

Putting things in PERSPECTIVE

Although the major events of Purim mentioned in *Megillas Esther* took place over the course of a ten year period, the bulk of those events – including most of the dramatic twists and turns contained in the megilla – transpired over the course of just a handful of days

BY ROBERT SUSSMAN



3338 – The first Beis HaMikdash (Temple) was destroyed (on the 9th and 10th of Av).

3395 – In the third year of his reign, Achashverosh made a banquet, which was attended by the Jews over the objections of Mordechai, the leader of the Jewish people. Queen Vashti refused to appear when summoned by Achashverosh and was killed for disobeying him.

3404 – In the twelfth year of Achashverosh's reign:

13 NISAN – Achashverosh issued the written decree, which had been requested by the wicked Haman, ordering the destruction of the Jewish people, which was to be carried out eleven months later on the 13th day of the Hebrew month of Adar. Mordechai informed Esther of Haman's plan and instructed her to intercede with Achashverosh. Fearing for her life, because she would need to approach the king without having been summoned by him, Esther asked that the Jews fast for three days. This became the first day of the fast, resulting in the three days of the fast taking place between the 13th and 15th of Nisan (although some say the fasting only started the next day and thus took place between the 14th and 16th of Nisan, which would shift the events listed below forward by one day).

14 NISAN – Second day of the fast requested by Esther.

15 NISAN – Despite this being the first day of Pesach on which we are commanded by the Torah to eat matzah, Esther nonetheless convinced Mordechai to instruct the Jews to fast for a third day, arguing that if the Jews would cease to exist as a result of Haman's plan, there would be no one left to observe Pesach in the future (see Esther Rabbah 8:7). [Perhaps this was intended as a tikun (repair) for the people's sin of not having listened to Mordechai when he had instructed the Jews to not attend or benefit from Achashverosh's banquet. Here, they were again being asked to not eat at Mordechai's command, this time having to forego fulfilling a positive commandment of the Torah (eating matzah).] On this third day of the fast, Esther approached Achashverosh without having been summoned,

found favour in the king's eyes, and invited him and Haman to a banquet later that day. At the banquet, Esther asked that Achashverosh and Haman attend a second banquet together the next day.

16 NISAN – That night, Haman had a gallows built on which he planned to hang Mordechai. That same night, Achashverosh had trouble sleeping and asked for the King's Chronicles to be read aloud to him, at which time he realised that he had never rewarded Mordechai for saving his life from the assassination plot of Bigsan and Seresh. At Achashverosh's instruction, Haman led Mordechai around Shushan on the king's horse while wearing the king's clothes. Thinking it was Haman who was on the horse and Mordechai who was leading him, Haman's daughter mistakenly dumped rubbish on Haman. Without time to change his clothes or bathe, the king's guards came and summoned Haman to attend Esther's second banquet. At the banquet, Esther revealed that she was Jewish and asked Achashverosh to spare her and her people from the wicked Haman's plan to destroy them. After stepping out of the room and returning to find Haman on the couch where Esther was sitting, Achashverosh ordered that Haman be hanged on the gallows that Haman had intended for Mordechai.

23 SIVAN – Unable to cancel his royal decree, Achashverosh authorised Esther and Mordechai to send out new decrees throughout his empire. The new decrees authorised the Jews to defend themselves against anyone who tried to carry out the king's previous decree sanctioning the destruction of the Jews on the 13th of Adar.

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13 ADAR – The Jews fought and killed their enemies throughout Achashverosh's empire and Haman's ten sons were hanged.

14 ADAR – With the exception of Shushan, where the fighting continued for a second day, the Jews celebrated their victory, on what would become known in later years as *Purim*.

15 ADAR – The Jews of Shushan celebrated their victory, on what would become known in later years as *Shushan Purim*.

3408 – Building of the second Beis HaMikdash (Temple) was resumed (and completed in 3412).



3399 – In the seventh year of his reign, Achashverosh chose Esther to be the new queen. (Mordechai had previously instructed Esther not to tell anyone that she was Jewish.)



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