

## Divine and Human Intervention in the Purim Story

### 1. Megilat Esther 9:27-28

**כז** קִיְמוּ וּקְבְּלוּ (וְקָבְלוּ) הַיְהוּדִים עֲלֵיהֶם וְעַל-זֶרְעָם וְעַל כָּל-הַגּוֹלִיּוֹם עֲלֵיהֶם, וְלֹא יַעֲבוּר--לְהֵיוֹת עֲשִׂים אֵת שְׁנֵי הַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה, כְּכַתְּבָם וְכִזְמָנָם: כָּכֵל-שָׁנָה, וְשָׁנָה.

**27** the Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them, so as it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to the writing thereof, and according to the appointed time thereof, every year;

**כח** וְהַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה נִזְכָּרִים וְנַעֲשִׂים כָּכֵל-דּוֹר וָדוֹר, מִלְּשָׁפְטָה וּמִלְּשָׁפְטָה, מִדִּינָה וּמִדִּינָה, וְעִיר וָעִיר; וַיְמִי הַפְּזוּרִים הָאֵלֶּה, לֹא יַעֲבֹרוּ מִתּוֹךְ הַיְהוּדִים, וְזָכָרָם, לֹא-יִסּוּף מִזֶּרְעָם. {ס}

**28** and that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed. {S}

### 2. Shabbat 88a

(שמות יט, יז) ויתיצבו בתחתית ההר – א"ר אבדימי בר חמא בר חסא מלמד שכפה הקב"ה עליהם את ההר כגיגית ואמר להם אם אתם מקבלים התורה מוטב ואם לאו שם תהא קבורתכם.

א"ר אחא בר יעקב מכאן מודעא רבה לאורייתא.

אמר רבא אעפ"כ הדור קבלוה בימי אחשורוש דכתיב (אסתר ט, כז) קימו וקבלו היהודים קיימו מה שקיבלו כבר

“And they stood under the mount” (Exodus 19:17), R. Avdimi b. Hama b. Hasa said: This teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, overturned the mountain upon them like an [inverted] barrel, and said to them, “If you accept the Torah, good; if not, there shall be your burial.” R. Aha b. Yaakov observed: This furnishes a strong *mod‘a* (protest) against the Torah. Said Rava, Yet even so, they re-accepted it in the days of Ahasuerus, for it is written, [the Jews] confirmed, and took upon them [etc.]:18 [i.e.,] they confirmed what they had accepted long before.

### 3. Pesachim 68b

תניא ר' אליעזר אומר אין לו לאדם בי"ט אלא או אוכל ושותה או יושב ושונה ר' יהושע אומר חלקהו חציו לאכילה ושתיה וחציו לבית המדרש. וא"ר יוחנן ושניהם מקרא אחד דרשו כתוב אחד אומר (דברים טז, ח) עצרת לה' אלהיך וכתוב אחד אומר (במדבר כט, לה) עצרת תהיה לכם ר' אליעזר סבר או כולו לה' או כולו לכם ור' יהושע סבר חלקהו חציו לה' וחציו לכם: א"ר אלעזר הכל מודים בעצרת דבעינן נמי לכם. מאי טעמא? יום שניתנה בו תורה הוא... אמר רב יוסף הכל מודים בפורים דבעינן נמי לכם מ"ט (אסתר ט, כב) ימי משתה ושמחה כתיב ביה.

R. Eleazar said: All agree in respect to the Feast of Weeks that we require [it to be] ‘for you’ too. What is the reason? It is the day on which the Torah was given. Rabbah said: All agree in respect to the Sabbath that we require [it to be] ‘for you’ too. What is the reason? And thou shalt call the Sabbath a delight. R. Joseph said: All agree that on Purim we require ‘for you’ too. What is the reason? Days of feasting and gladness is written in connection therewith.

4. Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm, *Festivals of Faith*

“Israel at the foot of Sinai was engulfed in the historic theophany; they heard the voice of God ...the felicitous and full confrontation with God elevates man to the highest ecstasy. But it robs from him his freedom to say no...and as long as man does not have the option of saying no, his yes has no merit...faith and belief and submission and renunciation are all meaningful only in the presence of the moral freedom to do just the opposite.”

“I suggest that just as the felicity of God’s presence is coercive and curbs freedom to disobey, so too the opposite, the tragedy of His absence, is coercive, and denies is the freedom to obey and believe...when he withdraws from us and abandons us, it requires a superhuman act of faith to believe, obey, pray, and repent.

Megillat Esther

3

ה איש יהודי, הנה בשושן הבירה; ושמו מרדכי, בן יאיר  
בן-שמעי בן-קיש--איש מינני. 5 There was a certain Jew in Shushan the castle, whose name was Mordecai the son of Jair the son of Shimei the son of Kish, a Benjamite,

ו אשר הגלה, מירושלים, עם-הגלה אשר הגלתה, עם  
יכניה מלך-יהודה--אשר הגלה, נבוכדנצר מלך בבל. 6 who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captives that had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away.

פתשגן הכתב,  
להנתן דת בכל-  
מדינה ומדינה,  
גלוי, לכל-העמים--  
להיות עתדים, ליום  
הנה. 14 The copy of the writing, to be given out for a decree in every province, was to be published unto all peoples, that they should be ready against that day.

טו הרצים יצאו  
דחופים, בדבר  
המלך, והדת נתנה,  
בשושן הבירה;  
והמלך והמן ישבו  
לשתות, והעיר  
שושן נבוכה. {ס} 15 The posts went forth in haste by the king's commandment, and the decree was given out in Shushan the castle; and the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city of Shushan was perplexed.  
{S}

Megillat Esther Chapter 4

וּמְרַדְכַּי, יָדַע אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשָׂה, וַיִּקְרַע מְרַדְכַּי אֶת-בְּגָדָיו, וַיִּלְבָּשׁ שָׂק וְאַפָּר; וַיֵּצֵא בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר, וַיִּזְעַק זַעֲקָה גְדוֹלָה וּמְרָה.

**1** Now when Mordecai knew all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry;

**ב** וַיָּבֹא, עַד לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר-הַמֶּלֶךְ: כִּי אֵין לְבֹא אֶל-שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ, בְּלְבוּשׁ שָׂק.

**2** and he came even before the king's gate; for none might enter within the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.

**ג** וּבְכָל-מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה, מִקּוֹם אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר-הַמֶּלֶךְ וַתְּבוֹא מִגֵּיעַ--אֲבָל גְּדוֹל לְהִיָּוָדִים, וְצוּם וַיְכִי וּמִסָּפַד; שָׂק וְאַפָּר, נִצַּע לְרַבִּים.

**3** And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

**ד** וַתְּבוֹאֵנָה (וַתְּבוֹאֵנָה) נְעוּרוֹת אֶסְתֵּר וְסֵרִיסָיָה, וַיִּגִּדּוּ לָהּ, וַתַּחֲתֹלֶחַל הַמֶּלֶכָה, מְאֹד; וַתִּשְׁלַח בְּגָדִים לְהַלְבִּישׁ אֶת-מְרַדְכַּי, וּלְהַסִּיר שָׂקוֹ מִעָלָיו--וְלֹא קָבַל.

**4** And Esther's maidens and her chamberlains came and told it her; and the queen was exceedingly pained; and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai; and to take his sackcloth from off him; but he accepted it not.

**ה** וַתִּקְרָא אֶסְתֵּר לְהַתָּךְ מִסֵּרִיסַי הַמֶּלֶךְ, אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱמִיד לִפְנֵיהָ, וַתְּצַוֶּהוּ, עַל-מְרַדְכַּי--לְדַעַת מַה-זֶּה, וְעַל-מַה-זֶּה.

**5** Then called Esther for Hathach, one of the king's chamberlains, whom he had appointed to attend upon her, and charged him to go to Mordecai, to know what this was, and why it was.

**ו** וַיֵּצֵא הַתָּךְ, אֶל-מְרַדְכַּי--אֶל-רְחוֹב הָעִיר, אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר-הַמֶּלֶךְ.

**6** So Hathach went forth to Mordecai unto the broad place of the city, which was before the king's gate.

**ז** וַיִּגַּד לוֹ מְרַדְכַּי, אֶת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר קָרָהוּ; וְאֵת פְּרִשְׁת הַכֶּסֶף, אֲשֶׁר אָמַר הֵמָּן לְשָׂקוֹל עַל-גִּגְזֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בִּיהוּדִים (בִּיהוּדִים)--לְאַבְדָּם.

**7** And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, and the exact sum of the money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them.

**ח** וְאֵת-פִּתְשֹׁנָה כְּתַב-הַדָּת אֲשֶׁר-נָתַן בְּשׁוֹשַׁן לְהַשְׁמִידָם, נָתַן לוֹ--לְהִרְאוֹת אֶת-אֶסְתֵּר, וּלְהַגִּיד לָהּ; וּלְצִוּוֹת עָלֶיהָ, לְבֹא אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהִתְחַנֵּן-לוֹ וּלְבַקֵּשׁ מִלְּפָנָיו--עַל-עַמָּה.

**8** Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given out in Shushan to destroy them, to show it unto Esther, and to declare it unto her; and to charge her that she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him, for her people.

**ט** וַיָּבֹא, הַתָּךְ; וַיִּגַּד לְאֶסְתֵּר, אֵת דְּבָרֵי מְרַדְכַּי.

**9** And Hathach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

**י** וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר לְהַתָּךְ, וַתְּצַוֶּהוּ אֶל-מְרַדְכַּי.

**10** Then Esther spoke unto Hathach, and gave him a message unto Mordecai:

**יא** כָּל-עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְעַם-מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ יָדְעִים, אֲשֶׁר כָּל-אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר יָבֹא-אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל-הַחֲצַר הַפְּנִימִית אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יִקְרָא אַחַת דָּתוֹ לְהַמִּית, לְבַד מֵאֲשֶׁר יוֹשִׁיט-לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-שַׁרְבִיט הַזֶּהָב, וְחַיָּה; וְאִנִּי, לֹא נִקְרָאתִי לְבֹא אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ--זֶה, שְׁלוֹשִׁים יוֹם.

**11** 'All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law for him, that he be put to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live; but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days.'

**יב** וַיִּגִּדּוּ לְמְרַדְכַּי, אֵת דְּבָרֵי אֶסְתֵּר.

**12** And they told to Mordecai Esther's words.

**יג** וַיֹּאמֶר מְרַדְכַּי, לְהַשִּׁיב אֶל-אֶסְתֵּר: אַל-תִּדְמִי בְנַפְשֶׁךָ, לְהַמְלֵט בֵּית-הַמֶּלֶךְ מִכָּל-הַיְּהוּדִים.

**13** Then Mordecai bade them to return answer unto Esther: 'Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews.

יד כי אם-הַתְּרוּשׁ תְּחַרְשִׁי, בְּעֵת הַזֹּאת--רוּחַ וְהַצִּלָּה יִעֲמוּד לְיִהוּדִים מִמְּקוֹם אֲחֵר, וְאֶת וּבֵית-אָבִיךָ תֹאבְדוּ; וּמִי יוֹדֵעַ--אִם-לָעֵת כְּזֹאת, הִצַּעַתָּ לְמַלְכוּת.

**14** For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then will relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house will perish; and who knoweth whether thou art not come to royal estate for such a time as this?'

טו וְהֵאמֵר אֶסְתֵּר, לְהָשִׁיב אֶל-מָרְדֳּכָי.

**15** Then Esther bade them return answer unto Mordecai:

טז לָךְ כְּנֹסֶס אֶת-כָּל-הַיְהוּדִים הַנִּמְצָאִים בְּשׁוּשַׁן, וְצוּמוּ עָלַי וְאֶל-הַתְּכֵלֵי וְאֶל-תְּשׁוּבוֹתֵי שְׁלִשֵׁת יָמִים לַיְלָה וְיוֹם--גַּם-אֲנִי וְנַעֲרָתַי, אֲצוּמִם כֹּן; וּבְכֵן אָבוֹא אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ, אֲשֶׁר לֹא-כְדָת, וְכֹאֲשֶׁר אֲבָדְתִי, אֲבָדְתִי.

**16** 'Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day; I also and my maidens will fast in like manner; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish.'

יז וַיַּעֲבֵר, מָרְדֳּכָי; וַיַּעַשׂ, כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר-צִוְתָהּ עָלָיו אֶסְתֵּר.

**17** So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.

#### Maimonides, Mishneh Torah: Hilchot Megilla V'Chanukah 2:18

כל ספרי הנביאים וכל הכתובים, עתידין ליבטל לימות המשיח, חוץ ממגילת אסתר--הרי היא קיימת כחמישה חומשי תורה, וכהלכות של תורה שבעל פה, שאינן בטילין, לעולם. ואף על פי שכל זכרון הצרות ייבטל, שנאמר "כי נשכחו הצרות הראשונות, וכי נסתר, מעיניי" (ישעיהו סה,טז)--ימי הפורים לא ייבטלו, שנאמר "וימי הפורים האלה, לא יעברו מתוך היהודים, וזכרם, לא יסוף מזרעם" (אסתר ט,כח).

Although all memories of the difficulties endured by our people will be nullified, as [Isaiah 65:16](#) states: "For the former difficulties will be forgotten and for they will be hidden from My eye," the celebration of the days of Purim will not be nullified, as [Esther 9:28](#) states: "And these days of Purim will not pass from among the Jews, nor will their remembrance cease from their seed."

#### Lamm, Festivals of Faith

"It is in the Purims of life, when we have no clear proof that God is with us or against us, that there is a special virtue in accepting the Torah... The real test of kabbalat HaTorah is not Shavuot but Purim.

What is accepted in high moments and hours, or rejected in low moments does not always last the great majority of moments and hours, of days and months and years, when we live neither on the mountains nor in the valleys but on boring plateaus; when the days in the office and the evenings at home follow each other in dull succession. Then does our commitment have the greatest value the strongest effect. Then it deserves the highest praise."