

Yoram Hazony

"God and Politics in (Megillas) Esther"

concepts, phrases, many sentences and references taken from Professor Hazony's book and from BT Megillah

וְלֹא יִתֵּר אֶפְרָיִם הַמְּוֹקֵפִין הַזֵּה מִיָּמֵינוּ
 יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן נֹון קֹרֵא בְּמִטָּה בְּכַפְרַיִם וְעִירֹת

Megillahs Esther is read, to the citizens of cities, that were surrounded by walls, at the time of Joshua, on the 15th of Adar.

This law is based on a wall at the time of Joshua, rather than at the time of the Purim story, because the walls of Jerusalem and its great cities lay in ruins, as a result of the Babylonian conquest. This rule spares Eretz Yisroel from her disgrace.

Furthermore, Joshua led the nation in its first battle against Amalek (Ex 17:8-16), so it is appropriate to link this holiday, that celebrates the defeat of Haman, who was an Amalekite, with Joshua.

Haman was described as an Agagite, a follower of Agog, king of the Amalekites.

6:6 and Haman said in his heart.

וַיֹּאמֶר הָמָן בְּלִבּוֹ

2:15 and Esther found favor
in the eyes of all who saw her.

וַתְּהִי אֶסְתֵּר
נְשִׂאת חַן בְּעֵינֵי כָּל רוֹאֵיהָ

2:22 and the matter became known to Mordechai.

וַיִּוָּדַע הַדָּבָר לְמֹרְדֵכַי

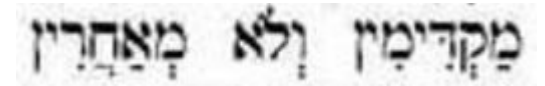
9:10 and they did not take any booty.

וַיִּכְבְּזוּהָ לֹא שָׁלְחוּ אֶת יָדָם

9:28 remembrance will never cease from their descendents.

וְזַכְרָם לֹא יִסּוּף מִזִּרְעָם :

This proves that the Book of Esther was composed with the Divine spirit, and counteracts the suggestion that G-d is not found in the Book of Esther. All require G-d's level of knowledge.



מִקְדִּימִין וְלֹא מְאַחֲרִין

We advance, we do not postpone.

If Purim falls on a Shabbos, we do not postpone it, but we observe it one day earlier.

Why?

Because, we cannot carry young children in a 'reshus harabim' on Shabbos and we needed to build a wooden platform for the "King" to stand on and that could not be done on Shabbos.

Rambam (1135 - 1209) ranked the Book of Esther immediately after the Pentateuch in importance.

The Festival of Purim was not celebrated by the Jewish sect of Qumran as part of their sacred calendar. The Book of Esther is not found amongst the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Is the story true? It could be. The story is believable, except for a few details, such as, the irreversibility of the law of the Medes and the Persians ^(Esther 8:8), the king's willingness for the Jews to wage war within his own capital city. ^(9:12-16)

There are no supernatural elements. The Persian king is mentioned 190 times in 167 verses, yet G-d is not mentioned at all.

King	Country	Year of Rule		Comment
		AC	BCE	
Nebuchadnezzar	Babylon	3319-3363	441	Destroyed Jerusalem
Evil Merdoch	“	3363-3386	393	Freed King Yochanya
Belshazzar	“	3386-3389	374	Last King of Babylon
Darius, the Mede	Medea	3389-3390	371	Defeated Belshazzar
Cyrus	Persia	3390-3393	370	Returned Exiles
Achashverosh (Xerxes I)	“	3393-3407	367	Husband of Esther
Darius, the Persian	“	3407-3442	353-318	Esther's son. Authorized completion of Temple.

History suggests that Artaxerxes I ruled Persia from 465 to 424 BCE immediately after Xerxes I.

Did you know?

- Mordechai, himself, determined it was not proper to prostrate himself before Haman, even at the risk of his life and the life of his people.
- Esther willingly maintained the King's favor, even though it violates the Jewish prohibition against such liaisons.
- Esther declared a fast, even though it obliterated the Passover holiday that year.
- Esther and Mordechai institute a new fast day and a new holiday, violating the rule "not to add" to the law. (Megillah 14a) 48 prophets and 7 prophetesses prophesied in Israel. None added or took away anything that is written in the Torah, until the story of Esther. Why was this allowed and rejoiced? G-d is not overtly mentioned in the story, but the series of coincidences - each the result of human activity- shows us his involvement. This is the transition from the light of heaven to the light coming from a star. A necessary transition to human initiative and responsibility.

The courage of Mordechai and Esther marks the beginning of the Rabbinic period and the creation of the Talmud, since the Torah was now in the hands of men.

The Book of Esther teaches us to recognize God's action in a world that is skeptical of miracles, but will accept the logical, predictable, explainable sequence of events.

The result is the same salvation, not through miracles, such as, the 10 plagues and splitting of the Red Sea, but through politics, power and the influence of human nature.

But never forget who is behind these factors, also.

The first chapter of the Book of Esther describes a party that lasted 180 days.

It involved a drunken tantrum, a king who fights with his wife, banishes her, consults with his advisors and calls for an empire-wide beauty contest, but never ever mentions the subject of the story - the Jews.

The story could have started with sentence 5 of chapter 2, but the purpose of this chapter is to acquaint us with the host - the personality of the king himself.

To say the story is believable, is not to say that it is true. Classical writers Herodotus, Ctesias, Xenophon, and Strabo agree with much of what the author of Esther says about King Xerxes.

- He had an extensive empire. 1:1-20
- He had a nasty temper. 1:12, 7:7-8
- He gave magnificent gifts. 5:3, 6:6-7
- Persian kings did have rousing drunken parties with lavish entertainment. 1:4-7
- He had several princely advisors. 1:14
- He had an efficient postal service. 3:13, 8:10

REF: Archeology and the Book of Esther - Carey Moore, The Biblical Archeologist - 1975

The inscriptions and clay tablets of the ancient Babylonians and Persians were deciphered, thanks to G H Rawlinsons, who analyzed the cuneiform inscriptions in the Behistun Rock in the Zagros mountains in 1854.

Achashverosh is the Hebrew name.

Khshayarshan is the old Persian name.

Xerxes I (485 - 465 BCE) is the Greek name.

He was defeated by the Greeks at Thermopylae and Salamis (480 BCE) and Platea (479 BCE), but defeated Egypt and Babylon and built Persepolis.

The courtyard, in the Acropolis, of the city of Susa (described in Esther 1:5-6), has been found. This palace was built by Darius, Xerxes' father, who described the building of the palace on a foundation document found at the site. C Moore p72

The name Mordechai is an authentic personal name, appearing in a 5th century Aramaic document, as well as the treasury tablets found at Persepolis.

It was spelled:

- Mrdk
- Mardukka
- Murdukka
- Marduk Nasir

Esther's name is also of authentic personal origin, but we are not sure if it's a variation of the name of Ishtar - the Goddess of love - or Estella - a star.

Reservations, regarding the historical status of the details in the Book of Esther, are:

- There is no evidence of anti-Jewish persecution in ancient Persia.
- In fact, Persian society was open to all, as long as they paid their taxes.
- The queen of Xerxes, at the time of this story was Amestris (Herodotus, History III 84), but that is not to say that Xerxes had only one queen.

Achashverosh,

Khshayarshan Khashar Arshan I,

whom the Greeks called Xerxes I, ruled the Persian empire from 486 - 465 B.C.E., a century after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586.

The great feast at the beginning of Esther in 483.

The first Purim is in the year 473 B.C.E.

Y.H. p. 210

וַיְהִי אֵינוֹ אֱלֹה לְשׁוֹן צַעַר

Whenever the term “va’yehi” is used in scripture, it is nothing but an expression of pain - it introduces a painful narrative.

It is a combination of the words “vey” “וי” - woe and “הי”- mourning (based on Megillah 11a).

And it was in the days of Achashverosh.

אע"פ שאין לו עכשיו והיה לו קודם לבן : ויהי
בימי אחשורוש אמר רבי לוי ואיתימא רבי

In those days, when King Achashverosh sat on his royal throne - Esther 1:2

In the 3rd year of his reign, he made a feast - Esther 1:3

The first verse suggests the feast was early in his reign.
The 2nd verse specifies the 3rd year. Which is correct?

The word 'כשבת', 'he sat', should be understood as, when he was 'at ease' - 'שנתישבה'. That occurred during the 3rd year of his reign. For, according to Achashverosh's calculations, that was the 70th year of the exile of the Jews, and if the exile lasted more than 70 years, it would never be reversed. Since the Jews had not been redeemed, their fate was clear and he was relieved, so he made the great feast.

In the 3rd year of his reign.

בְּשַׁנַּת שְׁלוֹשׁ, לְמַלְכוֹ, עָשָׂה מִשְׁתֶּה, לְכָל-שָׂרָיו
וְעַבְדָּיו: חֵיל פָּרַס וּמְדֵי, הַפְּרָתִים וְשָׂרֵי
הַמְּדִינֹת--לְפָנָיו.

The king, who has dominion of 127 provinces, from India to Ethiopia.
His main activity was to host a party for his political, military and
administrative elite.

Even the lowest of commoners (1:5) had access to the garden of the palace for
7 days.

בְּהִרְאֹתוֹ, אֶת-עֲשֶׂר כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ, וְאֶת-יָקָר, תְּפַאֲרַת גְּדוּלָתוֹ;

יָמִים רַבִּים, שְׂמוֹנִים וּמֵאָת יוֹם.

The riches of his kingdom.

He wishes to show his immense power, financially and administratively, to curry gratitude and flattery to heap honor upon him, from every corner of his empire and to create the impression that he is in control of the world.

It may be assumed that in the 3 years Achashverosh ruled, the empire has not yet been suitably impressed with his virtues as a leader.

Had he governed well, there would be no need for such an effort to ensure the people's affection.

Lacking the talent to secure their loyalty, via leadership qualities, he believes he can accomplish the same, by bribing the populace with food and drink.

The army of Persia and Medea, the nobles - Esther 1:3:9-11

הֵיל פֶּרְס וּמְדֵי

The kings of Medea and Persia - Esther 10:2:19-20

מְדֵי וּפֶרְס

Why did the order change in the two sentences?

Because the two countries stipulated that they would alternate. If a king came from one, the governor would come from the other.

This is reflected in the two sentences.

While the king, Achashverosh sat in his throne.

בְּיָמָיו, הָיָה--בְּשֵׁבֶת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ, עַל כִּסֵּא
מַלְכוּתוֹ, אֲשֶׁר, בְּשׁוֹשַׁן הַבִּירָה

The king has an appetite for ruling. This is one essential ingredient in the character of every ruler and, in fact, a primary aspect of man's nature.

The first quality, in the book of Moses, with respect to mankind - God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and they will rule over the fish in the sea, and over the birds in the skies, and over the cattle, and over the earth."

Y.H.

When he displayed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honor of his splendorous greatness.

בְּהִרְאֹתוֹ, אֶת-עֵשֶׂר כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ, וְאֶת-יָקָר, תְּפָאֶרֶת
גְּדוּלָתוֹ; יָמִים רַבִּים, שָׁמוֹנִים וּמָאתַיִם יוֹם

The word תפארת is written in Exodus 18:2, referring to the vestments of the Kohen Gadol.

It is, therefore, interpreted that Achashverosh displayed and even wore the priestly garments.

And when these days were filled.

וּבְמִלּוֹאת הַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה, עָשָׂה הַמֶּלֶךְ לְכָל-הַעָם הַנִּמְצְאִים
בְּשׁוֹשַׁן הַבֵּירָה לְמַגְדוֹל וְעַד-קָטָן מִשְׁתֵּה--שְׁבַעַת יָמִים
בַּחֲצַר, גִּנַּת בֵּיתוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ.

Only after he entertains his subjects, who lived in distant lands, did he invite those who lived in the capital.

Rav and Shmuel debated:

Was it wise, or was it foolish?

It was wise that he invited the distant subjects first, because he could appease the people of his own city anytime he wished, since they were nearby.

Or was it foolish? He should have first consolidated his support of the local population, his natural power base, to support him, if the outlanders revolted.

And the drinking was in accord with the law, that none should be compelled, but his officers should allow each man to do as that man wishes.

וְהִשְׁתִּיחַ כִּדְת, אֵין אִנְס: כִּי-כֵן יִסֵּד
הַמֶּלֶךְ, עַל כָּל-רַב בֵּיתוֹ--לַעֲשׂוֹת, כְּרָצוֹן
אִישׁ-וְאִישׁ.

That the king issued such a law. indicates how unusual it was for his government to concern itself with the will of the people.

Normally, if you came to a king's party and insulted the king by not drinking, the officers would kill that guest (R Levi Yalkut Shmimoni 104:8).

He knows there is no better way of gaining gratitude of others, than by using power to bestow liberty.

Queen Vashti made a feast for the women in the royal house.

גַּם וַשְׁתִּי הַמַּלְכָּה, עָשְׂתָה מִשְׂתֵּה נָשִׁים--בֵּית
הַמַּלְכוֹת, אֲשֶׁר, לְמֶלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֵרוּשׁ

The Megillah should have said that Vashti's banquet took place in the women's house, which is more private and not frequented by men. But, since the king intended to perform immoral acts, the women were close by.

Queen Vashti is the granddaughter of the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar.

To bring Vashti, the queen, to the king.

לְהָבִיא אֶת-וַשְׁתִּי הַמַּלְכָּה, לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ--בְּכֹתֵר מַלְכוּת
לְהִרְאוֹת הָעַמִּים וְהַשָּׂרִים אֶת-יָפְיָהּ, כִּי-טוֹבַת מְרֹאֵה הִיא

The climax of the festival was to be his show of power over the queen, before the people, “because she was beautiful and fair to look upon”.

We are told nothing of their relationship. When she appears in public for the first time, during six months of festivities, it is not as his partner in ruling, or his partner in life, but merely as another object in his demonstration of his total power.

But Vashti refuses to appear, exposing the king’s weakness before all the princes, nobles and even the common people of the empire. For 6 months, he has tried to show his omnipotence and yet, on the last night, at the last moment, he is proven impotent even in his own house - transformed into an object of laughter!!

The king turned to his advisors.

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ, לְחַכְמָיִם יְדַעֵי הָעַתִּים: כִּי-כֵן, דָּבַר
הַמֶּלֶךְ, לְפָנָיו, כָּל-יְדַעֵי דַת וְדִין

Achashverosh's move is a master stroke. He turns his personal shame into an issue of state; inviting his advisors to join him in doing justice and re-establishing the honor of the king.

(Esther 1:16) Memuchan turns the royal family's domestic spat into an empire-wide battle of the sexes, with the king representing all men against the constant challenges presented by the women in their homes.

Let the king give her royal estate to someone better than she.

אִם-עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב, יֵצֵא דְבַר-מַלְכוּת מִלְּפָנָיו, וַיִּכְתֹּב
 בְּדַתִי פָרֶס-וּמְדִי, וְלֹא יַעֲבֹר: אֲשֶׁר לֹא-תָבוֹא וְנִשְׁתִּי
 לְפָנָי הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֻׁרוּשׁ, וּמַלְכוּתָהּ יִתֵּן הַמֶּלֶךְ, לְרַעוּתָהּ
הַטּוֹבָה מִמֶּנָּה

Vashti is doomed to a life of celibacy. No-one who shared the king's bed can ever have another lover.

Imagine, Vashti could compare the prowess of her new lover with that of the king.

She will be stripped of her property, position and honor and forever be banished from the sight of the king.

That every man should rule in his own house.

וַיִּשְׁלַח סָפָרִים, אֶל-כָּל-מְדִינֹת הַמְּלֶךְ--אֶל-מְדִינָה
 וּמְדִינָה בְּכֹתֵבָה, וְאֶל-עַם וְעַם כְּלָשׁוֹנוֹ: לְהִיּוֹת כָּל-אִישׁ
שֹׂרֵר בְּבֵיתוֹ, וּמְדַבֵּר כְּלָשׁוֹן עִמּוֹ

With Memuchan's advice, Achashverosh will:

1. Prove that he, alone, rules.
2. Annihilate the queen's challenge to his control, by ensuring that she is never in a position to shame him again.
3. Cement the adherence, gratitude and honor of the people, by giving a gift of power to every adult male in the kingdom.

This was the same gesture the king had wished to achieve, through the 6 months of partying and free drinking of his wine.

When the king's rage subsided, he remembered Vashti.

אָחַר, הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, בְּשׂוֹף, חִמַּת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחֻשׁוּרוּשׁ--
זָכַר אֶת-וַשְׁתִּי וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר-עָשְׂתָהּ, וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר-נִגְזַר עָלֶיהָ

With this view, now that the party is over, we all can see the king's power is a fiction; a name, a face, but where is his reason? Must he destroy his queen for a passing drunken slight? For those who realized his lack of introspection, the party is a revelation and a harbinger of far worse to to come.

Y.H.

אָחַר, הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, כְּשֶׁךְ, חָמַת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶחְשׂוּרוֹשׁ--
זָכַר אֶת-וַשְׁתִּי וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר-עָשְׂתָהּ, וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר-נִגְזַר עָלֶיהָ

He remembered Vashti.

Some say that he could just as easily have reversed his decision and reinstated Vashti. No, say others, once the king has spoken, the honor of the king makes it impossible to reverse himself.

This is not so.

We read, in Herodotus book 3:11-15, that Xerxes' uncle, Artabanus, disagreed with the plan that Xerxes had announced to his troops; that they would invade Greece.

He had a vision at night that caused him to say, "I saw a vision last night and men of Persia, I ask your pardon for the change in plans.

I confess my error. I changed my judgement and will not make war against Greece."

אָחַר, הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, כְּשֶׁךְ, חִמַּת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶחְשָׁרוֹשׁ--
זָכַר אֶת-וַשְׁתִּי וְאֶת אֲשֶׁר-עָשְׂתָהּ, וְאֶת אֲשֶׁר-נִגְזַר עָלֶיהָ

He remembered Vashti.

Now, 3 years later, time has passed and the king's humiliation and his anger at Vashti has abated. He began to remember Vashti with longing.

The immutability of Persian law, and his own stubbornness, prevented him from reconciliation. So he takes his young men's advice to conscript the most attractive virgins from all quarters of the empire, so he might have a taste of each, in turn, until he finds one to his liking.

Achashverosh likes to force himself on women. Sexual craving is evidence of an overwhelming need to be loved and needed. It is evidence of a lack of control and power.

It is a perfect institution of rape, in which the king's will, is the only will, and his power is the only power.

And the king appointed
officers.

וַיִּפְקֹד הַמֶּלֶךְ פְּקִידִים, בְּכָל-מְדִינֹת מְלָכוֹתָו, וַיִּקְבְּצוּ אֶת-
כָּל-נְעָרָה-בְּתוּלָה טוֹבַת מְרֹאֶה אֶל-שׁוֹשַׁן הַבַּיִת אֶל-בֵּית
הַנְּשִׁים, אֶל-יַד הַגָּא סָרִיס הַמֶּלֶךְ שֹׁמֵר הַנְּשִׁים; וְנָתַן
תְּמַרְקִיָּהוּ

They gather every beautiful young maiden for the king, to bring to the king, for him to spend a night with. In effect, all the maidens would be violated by him and only one would be chosen queen.

Therefore, anyone who had a daughter, hid her from the appointed officers.

Y.H.

There was a Jewish man in Shushan, the capital. His name was Mordechai, the son of Yair, the son of Shimi, the son of Kish - a Benjamite.

אִישׁ יְהוּדִי, הָיָה בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה; וּשְׁמוֹ מֹרְדֵכַי, בֶּן
יָאִיר בֶּן-שִׁמֵּי בֶן-קִישׁ--אִישׁ יְמִינִי

Was Mordechai an “ish Yehudi”, i.e. “from the tribe of Judah” or was he “ish Yemini”, i.e. “from the tribe of Benjamin”?

The Gemara states that, in his honor, both of his parents are mentioned. His father’s tribe was Benjamin and his mother was from Judah.

There was a Jewish man in Shushan,
the capital. His name was Mordechai.

אִישׁ יְהוּדִי, הָיָה בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבְּיָרָה; וּשְׁמוֹ מֹרְדֵכַי, בֶּן
יָאִיר בֶּן-שֶׁמַּעִי בֶן-קַיִשׁ--אִישׁ יְמִינִי

We know little about Mordechai; only that he is a Jew and descended from those who were exiled from Jerusalem with the King of Judah, who had been exiled by Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon.

Only one fact is special regarding Mordechai, he lives, not in the town of Susa, where the Jewish quarter was, but in the central fortress called Susa, the capital, which was the center of Persian power and influence.

Who had been exiled from
Jerusalem, along with the exiles that
were exiled.

אֲשֶׁר הִגְלָהּ, מִירוּשָׁלַיִם, עַם-הַגְּלָהּ אֲשֶׁר הִגְלָתָהּ,
עַם יְכַנְיָה מֶלֶךְ-יְהוּדָה--אֲשֶׁר הִגְלָהּ, נְבוּכַדְנֶצַּר
מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל

It could simply have been written, “who had been among the exiles”.

We learn from the more complex description, that Mordechai went into exile of his own will.

He did so to create a holy atmosphere in Persia, so that Jews could survive there.

Esther

וַיְהִי אִמֵּן אֶת-הַדָּסָה, הִיא אֶסְתֵּר בֵּת-דָּדוֹ--כִּי אֵין
 לָהּ, אָב וְאִם; וְהַנְּעָרָה יָפֵת-הַתְּאֵר, וְטוֹבֵת מְרָאָה
 וּבְמוֹת אָבִיהָ וְאִמָּהּ, לְקַחְתָּהּ מִרְדֵּכַי לֹו לְבַת

Her Hebrew name is Hadassah.

The new name derives from the Persian word, “stara”, meaning ‘star’, which appeals to the followers of astrology in the fortress Susa.

Esther, in Hebrew letters, looks as if it were constructed from the Hebrew root, סתר, meaning ‘to conceal’, or ‘to hide’.

This can be read as Mordechai’s watchword, referring to his strategy of concealing that they are Jews, or associated with the holiness of God, or as Deuteronomy 31:18 states, “I will surely hide [הסתיר אסתיר] my face on that day” and Ezekiel 39:26-29, “And I will no longer hide [לא אסתיר עוד] my face from them”.

As a reward for the modesty of King Saul, it is mentioned that Esther descended from him.

זָכָרָה וְיָצְאָתָא מִמְּנוּ אֶסְתֵּר

Esther was the daughter of Mordechai's uncle and Targum Sheni traces Mordechai's uncle back to King Saul (Rashi).

She had neither father, nor mother.

וַיְהִי אִמֵּן אֶת-הַדָּסָה, הִיא אֶסְתֵּר בֵּת-דָּדוֹ--כִּי אֵין
לָהּ, אָב וְאִם; וְהִנְעָרָה יָפֶת-תֹּאֵר, וְטוֹבֵת מְרֹאֶה
וּבְמוֹת אָבִיהָ וְאִמָּהּ, לְקַחָהּ מִרְדְּכָי לֹו לְבֵת

We knew she was an orphan.

Why describe it again in this way?

When Esther's mother conceived, her father died.

When she was born, her mother died and therefore, she never did have a living father, or mother.

She did not tell.

לֹא-הִגִּידָה אֶסְתֵּר, אֶת-עַמָּהּ וְאֶת-מוֹלְדֹתָהּ: כִּי מְרֻדְכַי
צָוָה עָלֶיהָ, אֲשֶׁר לֹא-תִגִּיד.

Mordechai instructs his niece, Hadassah, not to divulge her name, her people, or her kindred and it is obvious she will be forced to make sacrifices in religious observance to maintain the facade. He also consents to allow her be known by her Persian name, Esther, meaning “star”.

אִין אֶסְתֵּר, מִגִּדַת מוֹלְדֹתָהּ וְאֶת-עַמָּהּ, כַּאֲשֶׁר צָוָה עָלֶיהָ,
מְרֻדְכַי; וְאֶת-מֵאמֶר מְרֻדְכַי אֶסְתֵּר עֲשָׂה, כַּאֲשֶׁר הִיטָהּ
בְּאִמְנָה אֶתוֹ

And Esther did as Mordechai instructed her, just as she did growing up in his household.

It seems that passivity is her own strategy, as well as her submissiveness, that makes her the favorite; first of Haggai and then of the king, himself. In Esther, the king had finally found a puppet, who could be the answer to his dreams of domination, or so he thought.

And when the maidens were gathered a second time and Mordechai was sitting at the King's gate.

וּבְהִקְבִיץ בְּתוּלוֹת, שְׁנִית; וּמְרַדְכַי, יֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר-
הַמֶּלֶךְ

Esther, at this point was already queen, what was the reason to gather the maidens again?

Mordechai had been asked by the king, how to get Esther to tell him of her origins.

Mordechai suggested gathering the maidens again. Mordechai said, "They will make Esther jealous and she will tell you."

Really, Mordechai hoped the king would find someone he liked more than Esther.

The next sentence tells us that even after the maidens were gathered, Esther did not reveal her origins. ... אין אסתר מגדת מולדתה וגו...

Mordechai sat in the gate of the King.

וּבַהֶקְבִּיץ בְּתוּלוֹת, שְׁנִית; וּמְרֹדֶכִי, יֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר-
הַמֶּלֶךְ

We learn that Mordechai is in the habit of sitting in the King's gate.

This is the receiving area of the citadel, where supplicants of the Empire came to obtain an audience with the King. All the important politics of the kingdom were discussed here. Mordechai must, by now, be a known figure. When a conspiracy developed to assassinate the king, Mordechai is sufficiently trusted, to obtain reliable information leading to the safety of the king and the punishment of the conspirators.

2:22:1-2

And the plot became known.

וַיִּוָדַע הַדָּבָר לְמְרֹדֶכִי, וַיִּגֵּד לְאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה; וַתֹּאמֶר
אַסְתֵּר לְמֶלֶךְ, בְּשֵׁם מְרֹדֶכִי

Mordechai's reasoning may seem incongruous, but it is sensible. Achashverosh has not been overly horrible to the Jews. There is no reason to think that any other successor regime would be better for the Jews. In fact, it could easily be worse. There is no reason to risk his death, where nothing will be gained by it. So Mordechai informs the authorities of the plot, by telling Esther and she tells the king in Mordechai's name.

Achashverosh has many flatterers, who seek to serve him, but do so for selfish reasons. They become more trouble than they are worth, but of immense value to a king is not someone who is submissive, but one who will initiate actions, so that his will will be done.

Here, Mordechai received no instructions from the king. He was independently, alert to the king's needs and was willing to use his judgement and talent in the King's service, even though siding with the king was risky.

Passive adherence offers the king only another body.
Activism offers the king the use of a mind.

Mordechai is, at least, one subject the king can rely upon.

Esther made good in his eyes.

וְתִיטֵב הַנְּעִרָה בְּעֵינָיו

2:15 -She found favor in all who looked upon her.

וַתְּהִי אֶסְתֵּר נְשֵׂאת חַן, בְּעֵינָיו כָּל-רְאִיָּה

2:17 - The king loved Esther more than all the women.

וַיֵּאָהֵב הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-אֶסְתֵּר מִכָּל-הַנְּשִׂים

It is clear that it is not mere beauty that is driving her success, but an understanding of the workings of political favor.

2:15 - She took only what Haggai advised.

כִּי אִם אֶת-אֲשֶׁר יֹאמַר הָגַי

Haggai's rapid advancement of Esther is not a gesture toward her, but a career move of his own. The sooner the king finds a queen, the better.

Esther makes it clear that she considers Haggai, the master and that his interest is exactly as hers. She makes it her business to understand what he wants and to do it. Esther found favor in his eyes and in the eyes of all who had power over her, by convincing them that she seeks their interests.

The king marries Esther in the 7th year of his reign.

And the bidding of Mordechai, Esther did.

וְאֶת-מֵאֲמַר מְרֹדֵכִי אֶסְתֵּר עָשָׂה

Mordechai was Esther's true husband and after being with Achashverosh, she returned to him.

A woman, who has relations with another man, is forbidden to her husband. However, she may do so if the association with the other man was not done willingly (unless her husband is a Kohen) (see Kesubos 51b).

Here, Esther's activities are judged to have been forced, so she can return to her husband, Mordechai.

Mordechai overheard the plot.

וַיִּזְדַּע הַדָּבָר לְמֹרְדֵכַי

Mordechai understood 70 languages, so he could understand the plot that the two men were discussing, though they were well concealed.

The members of the Sanhedrin were also supposed to understand 70 languages, in order to understand the perspectives of all men. Joseph is, also, thought to have had this gift (Sota 36b).

After these things.

אחר הדברים האלה

After Mordechai saved the king's life, thinking perhaps he might gain favor with the king for doing so, he finds that instead, the king advances Haman, the enemy.

The king previously relied on a group of advisors to assist him in governing. Now, two of his trusted servants conspired against him. The trust the king placed in all his advisors was, therefore, damaged. While he presumes to rule the entire known world, it is apparent that he cannot even tell what is happening in his own palace. He, therefore, turns to a single advisor with huge powers. But, by being a single advisor, he could be held responsible for any problem and this should silence the politics of the royal court.

Mordechai's action, instead of being helpful to the Jews, is, instead, the cause of severe menace to the Jews. The stimulus to the ascending of Haman.

Y. H.

The king promoted Haman.

גדל המלך אחשורוש את המן

Who was Haman?

Neither Haman, nor his father, Hamedata, the Agagite, are even among the 13 named advisors to the king (see Esther 1:10 and 1:14).

The many advisors to the king, as well as the princes and governors of the empire, suddenly learn that they have been bypassed by an upstart, not worthy of even being mentioned earlier, but who, now, supersedes their authority and before whom, they must humble themselves.

3:2 - “Yet, all the king's servants, who were in the king's gate, bowed and prostrated themselves before Haman, for the king had so advised concerning him -- but not Mordechai. He did not prostrate himself and he did not bow down.”

וְכָל-עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר-בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ, כָּרְעִים
וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוִים לְהַמָּן--כִּי-כֵן, צִוָּה-לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ;
וּמֶרְדֵּכָי--לֹא יִכְרַע, וְלֹא יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה

Haman- the Agagite.

הַאֲגָגִי

Writers have argued whether Haman is supposed to be a literal descendent of Agag, king of the Amalekites, or merely shares with Agag the same philosophy and hatred for Jews.

Mordechai is introduced as a Benjamite, a great-grandson of Kish and therefore, a relative of King Saul, the son of Kish, who united the Jews in the war against Agag.

The war with Amalek goes back even farther to when Amalek harassed the liberated Jews without mercy. Haman the Agagite, the Amalekite, is heir to a conflict that has been ongoing since the day the Jews left Egypt.

Y.H.

The king promoted Haman... the Agagite.

אַחַר הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, גָּדַל הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־שׂוּרוֹשׁ אֶת־הַמֶּן
 בֶּן־הַמְּדָתָא הָאֲגָגִי--וַיִּנְשְׂאֵהוּ; וַיִּשָּׂם, אֶת־כִּסְאוֹ, מֵעַל
 כָּל־הַשָּׂרִים אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ.

Perhaps this is the reason Mordechai's behavior changed. He resented the ruling of the king and he made known that he was a Jew.

He knew that Haman, the Amalekite, had a long standing hatred for the Jews and that it was merely a matter of time before Haman found a way to hurt the Jewish people.

Mordechai had to provoke a conflict early in Haman's reign, before he became further ingrained in his high position, and while the animosity and jealousy of the other princes and nobles was fresh, to challenge Haman's authority.

Mordechai also saw a dramatic change in the way Persia was to be ruled.

Persia was no longer to be ruled by a king, who sought advice from his advisors (1:10 and 1:14) and thereby, received balanced advice.

The traumatized king, who just escaped treachery from his trusted servants, decided to put all the power in one man, Haman, (3:1) and merely terminate the politics of the court, making his servants answer to a single enforcer.

And Mordechai did not bow and did not prostrate himself.

וְכָל-עֲבָדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר-בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ, כָּרְעִים
 וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוִים לְהֶמֶן--כִּי-כֵן, צִוָּה-לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ; וּמֶרְדֵּכַי--לֹא
יִכְרַע, וְלֹא יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה

And why not? - “For he had told them, that he was a Jew” (3:3-4).

What does being a Jew have to do with it?

Nothing in Jewish law forbids a Jew to bow before a ruler. Later, we see Esther even fall on the floor in supplication to the king (8:3). What is the difference between bowing to a ruler who is king, as Esther did and likely Mordechai did, without hesitation and bowing to the vizier? Why endanger everything and everyone? And why use an excuse for this subordination, saying that “I’m a Jew”?

Is Mordechai a hero for causing the vizier’s anger to threaten the Jews and then save them? Not really.

It was Mordechai’s stubbornness and intransigence that created the danger. He is the culprit, more than the savior of the Jews.

Mordechai did not bow and did not prostrate himself.

וַיֵּרָא הָמָן--כִּי אֵין מִרְדֵּכָי, כִּרְעַ וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לוֹ; וַיִּפְלֵא
הָמָן, חָמָה

It would appear that Mordechai was even more upset by the elevation of Haman, than any of the other politicians, and took it upon himself to be disrespectful. What did he expect? Did he expect that not bowing was going to change things? His behavior seems to be merely petulant, jealous, unreasonable and dangerous. And when called on it, he hides behind the Jewish people, using them as his excuse! Of course, Haman could be expected to eliminate this threat to his authority. Mordechai's behavior makes no sense. Until now, he hid that he was a Jew (3:4:15-20). Until now, he supported the king and even saved his life. Would he, now, disobey the king's edict and openly disrespect his vizier? He endangers Esther and all the Jewish people and then, forces the young girl to put her life on the line to mask his rash behavior. As Hazony says, "On the surface, it is as though Mordechai has recanted everything he has ever believed about his relationship with the Persian State. But, Mordechai has not changed. It is Persia that has changed."

וַיְבֹז בְּעֵינָיו, לְשַׁלַּח יָד בְּמֶרְדֵּכַי לְבַדּוֹ--כִּי-הִגִּידוּ לוֹ
 אֶת-עֵם מְרֵדֵכַי; וַיִּבְקֹשׁ הַמֶּלֶךְ, לְהַשְׁמִיד אֶת-כָּל-הַיְהוּדִים
 אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל-מְלָכוֹת אֲחַשְׁוֵרוּשׁ--עַם מְרֵדֵכַי

They had revealed to him, Mordechai's people.

Now Haman knew that Mordechai was a Jew.

The Jews had been ordered to annihilate each and every man, woman and child of the Amalekite tribe, of whom Haman was a member.

Here was an opportunity for Haman to rid his people from the fear of Jewish retribution, by killing the Jews first, and with the support of the king!

Haman seems to have acted quite rationally and not with excessive malice. He is simply doing to others, what they would have done to him!

They cast “pur”, that is, the lot.

בַּחֹדֶשׁ הָרֵאשׁוֹן, הוּא-חֹדֶשׁ נִסָּן, בְּשָׁנַת שְׁתַּיִם עָשָׂרָה
 לְמֶלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוּשׁ: הַפִּיל פּוּר הוּא הַגּוּרָל לְפָנַי הָמָן
 מִיּוֹם לְיוֹם וּמִחֹדֶשׁ לְחֹדֶשׁ שְׁנַיִם-עָשָׂר--הוּא-חֹדֶשׁ אָדָר

Lots were cast from day to day and from month to month. This means that two lotteries were conducted. One to determine the day of the new month and the other the month itself.

Haman was pleased that the lottery came out in the month of Adar, since Moses died in Adar, which is obviously a bad month for the Jews. But, he did not know that Moses was also born in the month of Adar.

To tell her, and to command her.

וְאֵת-פֶּתֶשֶׁגֶן כְּתָב-הַדָּת אֲשֶׁר-נָתַן בְּשׁוֹשָׁן לְהִשְׁמִידָם
נָתַן לוֹ--לְהִרְאוֹת אֶת-אֶסְתֵּר, וּלְהַגִּיד לָהּ; וּלְצִוּוֹת
עָלֶיהָ, לְבוֹא אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהִתְחַנֵּן-לוֹ וּלְבַקֵּשׁ מִלְּפָנָיו--
עַל-עַמָּהּ

Mordechai is asking Esther to repeat Vashti's crime (1:12), by defying the King's order and to confirm Haman's charge that the Jews are insubordinate (3:8)

And ten thousand talents of silver.

אם-על-המלך טוב, יכתב לאבדם; ועשרת אלפים כפר-
כסף, אשקול על-ידי עשי המלאכה, להביא, אל-גנזי
המלך

How did Haman arrive at this figure?

Every adult Jewish male above age 20 was obligated to give ½ shekel each year to pay for common sacrifices.

Annual life span is 70 years.

From 20 - 70 is fifty, so ½ shekel per year is 25 shekels per male for his lifetime.

25 x 600,000 = 15 million shekalim.

The ordinary kikar of silver is 1,500 shekalim.

15 million / 1500 is 10,000 - the amount Haman gave

Achashverosh for the right to destroy the Jews (Bach, Pnei Yehoshua)

To annihilate to kill and to destroy
all the Jews.

The young and the elderly,
children and women.

And to take their property and
plunder.

וְנִשְׁלוֹת סְפָרִים בְּיַד הָרָצִים, אֶל-כָּל-מְדִינוֹת הַמְּלֶכֶת--לְהַשְׁמִיד
לְהַרְגַּ וּלְאַבֵּד אֶת-כָּל-הַיְהוּדִים מִנְּעֵר וְעַד-זָקֵן טַף וְנָשִׁים בָּיּוֹם
אֶחָד, בְּנִשְׁלוֹשָׁה עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ שָׁנַיִם-עָשָׂר הוּא-חֹדֶשׁ אָדָר
וְשָׁלָלָם, לְבוֹז

This is an almost comical emphasis on destroying the Jews
without exception, without hope of escape.

The emphasis on children and women was meant to increase the
terror.

The prize, of the property of the Jews, to their killers
guaranteed the cooperation of the populace in this dirty
business.

And he went out into the midst of the city,
crying out loud and bitterly.

וּמְרֹדֵכַי, יָדַע אֶת-כָּל-אַשֶׁר נַעֲשָׂה, וַיִּקְרַע מְרֹדֵכַי אֶת-
 בְּגָדָיו, וַיִּלְבַּשׁ שָׂק וְאָפֶר; וַיֵּצֵא בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר, וַיִּזְעַק
 זַעֲקָה גְדוֹלָה וּמְרָה

Mordechai's reaction is understandable, but unexpected. He makes a public outcry.

The slaughter of the Hebrew children by Pharaoh.

The order that all Hebrews become slaves.

The snatching of children from their families.

The throwing of the children in the Nile.

None of these outrages were responded to by public outcry and demonstration - why here?

In Pharaoh's Egypt, there was no hope that public pressure would change anything but result in greater hardships for the people. Here in Persia, the maximum decree had already been mentioned. It won't get worse - but also Haman was only recently elevated by the king, in order to do away with politics, to create a smooth running of the government. But if, before he consolidates his new power, it can be shown to the king that Haman's presence creates political unrest, rather than tranquility, perhaps the edict can be rescinded?

Y.H. p.79

And the queen was greatly distressed.

ותבואינה (ותבואנה) נַעֲרוֹת אֶסְתֵּר וְסָרִיסָהּ, וַיִּגִּדּוּ
 לָהּ, וַתַּחֲלֹחַ לְחַל הַמַּלְכָּה, מְאֹד; וַתִּשְׁלַח בְּגָדִים לְהַלְבִּישׁ
 אֶת-מָרְדֳּכָי, וּלְהַסִּיר שִׁקּוֹ מֵעַלָיו--וְלֹא קָבַל

About what? She knew nothing about the decree against the Jews, so what is she distressed about?

-That the position and influence that Mordechai had built up in political circles over the years, would be lost by his bizarre behavior.

-That her position might be jeopardized because of her association with him, whom all knew to be the queen's cousin.

It certainly was against the norms of court conduct; these could well have been her fears.

Y.H. p.83

וַיֵּצֵא הַחַדָּה, אֶל-מֹרְדֵכָי--אֶל-רְחוֹב הָעִיר, אֲשֶׁר
 לְפָנָיו שַׁעַר-הַמָּלְךָ.

Hatach went out to Mordecai.

And Hatach found Mordechai ready to receive him. This suggests that Mordechai's behavior was calculated for just this result; the opportunity to share with Esther, who was inside the cloistered palace, the facts of the upcoming calamity .

Mordechai puts the problem, which he has created by his insulting and intransigent behavior, in her lap and asks her to solve it by putting her life in danger.

He was hiding behind the 'skirts of a woman'.

Y.H. p.83

He told them of the money Haman had offered to pay to have the Jews destroyed.

וַיִּגְד־לוֹ מְרַדְכַּי, אֵת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר קָרָהוּ; וְאֵת פְּרִשְׁת
הַכֶּסֶף, אֲשֶׁר אָמַר הָמָן לְשָׂקוֹל עַל-גְּנוּזֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ.
בִּיהוּדִיִּים (בְּיְהוּדִים)--לְאַבְדָּם

This is an important feature, even though the offer was refused and never occurred. But a monetary bribe could be used by the new vizier to gain power and do what he wished to any group in the vast kingdom. His behavior is a danger to everyone in society. Publicising this, creates insecurity for the populace and adds them to our cause of fearing and resenting and being willing to oppose such high-handed actions from this upstart, ambitious, politician. It makes everyone think, “What kind of government is this?”

Mordechai, himself, is a man of the court. He knows how politics work and how to use the appropriate methods to place public pressure and challenge the mighty.

Any citizen who sees him in sackcloth and ashes, who hears his cries in a loud voice, who hears his explanation for his behavior, will have to think, ‘what does this mean to me’ and ‘how will I ever be able to say “we didn’t know”? They are forced to decide if they agree to that policy.

Y.H. p.79

Y.H. P.93

כָּל-עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְעַם-מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ יָדְעִים, אֲשֶׁר כָּל-
 אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר יָבֹא-אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל-הַחֲצַר הַפְּנִימִית
 אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יִקְרָא אַחַת דָּתוֹ לְהִמָּיֵת, לְבַד מֵאֲשֶׁר יוֹשִׁיט-
לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-שַׂרְבִיט הַזֶּהב, וְחָיָה; וְאֲנִי, לֹא נִקְרָאתִי
לְבֹא אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ--זֶה, שְׁלוֹשִׁים יוֹם

And I have not been summoned to come to the king for 30 days.

Esther refuses: What you, Mordechai, ask of me

- Is against the law.
- Endangers my life.
- Will not change anything.
- The king does not care enough for me to change his policy.

The similarity with Moses' refusal to confront Pharaoh is striking.

At first she thinks only of the power of the King and fears the loss of his favor. But when appealed to second time,, she realizes she is the queen, and that she, too, has some power and influence and she must use it. Power, that one is afraid to use, is no power at all.

כִּי אִם-הַחֲרָשׁ תַּחֲרִישִׁי, בְּעֵת הַזֹּאת--רוּחַ וְהַצִּלָּה
יַעֲמֹד לְיִהוּדִים מִמָּקוֹם אֲחֵר, וְאֶת וּבֵית-אָבִיךָ
תֵּאבְדוּ; וְמִי יוֹדֵעַ--אִם-לָעֵת כָּזֹאת, הִגַּעְתָּ לַמְּלָכוֹת

For if you insist on remaining silent at this time, relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from elsewhere.

This is another inclusion of a reference to God in the Purim story.

- 1) The name itself, Purim - 'the festival of lots, chance' - is actually orchestrated by God.
- 2) When the story references 'sackcloth and ashes', it is for supplication to God. Where Esther and her maids (4:16) fast for 3 days, together with the Jews of the capital Susa, it is to pray for God's intervention.

The word מקום as in “המקום ינחם...”, is another word for God.

God is, of course, everywhere in this story.

And who knows

וּמִי יוֹדֵעַ

If I perish, I will perish.

וְכִאֲשֶׁר אֶבְדָּתִי, אֶבְדָּתִי

This may well be a reference to God in the story of Purim.

Jonah (3:9) - Who knows whether God will not turn and relent, turning away from his fierce anger, that we not perish?

2 Samuel (12:16, 12:22)- When David pleads with God to save the dying child, born to him and Bathsheva, he too, fasts and throws himself on the ground and says, "Who knows whether the Lord will not be gracious to see that the child may live?"

Yoel (:12-14) - Tells the people of Judah to fast and repent for, "Who knows whether He may turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him?"

These 3 examples of 'who knows', all refer to God acting. In Megillahs Esther, Mordechai is requesting Esther to act and this further suggests that a transition has occurred, where God's miracles must come through human initiation - but He is, nonetheless, very much involved.

And now I will go to the king
and if I perish, I perish.

לְךָ כְּנֹס אֶת-כָּל-הַיְהוּדִים הַנִּמְצָאִים בְּשׁוֹשָׁן, וְצוּמוּ עָלַי וְאֶל-
תֹּאכְלוּ וְאֶל-תִּשְׁתּוּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים לַיְלָה וַיּוֹם--גַּם-אֲנִי וְנַעֲרָתִי,
אֲצוּם כֵּן; וּבְכֵן אָבוֹא אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ, אֲשֶׁר לֹא-כֹדֶת וְכֹאשֶׁר
אֲבֹדְתִי, אֲבֹדְתִי

Born in 505 BCE - Died 425 BCE in Persia.

Daughter of Avichayil - had 11 children.

She remained passive in her relationship with the king until she is convinced that she must act to save the Jews. She had been queen for 7 years.

She asked all the Jews to fast for 3 days and 3 nights.

When told that one of the days coincided with the first night of Passover, Esther reportedly said, "If there are no Jews, who will need Passover?"

How can we understand the abrupt change in Esther, from passive behavior to leadership? She was made aware of her unique position of influence. She had a mission, which made her life understandable. It explained why she had to yield to this irritable king and why she had been made queen.

She also stayed with him after the Jews were saved. Why? Cyrus was the first Persian king who gave the Jews, whom he freed from Babylon, the right to return and rebuild Jerusalem in 538 BCE - Ezra 6:2

Most preferred the comfortable life in the Persian empire. The Talmud sees Haman's decree as a punishment to those Jews. A few years later, Nechemia asks the king, with the queen sitting at his side, to release the remaining Jews, and with the queen's influence, he did so. The queen, described in the book of Nechemia, is Esther. She stayed to complete her mission.

לֵךְ כְּנוֹס אֶת-כָּל-הַיְהוּדִים הַנִּמְצָאִים בְּשׁוֹשָׁן,
וְצוּמוּ עָלַי וְאֶל-תֹּאכְלוּ וְאֶל-תִּשְׁתּוּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים
לַיְלָה וַיּוֹם--גַּם-אֲנִי וְנַעֲרֹתַי, אֲצוּמִם כֵּן; וּבִכְן אָבוֹא
אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ, אֲשֶׁר לֹא-כֹדֵת, וְכֹאֲשֶׁר אֲבַדְתִּי,
אֲבַדְתִּי

Do not eat or drink for three days and three nights.

I and my maidens will fast as well.

What did Esther do during those 3 days?

Certainly she fasted and likely she prayed and perhaps she formed her strategy on how to get the king to change his orders.

-How can she get the king to change his reliance on Haman?

Does relying on Haman help the king, or has he something to lose, if he follows Haman's advice?

She knows to make the king jealous of Haman.

Make Haman appear flawed in judgement- or even suspect in the King's eyes.

לֵךְ כְּנוֹס אֶת-כָּל-הַיְהוּדִים הַנִּמְצָאִים בְּשׁוּשַׁן, וְצוּמוּ עָלַי וְאֶל-
תֹּאכְלוּ וְאֶל-תִּשְׁתּוּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים לַיְלָה וַיּוֹם--גַּם-אֲנִי וְנַעֲרֹתַי,
אֲצוּם כֵּן; וּבֵינָן אָבוֹא אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ, אֲשֶׁר לֹא-כִדַּת, וְכֹאשֶׁר
אֲבַדְתִּי, אֲבַדְתִּי

If I am lost, I am lost.

Until now, she was with Achashverosh involuntarily, but she will now go to him voluntarily
As a woman married to Mordechai. she will, henceforth, be forbidden to him.
Not only is she lost from her father's house, but also from Mordechai, her husband.

Y. H.

וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי, וּתְלַבֵּשׁ אֶסְתֵּר מַלְכוּת, וַתַּעֲמֵד
בַּחֲצַר בַּיִת-הַמֶּלֶךְ הַפְּנִימִית, נֹכַח בַּיִת הַמֶּלֶךְ; וְהַמֶּלֶךְ
יוֹשֵׁב עַל-כִּסֵּא מַלְכוּתוֹ, בְּבַיִת הַמַּלְכוּת, נֹכַח, פֶּתַח
הַבַּיִת

And Esther clothed herself in royalty.

It should say, “She clothed herself in royal garments.”

Scripture intimates that she was clothed in the Divine Spirit.

And Esther clothed herself in royalty.

וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי, וּתְלַבֵּשׁ אֶסְתֵּר מַלְכוּת, וַתַּעֲמֵד
בַּחֲצַר בַּיִת-הַמֶּלֶךְ הַפְּנִימִית, נֹכַח בַּיִת הַמֶּלֶךְ; וְהַמֶּלֶךְ
יּוֹשֵׁב עַל-כִּסֵּא מַלְכוּתוֹ, בְּבַיִת הַמַּלְכוּת, נֹכַח, פָּתַח
הַבַּיִת

This means she clothed herself in kingship.
Whose kingship? Which kingdom?

On the surface, we see she has come to royalty, by becoming queen to the Persian king. But also, by coming into worldly royalty, Esther has placed herself in a position to act in the service of another king as well - The Kingdom of Heaven.

וְיְהִי כִּרְאוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה, עֹמֶדֶת
בְּחֶצֶר--נִשְׂאָה חֵן, בְּעֵינָיו; וַיִּזְשֹׁט הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאֶסְתֵּר, אֶת-
שֵׁרְבִיט הַזָּהָב אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדוֹ, וַתִּקְרַב אֶסְתֵּר, וַתִּגַּע
בְּרֹאשׁ הַשֵּׁרְבִיט

And when the king saw Esther the queen.

She won his favor and he extended the scepter toward her.

Rav Yochanan said that three angels helped her then.

-One to lift up her arm - since she was weak from fasting.

-One covered her with grace.

-One stretched the king's scepter toward her, since she was too fearful to walk towards it.

וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר, אִם-עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב--יָבוֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֵּן הַיּוֹם,
אֶל-הַמִּשְׁתֶּה אֲשֶׁר-עָשִׂיתִי לוֹ

Let the king and Haman come.

What was Esther's reason for inviting Haman to the banquet?

R Eliezer: To set a trap for him.

R Yehoshua: She learned from her father's house - 'If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat (i.e., kill him with kindness)'.

R Meir: To occupy him, so he does not plan other mischief.

R Yehoshua ben Korcha: So she could smile at him and cause the king to be jealous.

Rabbah: Pride comes before destruction (Proverbs 16:18: **לפני שבר גאון**).

Elijah: For all these reasons.

Let the king and Haman come today for a banquet, that I have prepared for him.

וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר, אִם-עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב--יָבוֹא
הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֵּן הַיּוֹם, אֶל-הַמִּשְׁתֶּה אֲשֶׁר-עָשִׂיתִי
 לוֹ

And when they both came, Esther invited the two of them again for the next evening - just the king and Haman. Certainly any man would be curious - 'Why invite my vizier. when my wife and I are having dinner together?'

This caused the king to wonder and to worry and it interfered with his sleep, so much that, he had to have his mind diverted by being read to by his servants.

'Is something going on between them?' 'Can I really trust this Haman?' 'And if I have a question about him and my wife, can I truly entrust him with my kingdom?'

Notice the Megillah says, "for him" and not, 'for them' - "Who is the "him"? asks the king, "Is the party for him", 'lo'?.

And when Esther invites them for a 2nd dinner, she changes her invitation to clearly include Haman to the party. She uses the word "lahem", 'them'.

He neither stood, nor stirred before him.

וַיֵּצֵא הָמָן בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא, שָׁמַח וְטוֹב לֵב; וְכִרְאוֹת הָמָן
 אֶת-מֶרְדֵּכַי בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ, וְלֹא-קָם וְלֹא-זָע מִמֶּנּוּ--
 וַיִּמְלֵא הָמָן עַל-מֶרְדֵּכַי, חֲמָה

Mordechai's failure, even to acknowledge Haman's presence, was a further insult.

The decree, to destroy one's entire people, would have induced another man to beg the vizier for mercy. Haman cannot let this challenge to his position as vizier fester for the next eleven months, until the decree is implemented. It is too dangerous.

Esther did not invite anyone....only me.

וַיֹּאמֶר, הַמֶּן--אֶף לֹא-הִבִּיֵאָה אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה עִמִּי--
הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל-הַמְּשֻׁתָּה אֲשֶׁר-עָשִׂתָּה, כִּי אִם-אוֹתִי; וְגַם-
לְמַחֵר אֲנִי קָרוֹא-לָהּ, עִם-הַמֶּלֶךְ.

Esther's preferential treatment was not lost on Haman either, but for him it was as a triumph. He bragged to his wife and friends about how important this made him feel.

But, he also complained that Mordechai's behavior made all his riches, honors, and family success worthless, as long as Mordechai sat in the king's gate.

Then Zeresh his and all his friends said to him, “Let a tall gallows be made.”

וְהֵאמֵר לוֹ זֵרֶשׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ וְכָל-אֶהְבָּיו, יַעֲשׂוּ-עֵץ גָּבוֹה חֲמִשִּׁים
אַמָּה, וּבִבְקָר אָמַר לְמֶלֶךְ וַיִּתְּלוּ אֶת-מָרְדֳּכָי עָלָיו, וּבֹא-עִם-
הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל-הַמִּשְׁתָּה שָׁמַח; וַיִּיטֵב הַדָּבָר לְפָנָי הָמוֹ, וַיַּעַשׂ
הָעֵץ.

This would accomplish two goals:

- 1) This would promptly remove the threat of Mordechai undermining Haman's authority.
- 2) The tall gallows could be seen far and wide and would serve as a warning to other would be detractors of Haman; that “disobedience is doomed”.

That night, the King could not sleep.

בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא, נִדְדָה שְׁנַת הַמֶּלֶךְ; וַיֹּאמֶר, לְהָבִיא אֶת-סֹפֵר
הַזְכָּרֹנוֹת דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים, וַיְהִי נִקְרָאִים, לְפָנָי הַמֶּלֶךְ.

Which night? The night after Esther's party. Why could he not sleep?

He asked himself:

--What was the purpose of Esther's party?

--Why was Haman invited to a party where only I and my queen were present? And why is he invited again tomorrow night? Is something going on between them?

--Is there another conspiracy going on right under my nose, in my palace, like the one I recently escaped from?

The king brought Haman to power, precisely to protect him from these concerns and look, it seems that Haman himself is involved in some conspiracy with his queen!

That night, the sleep of the king was disturbed.

בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא, נִדְדָה שְׁנַת הַמֶּלֶךְ; וַיֹּאמֶר, לְהָבִיא אֶת-סֵפֶר
הַזְכָּרֹנוֹת דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים, וַיְהִי נִקְרָאִים, לְפָנָי הַמֶּלֶךְ.

A thought occurred to Achashverosh:

‘What is the meaning of this strange thing that happened today, that the queen invited Haman to the banquet? Perhaps they are conspiring against me? If so, is there no-one who loves me, who would have informed me of this plot? Once before, there was such a man, but did I reward him for his good behavior? Perhaps I failed to do so and therefore, no-one is now willing to do me a favor again’. Straightaway, he ordered his record book.

There he found how Mordechai had denounced Bigtana and Teresh, who had plotted against King Achashverosh.

וַיִּמְצֵא כְּתוּב, אֲשֶׁר הִגִּיד מֶרְדֵּכַי עַל-בְּגִתָּנָא וְתֵרֶשׁ שְׁנֵי
סָרִיסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ--מִשְׁמֵרֵי, הַסֵּף: אֲשֶׁר בְּקִשְׁוֹ לְשַׁלַּח יָד, בַּמֶּלֶךְ
אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ

The Jew, Mordechai, had saved the king's life. But Haman had said (Esther 3:8), "It is of no benefit for the king to tolerate the Jews". "Certainly there is benefit, look how they saved my life", said the king, "and I gave Haman the authority to annihilate the Jews!"

So, Haman is conniving with the queen, my trusted advisor is giving me wrong advice about the Jews - what else is he doing wrong??

Not a thing has been done for him.

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ--מֵה-נַעֲשֶׂה יְקָר וַיְגִדּוּלָהּ לְמֶרְדֵּכַי, עַל-זֶה;
וַיֹּאמְרוּ נַעֲרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ, מִשְׁרָתָיו, לֹא-נַעֲשֶׂה עִמּוֹ, דְּבָר

Since Haman was appointed Vizier after the attempt on the king's life, he should have investigated the plot and rewarded Mordechai for his loyalty to the king.
The fact that he did not, raises the questions about him in the mind of the king.
This suspicion is also part of Haman's undoing and the sensitivity caused by the jealousy, induced by Esther's behavior.

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Not a thing has been done for him

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ--מַה-נַּעֲשֶׂה יְקָר וַיְגִדּוּלָהּ לְמֹרְדֵכַי, עַל-זֶה;
וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְעָרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ, מִן־שָׂרְתָיו, לֹא-נַעֲשֶׂה עִמּוֹ, דְּבַר

The king's assistants told him this, not because they loved Mordechai, but because they hated Haman and knew he would be upset to see Mordechai rewarded by the king.

Not a thing has been done for him.

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ--מַה-נַּעֲשֶׂה יְקָר וַיְגִדּוּלָהּ לְמַרְדֳּכַי, עַל-זֶה
וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְּעָרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ, מִשְׁרָתָיו, לֹא-נַעֲשֶׂה עִמּוֹ, דְּבָר

This is the first response from any advisor to the king we have since Haman was elevated. Until now, the king sought no counsel from anyone but Haman. Now, finally, others are able to be influential with him. This is, in a sense, an accusation against Haman and his running of the kingdom; handing out rewards for service to the king is important, it encourages others to do likewise. By not doing so, Haman endangers and isolates the king.

Why would these youthful companions of the king cast aspersions on Haman? Because they hate his arrogance, his monopoly of power and his usurpation of that which belongs solely to the king, i.e., the signet ring to seal proclamations and the order to prostrate themselves before him.

And Haman came into the outer court.

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ, מִי בִּחְצֵר; וְהָמֹן בָּא, לַחֲצַר בֵּית-הַמֶּלֶךְ.
הַחֲצוֹנָה, יֹאמֶר לַמֶּלֶךְ, לְתֵלוֹת אֶת-מֶרְדֵּכַי עַל-הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר-
הִכִּין לוֹ

Just at that moment, when the king is harboring these terrible thoughts about Haman, who walks in? Haman himself, very early in the morning. He could not wait until later in the day to ask permission to hang Mordechai.

What should be done for the man whom the king desires to honor?

וַיָּבֹא, הָמָן, וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ, מִה-לְעֲשׂוֹת בְּאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר
הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בִּיקְרוֹ; וַיֹּאמֶר הָמָן, בְּלִבּוֹ, לְמִי יִחְפֹּץ הַמֶּלֶךְ
לְעֲשׂוֹת יְקָר, יוֹתֵר מִמֶּנִּי

This king asks this of Haman. One can surmise that the king is already set to catch Haman in a trap. The king, by now, is suspicious of Haman; Is he involved with the queen? Is he plotting against the king? Was he actually part of the conspiracy of Bigtana and Teresh? Haman does not see this coming and falls right into the trap. Haman can only see his own importance. This egocentricity blinds Haman to think that he king could not “desire to honor anyone more than me” (6:6). “Haman’s response is,” as Hazony says, “that infamous fantasy of self indulgence and usurpation. Haman asks for the king’s robe, his horse and his crown; clearly indicating to the king, his desire to replace the king as ruler of Persia.”

And Haman said in his heart.

וַיָּבֹא, הָמָן, וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ, מַה-לַּעֲשׂוֹת בְּאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר
הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בִּיקְרוֹ; וַיֹּאמֶר הָמָן, בְּלִבּוֹ, לְמִי יִחַפֵּץ הַמֶּלֶךְ
לַעֲשׂוֹת יְקָר, יוֹתֵר מִמֶּנִּי

Notice this line and others like it in this story.

Here is G-d.

Some say G-d is not mentioned in the story of Esther, but of course He is. He dictates the affairs of men. Who, but G-d, could tell us what thoughts Haman had in his heart?

Hurry, take the robe and horse ... omit
nothing from all you have said.

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהָמָן, מִהֵר קַח אֶת-הַלְבוּשׁ וְאֶת-הַסּוּס כַּאֲשֶׁר
דִּבַּרְתָּ, וְעֲשֵׂה-כֵן לְמַרְדְּכַי הַיְהוּדִי, הַיּוֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ:
אֶל-תִּפֹּל דְבַר, מִכֹּל אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ.

These words demote Haman from his lofty status, back to being a mere servant to the king.
The king is convinced by the words Haman utters, that his suspicions are correct and Haman has
desire for his throne.

And the king spoke and he spoke to Esther.

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶחָשׁוּרוּשׁ, וַיֹּאמֶר לְאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה: מִי הוּא
זֶה וְאֵי-זֶה הוּא, אֲשֶׁר-מָלְאוּ לְבוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת כֵּן

Why does it say 'he spoke' twice?

At first, he would speak to her through a spokesman. But, after he learned of her descent from the house of King Saul, he spoke to her directly, one royal to another.

Who is it and which is he, who has inclined his heart to do so?

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶחָשֵׁרוּשׁ, וַיֹּאמֶר לְאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה: מִי הוּא
זֶה וְאֵי-זֶה הוּא, אֲשֶׁר-מָלְאוּ לְבוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת כֵּן

To do what? Esther has made known to the king several objectives of Haman:

- Her life

- The life of her people, the Jews.

His questions had nothing to do with the Jews, but with the threat to his queen.

He does not want to lose another queen and have to go through a process that takes years and involves his entire kingdom to resolve.

He sees the threat that Haman poses as a threat to himself, more so than to Esther, or the Jews.

The king returned from the palace garden.

וְהַמֶּלֶךְ שָׁב מִגִּזְנֵת הַבַּיִתָּן אֶל-בֵּית מְשֻׁתָּה הַיָּיִן, וְהָמֹן נִפְלַע
עַל-הַמָּטָה אֲשֶׁר אָסְתָּר עָלֶיהָ, וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ, הַגַּם לְכַבּוֹשׁ
אֶת-הַמְּלָכָה עִמִּי בַּבַּיִת; הִדְבָּר, יֵצֵא מִפִּי הַמֶּלֶךְ, וּפְנֵי הָמֹן
חָפוּ

The verse did not have to say that the king returned from the garden, since it is obvious that he returned from the place from which he had gone.

Rather, it means to teach us, that just as he had left in anger, so he returned in anger.

Charvonah, one of the chamberlains of the king, said.

וַיֹּאמֶר חַרְבוֹנָה אֶחָד מִן־הַסְּרִיסִים לְפָנַי הַמֶּלֶךְ, גַּם הִנֵּה־
הָיָה אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה הַמֶּלֶךְ לְמַרְדְּכַי אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר־טוֹב עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ;
עֹמֵד בְּבֵית הַמֶּלֶךְ--גְּבוּהָ, חֲמֻשִׁים אִמָּה; וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ, תִּלְהֹו
עָלָיו

The king prefers to have his decisions suggested to him by others - an apparent consultation. Charvonah materializes from nowhere, to advise the king. He is mentioned once before in 1:10, but like all the king's advisors, he disappeared when Haman was elevated. However, he keeps track of all that is going on in the palace. He does not speak out when Haman is appointed, when Mordechai resists, or when Mordechai appeals for help. But, once the king's anger is kindled, there is Charvonah directing and transforming that anger into a decision. It is Charvonah who deals Haman the final blow.

Charvonah sensed the shift in power that had taken place and the chance finally to rid himself of Haman's influence. This helps Charvonah, but it, also, very much helps the Jews, even though that was not amongst Charvonah's objectives. Politics makes for strange bedfellows. Haman's rule lasted, not even, one month.

And Charvonah said Fifty cubits high.

וַיֹּאמֶר חַרְבוֹנָה אֶחָד מִן-הַסָּרִיסִים לְפָנַי הַמֶּלֶךְ, גַּם הַגֵּה-
הַעֵץ אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה הַמֶּן לְמַרְדֵּכַי אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר-טוֹב עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ;
עֲמִד בְּבֵית הַמֶּן--גְּבוּהָ, חֲמֵשִׁים אַמָּה; וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ, תִּלְהוֹ
עָלָיו

How did Charvonah know that the gallows, that Haman constructed to hang Mordechai, actually was 50 cubits?

Because, he was one of the advisors who counselled Haman to hang Mordechai. Now that he sees the tide has turned, he switches allegiance and supports Mordechai.

Hang him on it.

וַיֹּאמֶר חֲרִבוֹנָה אֶחָד מִן-הַסָּרִיסִים לְפָנַי הַמֶּלֶךְ, גַּם הַנֵּה-
הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה הָמֶן לְמַרְדְּכַי אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר-טוֹב עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ;
עִמַּד בְּבֵית הָמֶן--גְּבוּהָ, חֲמִנְשִׁים אַמָּה; וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ, תִּלְהֶוּ
עָלָיו

Haman's edict was sent out on the 13th of Nisan.

Mordechai's on the 23rd of Sivan.

Haman, it can be assumed, was hanged on the 17th of Nisan, 4 days after his letter of extermination.

From Sivan 23 to Adar 13 is 8 months and 20 days.

722 BCE: Assyrians deportation of the northern kingdom.

586 BCE: Babylonians destroyed the southern kingdom (of which, Mordechai's tribe of Benjamin, was a part).

Passover falls on the 15th of Nisan, the day Esther first approaches Achashverosh to invite him to her banquet that afternoon. She had requested that the Jews fast for her, from the 13th of Nisan, which means that the seder night went by without the central aspect of the commemorations familiar to us.

And the King's anger subsided.

וַיִּתְּלוּ, אֶת-הַמֶּזַח, עַל-הָעֵץ, אֲשֶׁר-הֵכִין לְמַרְדְּכָי; וַחֲמַת
הַמֶּלֶךְ, שָׁכְבָה

Usually the word subsided - שכה - is written with one kuf. Here it has 2. It means to tell us that the king (Achashverosh's) anger subsided and the anger of the King of the Universe's anger also subsided (Marhasha).

And Esther spoke before the king, yet again.

וַתּוֹסֶף אֶסְתֵּר, וַתְּדַבֵּר לְפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ, וַתִּפֹּל, לְפָנֵי רַגְלָיו;
וַתִּבְךְּ וַתִּתְחַנֵּן-לוֹ, לְהַעֲבִיר אֶת-רַעַת הַמֶּן הָאָגָגִי, וְאֵת
מִחְשְׁבֹתָיו, אֲשֶׁר חָשַׁב עַל-הַיְהוּדִים

Esther enters the king's presence and starts to speak even before he extends to her, his gold scepter. She cried, she pleaded, fell at his feet and begged him to avert the evil of Haman's scheme against the Jews.

Sixty-six days had gone by since Haman was deposed, yet the Jews remained in danger. Time was of the essence. There was no choice. Esther, again, had to gamble with her life.

She makes this plea publically. There can be no doubt in the king's mind as to what she wants.

He grudgingly extends the scepter, but saying nothing. He just lets her "talk".

He, himself, has been hanged on the gallows, because he lifted up a hand against the Jews.

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ לְאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה, וּלְמַרְדֳּכַי הַיְהוּדִי:
הֲנִיָּה בֵּית-הַמֶּן נִתְּתִי לְאַסְתֵּר, וְאֵתוֹ תָּלוּ עַל-הָעֵץ--עַל אֲשֶׁר-
שָׁלַח יָדוֹ, בְּיַהֲוָדִים

For two months, rumors were spread, that Haman's downfall was due to his treachery against the king and the queen. But now, we learn from Achashverosh's own mouth, the real reason, "Because Haman would lift up a hand against the Jews". Persecution of the Jews," he implies, "is unjust and undesirable, but it is on the books".

Achashverosh would have us believe, that this persecution of the Jews occurred through no fault of his own. It was all Haman's fault.

The book of Esther describes 6 ways in which Mordechai acts to fight and win the political war.

1. 8:9-14 - A decree that permits the Jews to assemble and defend themselves.
2. 8:15 - 8:16 - Mordechai's public appearances in Susa.
3. 8:17 - Public celebrations among the Jews.
4. 9:2 - Organizing Jewish military power.
5. 9:3 - Rallying the support of provincial and local governments.
6. 9:4 - Building up his own reputation.

These form a comprehensive political campaign.

To annihilate, to kill and to destroy children
and women.
To take their possessions for plunder.

אֲשֶׁר נָתַן הַמֶּלֶךְ לַיהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל-עִיר-וָעִיר, לְהַקְהִיל
וְלַעֲמֹד עַל-נַפְשָׁם--לְהַשְׁמִיד וְלַהֲרֹג וְלֹאֲבֹד אֶת-כָּל-חַיִּל עַם
וּמְדִינָה הַצָּרִים אֹתָם, טַף וְנָשִׁים; וְשָׁלַלְם, לְבוֹז

Mordechai's decree is the same as Haman's - to give the anti-semites a taste of their own medicine. These are words from the language of terror, "Let the would-be killers worry now about their own safety and the safety of their families and property, as the Jews had worried for these 10 long weeks."

Mordechai left the king's presence in royal apparel: 1) blue 2) white 3) with a gold crown 4) a robe of fine linen 5) purple.

וּמֵרַדְכַּי יֵצֵא מִלְּפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ, בְּלְבוּשׁ מַלְכוּת תְּכֵלֶת וְחֹר
וְעֵטְרֵת זָהָב גְּדוּלָה, וְתִכְרִיף בּוּץ וְאַרְגָּמָן; וְהָעִיר שׁוֹשָׁן
צָהָלָה וְשִׁמְחָה

These 5 articles of clothing relate to the 5 changes of clothing that Joseph gave to Benjamin. Rather than stoking the flames of jealousy, it was a sign, that through a descendant of Benjamin, Mordechai Ish Yemini, would receive the 5 articles of clothing representing royal favor.

לְיִהוּדִים, הַיְתָה אֹרֶה וְשִׂמְחָה, וְשֵׁן, וַיְקַר.

The Jews had light and gladness, joy and honor.

R. Yehudah said -These represent 4 mitzvahs: Torah study, yom tov, tefillin and circumcision, which Haman had prohibited the Jews from performing. Now that he was dead, they had the access again to these mitzvahs.

-Torah is a lamp - light

-Gladness is the simcha of the holidays -yom tov

-Joy refers to circumcision - since this mitzvah is always with a person, even in a bath house (King David in Menachos (43b).

Honor refers to tefillin -which bring honor, since they invoke fear in other nations.

And many, from among the people of the land, became Jews, for fear of the Jews had fallen upon them.

וּבְכָל-מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה וּבְכָל-עִיר וָעִיר, מִקּוֹם אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר-
הַמֶּלֶךְ וְדָתוֹ מֵגִיעַ, שְׂמֵחָה וְשִׂשׂוֹן לַיהוּדִים, מִשְׁתָּה וַיּוֹם
טוֹב; וְרַבִּים מֵעַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ, מִתְיַהֲדִים--כִּי-נָפַל פַּחַד-
הַיְהוּדִים, עֲלֵיהֶם

In politics, strength attracts strength and power attracts power.

Esther 9:4:1-5;10-14

And Mordechai was great in the house of the king.....The man, Mordechai, grew greater and greater.

כִּי-גָדוֹל מָרְדֵּכַי בְּבֵית הַמֶּלֶךְ, וְשָׁמְעוּ הוֹלֵךְ בְּכָל-הַמְּדִינֹת
כִּי-הָאִישׁ מָרְדֵּכַי, הוֹלֵךְ וְגָדוֹל

By the opening of the actual war, the influence of the Jews in the Empire had become overwhelming, “and none could stand before them” (9:2-4).

The Jews struck at all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying.

וַיִּכּוּ הַיְהוּדִים בְּכָל-אֲבֵיהֶם, מִכַּת-חֶרֶב וְהַרְגוּ וְאַבְדּוּ; וַיַּעֲשׂוּ
בְּשָׂאֵיהֶם, כְּרָצוֹן

Some have suggested that Mordechai had the option of restraining the Jewish crowd, now that all the power was on their side. He could have been merciful, but was not. Why?

Machiavelli said -

- 1) A man must either be caressed or annihilated, or they may try to avenge themselves.
- 2) A mild response may be perceived (and may encourage others to interpret it) as hesitancy, or weakness and perhaps, embolden them to try again, in the future.
- 3) Since Achashverosh is so changeable and clearly does not care about the Jews one way or the other, perhaps, the idea was to get rid of as many anti-semites as we can, so they cannot influence the king to again change his mind.

In one breath.

בְּנִשְׁמָה אַחַת

Why do we read all the names of Haman's sons in one breath?
Because they all died at the same moment, simultaneously..

They were all hung on the same pole, one above the other.

The names are written in the Megillah with spaces beneath each name, on the line below, so these wicked men would find no firm footing to break their fall.

The king said to Esther, the queen.

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה, בְּשׂוֹשַׁן הַבִּירָה הָרְגוּ
הַיְהוּדִים וְאַבְדוּ חַמִּשׁ מֵאוֹת אִישׁ וְאֵת עֲשָׂרַת בְּנֵי-הָמֶן--
בְּשָׂאֵר מְדִינֹת הַמְּלָךְ, מָה עָשׂוּ; וְמָה-נְשְׂאֵלְתֶּךָ וְיִנָּתֶן לָךְ
וְמָה-בְּקִשְׁתֶּךָ עוֹד וְתַעֲשׂ

Please notice, this is the first time he initiates a conversation with Esther. She is now strong enough to be taken seriously by him and he goes on to offer her, not just half his kingdom, but “whatever you wish, it will be given to you and whatever more you may request, it will be done.”

If it pleases the king, let the Jews of Susa do tomorrow, according to the law, for today and let Haman's 10 sons be hanged on the gallows.

וְהָאָמַר אֶסְתֵּר, אִם-עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב--יִנָּתֵן גַּם-מָחָר לַיהוּדִים
אֲשֶׁר בְּשׂוֹשָׁן, לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּדַת הַיּוֹם; וְאֵת עֲשָׂרַת בְּנֵי-הָמֶן
יִתְלוּ עַל-הָעֵץ

Why does Esther ask for another day?

Because she does not know how the war is going in the rest of the empire. She will have a better knowledge of its success in 24 hours.

Why does she ask that the dead bodies of Haman's sons be put on the gallows?

They are a sign of Jewish success and a grisly warning to any remaining potential opponents.

But they took no plunder.

וְשָׂאֵר הַיְהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּמַדִּינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ נִקְהָלוּ וְעָמְדוּ עַל-
נַפְשָׁם, וְנוֹחַ מֵאִיְבֵיהֶם, וְהָרוּג בְּשִׁנְאֵיהֶם, חֲמִשָּׁה וְשִׁבְעִים
אָלֶף; וּבְבִזָּה--לֹא שָׁלְחוּ, אֶת-יָדָם

Why is this emphasized?

Haman's edict encouraged the murder of the Jews, because the killer could claim Jewish property for themselves, or for the king (10,000 talents of silver) (Esther 3:9).

The Jews' war was only to eliminate those who endangered them physically, not to kill in order to enrich themselves. The Jews were on a much higher moral plane.

They should keep the 14th and 15th day of Adar every year, as days on which the Jews gained respite from their enemies.

לְקַיֵּם, עֲלֵיהֶם--לְהִיּוֹת עֲשִׂים אֶת יוֹם אַרְבַּעַת עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ
אָדָר, וְאֶת יוֹם-תְּמִנְשָׁה עָשָׂר בּוֹ: בְּכָל-שָׁנָה, וּשְׁנָה

Mordechai and Esther each sent out a letter asking that the Jews observe these days in the years to come, forever. No other hero of a biblical story ever tries to create a holiday, or festival, forever. Not since Moses, was such a religious festival established. It was to be established as an undertaking (9:23,27,31), suggesting that it was voluntary.

The exile in Babylonia and Persia, had exposed the Jews to other cultures, tempting them to assimilate. Anti-semitism was further pressure to hide one's Jewishness. They felt weak and fearful and tried to hide.

Now, the success of Mordechai and Esther, where Jews could be in high positions and win allowed Jews to choose to remain Jews. Purim offers a second opportunity to accept the laws of the covenant of Moses and to be proud to be a Jew.

In accordance with their writing and in their proper time, each and every year,

קִיְמוּ וּקְבִלּוּ (וְקָבְלוּ) הַיְהוּדִים עֲלֵיהֶם וְעַל-זְרָעָם וְעַל כָּל-
הַנְּלוּיִם עֲלֵיהֶם, וְלֹא יַעְבֹּר--לְהִיּוֹת עֲשִׂים אֵת שְׁנֵי הַיָּמִים
הָאֵלֶּה, בְּכַתְּבָם וּכְזַמְנָם: בְּכָל-שָׁנָה, וּשְׁנָה

Just as the timing must be in proper sequence, the 14th and 15th of Adar, so too, their writing of the Megillah must not be out of sequence.

It should be read in Hebrew, but may be read in another language for people who do not know Hebrew, but do know the other language. But, hearing it in another language is not permissible for a person who knows Hebrew. He has not fulfilled his obligation by hearing it read in a language, other than Hebrew.

Hearing the Megillah being read, even if you don't understand every word (and the words in 8:10 "haachashteranim bnei haremachim" are not understood by anyone, BT Megillah 18a⁴).

This is the essence of the mitzvah, since that will publicize the miracle.

These days shall be remembered,

וְהַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה נִזְכָּרִים וְנַעֲשִׂים בְּכָל-דּוֹר וָדוֹר, מִשְׁפָּחָה
וּמִשְׁפָּחָה, מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה, וְעִיר וְעִיר; וַיְמִי הַפּוֹרִים הָאֵלֶּה
לֹא יֵעָבְרוּ מִתּוֹךְ הַיְּהוּדִים, וְזָכָרָם, לֹא-יִסּוּף מִזֶּרְעָם

How?

By reading the Megillah.

And it was written in the book,

וּמְאֹמֶר אֶסְתֵּר--קַיִם, דְּבַר יְהוָה הַפְּרִים הָאֵלֶּה; וְנִכְתָּב, בְּסֵפֶר

Esther requested that the sages incorporate the Megillah in the book of Holy Scripture and that is one of the reasons that the Anshe Knesses Hagedolah did so.

A great man among the Jews and with a multitude of his brethren.

כִּי מְרַדְּכַי הַיְהוּדִי, מִשְׁנֵה לְמַלְךְ אֲחַשְׁוֵרוּשׁ, וְגָדוֹל לַיְהוּדִים
וְרִצּוֹי לְרַב אֲחִיו--דִּרְשׁ טוֹב לְעַמּוֹ, וְדַבֵּר שְׁלוֹם לְכָל-זֶרְעוֹ

This suggests that Mordechai was popular with many, but not all of his brethren.

Who would not be pleased with Mordechai's accomplishments?

The gemara suggests that his colleagues, of the Anshe Knesses Hagedolah, who felt his government duties caused him to neglect his Torah study (Rashi).

Certainly that was permissible in time of mortal danger, but the danger here, has passed. Others say, "No, the danger happened once, it could happen again and Mordechai's place in government was a necessary protection against mortal danger.

Postscript BT Shabbos 88a

The Jews accepted the torah twice.

Once at Sinai, when there was no choice but to accept and the second time, at Purim, 'in the days of Achashverosh' where they accepted it voluntarily.

For the first 1000 years, the word of God could not be escaped within the insular Jewish community.

However, all that changed in Persia, where a Jew could choose the lifestyle he wished. He could assimilate and be lost in the general culture.

The fact that the Jews remained Jews, or were reinvigorated in their Judaism, tells us that even though they had a choice, they chose to follow Jewish laws and the Torah principles.