the events lining up or leaders such as Mordechai and Esther.

When we, the Jewish people, feared persecution we were constantly living under a dark cloud and in a world of negativity. But in that time of darkness, Hashem came to our side and saved us by lifting this dark cloud off of us.

Because of this, we recite the pasuk from this perek, "Layehudim Hayta Orah V'simcha V'sason V'yikar - **The Jewish people had light, happiness and rejoiced**" during Havdalah. During Motzei Shabbat, we are in a time of sadness as Shabbat is over.

Between the delicious food, connections with family/friends and meaningful prayers, Shabbat is known as the highlight of our week. When Shabbat ends, we go into a time of dark and despair. Although the fire of Shabbat has gone out, the "orah" (light) of the Havdalah candle brings light into our week to come. **We rejoice in remembering each Motzei Shabbat the lesson of the Purim story, that no matter what lies ahead, we rejoice in knowing Hashem is our savior and constantly with us, even in times of darkness.**

Purim Word Search
Find the hidden words associated with Purim.

T	N	G	E	L	E	K	E	H	S	I	C	K	B	V	P	T
H	P	H	N	E	C	R	A	D	A	X	H	I	N	M	O	L
S	A	Y	A	O	V	K	Y	T	X	D	A	N	K	U	J	M
I	R	R	H	V	H	S	I	Q	T	R	R	G	Z	L	A	G
N	T	E	S	J	X	A	K	E	S	X	V	V	Q	N	R	V
A	Y	H	U	D	R	M	U	I	H	J	O	U	O	V	Q	S
A	W	T	H	M	C	Q	N	C	A	D	N	T	J	S	U	S
T	J	S	S	X	N	O	S	H	T	C	A	L	N	C	E	P
T	B	E	Z	A	M	A	S	S	A	G	E	X	U	C	E	B
M	F	I	B	J	T	I	A	T	G	L	Q	D	Y	W	N	H
J	R	Z	R	N	C	X	R	D	U	R	L	X	R	G	N	S
L	L	E	A	Q	F	E	Y	U	U	M	O	I	W	O	G	E
P	F	M	C	M	C	T	Q	H	P	E	E	G	G	K	M	R
U	A	P	A	I	S	R	E	P	X	R	S	F	G	E	K	E
H	T	M	M	I	S	H	L	O	A	C	H	E	A	E	M	Z
A	W	O	W	F	S	S	R	F	A	S	T	I	N	G	R	E
V	A	S	H	T	I	D	H	E	G	A	I	A	F	A	E	A

- ADAR
- BANQUET
- CHARVONA
- COSTUME
- ESTHER
- FASTING
- GROGGER
- HAMANTASCH
- HEGAI
- KING
- MANOT
- MASK
- MEGILLAH
- MISHLOACH
- MORDECAI
- PARTY
- PERSIA
- PURIM
- QUEEN
- SEUDA
- SHEKEL
- SHUSHAN
- TAANIS
- VASHTI
- ZERESH

Chapter 9

*H*aman's evil decree to kill the Jews was reversed, and the Jews were given free reign to defend themselves and persecute their enemies instead, making many non-Jewish nations fear Mordechai. This led to a spree in the Jewish military's success. This news traveled to King Achashverosh who told Esther all the Jews had done and offered her anything in the world that was her heart's desire. Esther's response was for the next day to be full of the same freedom as that day, and for Haman's sons to be killed, and Achashverosh did as she asked. The Jews then continued to beat all their enemies, without ever stealing their war spoils, and on the 14th day of Adar they feasted and celebrated (which is why we now celebrate Purim then.) At this point, Achashverosh decrees for all the bad Haman planned on the Jews to happen to him, as he had decreed from his lottery (pur), which is why we call the holiday Purim. Then Mordechai and Esther wrote down all about the holiday of Purim, in the Book of Esther, and sent it to all the Jews to ensure that they would continue to celebrate it in years to come.

SPARKS OF INSPIRATION

There is an idea throughout the story of Purim called "v'nahafoch hu," that things get turned into the opposite. The finality of this thought is prominent in this chapter, where many of the themes that have been so vital to the Purim story actually get changed at the last minute, and the opposite of what has been planned happens. This emphasis on irony is not lost on most Megillah readers, and can be seen in many other ways throughout the story.

A main time that this idea can be seen is after Haman and his sons spend the whole story trying to kill the Jews, and have a whole lottery to pick a date for our destruction, with an emphasis on the murder of Mordechai. Instead, on the very same date that Haman chose for his annihilation of the Jew's, he himself is hung with his sons from the very tree that was meant for Mordechai, and the Jews are given free reign to beat their enemies, instead of vice versa.

From this we can learn the importance of hope and perseverance. As it may have seemed to the Jews that they were done for, they nevertheless prayed to G-d, fasted, and held fast to their faith, which then allowed them to overcome the odds, defeat the enemies, and come out victorious.

Many times in life it seems to us that we may not succeed, but Purim shows us the importance of believing.



KEEP
CALM
AND
DO THE
OPPOSITE

Chapter 10

In this final chapter of the Megillah, we find out that Achashverosh imposes a tax on his kingdom. We are also told that all of the occurrences and happenings of Achashverosh's reign are recorded elsewhere. The Megillah then concludes with words of praise of Mordechai.

SPARKS OF INSPIRATION

The Megillah praises Mordechai by describing him as being "**Doresh Tov**," which the Ibn Ezra explains to mean that he **actively sought out opportunities to do good**, as opposed to merely waiting for people to ask him for help.

This value of being a person who is Doresh Tov is incredibly important, especially when it comes to Purim. In fact, earlier in the Megillah, Haman describes Bnei Yisrael as being "M'fuzar U'm'forad Bein Ha'amim" - "scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples" (3:8). He is saying that Jews are **disunified**, that we don't care about one another.

On Purim, we celebrate the fact that Haman is dead wrong. By giving Mishloach Manot and Matanot La'evyonim to one another, we show the world not only that we are unified, but that we are a nation full of people who are Dorshei Tov. Purim is a day on which we are all about giving to others, a day on which we actively seek out opportunities to do good. This Purim, let us try to be like Mordechai in this regard, by truly internalizing the value of being a Doresh Tov.



by **Eli Hyman** New Jersey Regional Board Member