

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter LVIII: Esther

Essay 8. Mordecai warns Esther not to remain silent

פסוק "כי אם־התרחש תתרחשי בעת הזאת רנוח ונהצלה" וכו'. קשה למה דוקא "ממקום אחר", ומהו זה המקום, והנה די שיאמר "רנוח ונהצלה נעמוד ליהודים". ועוד למה "נאת ובית־אביך תאבדו", וכי לא יהנה אפטר שינצלו ישראל בלא שתאבד היא, ומה אבידה שיהי כאן, הנה לו לומר "תמותו"? ומהו "ומי יודע"?

There is a **verse**: “Mordecai had this message delivered to Esther: ‘Do not imagine that you, of all the Jews, will escape with your life by being in the king’s palace. **Because if you keep silent in this crisis, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews** from another place, but you and your father’s house will lose [your lives]; and who knows, if for a time such as this you have arrived to a royal position.’ ” (Esther 4:13–14).

Question 1: **It is difficult** to know **exactly why** it says “**from another place,**” and what is the place? **Also, it** seems that it **would have been enough for it to say,** “**relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews,**” i.e., without adding “from another place.”

Question 2: **Also, why** did it say, “**but you and your father’s house will lose,**” for it **wouldn’t it have been possible for Israel to be saved** from another place **without her being lost? Also, how is a “loss” relevant here, it should have** more directly said “**you will die**”?

Question 3: **Also, what is this “and who knows”?**

ויוכח במה שכתב עולת אהרן בפרק קמא דמגילה על ההיא דתנו רבנן מה ראתה אסתר שזימנה להמן וכו', שהמן אמר למלך "בכל מדינות מלכותך דהיינו שאם אתה הורגם לא יקראו לך מלכותא קטיעתא, וכמו שנודע שאחשורוש מלך על קכ"ז מדינות שהם כל העולם כמו שכתב מהרש"א שם בזכות אסתר, כדאמרינו במדרש תבא אסתר שהיא בת בתה של שרה שחיייתה קכ"ז שנה ותמלוך על קכ"ז מדינה, נמצא זכות אסתר הנה רע לישראל, משום דאי לאו זכותא דאסתר לא מלך אחשורוש על כל העולם ולא הנה יכול להרוג את ישראל דקארו ליה מלכותא קטיעתא וכו' עכ"ל בקיצור.

It will be understood by that which the Olat Aharon¹ wrote on the first chapter of tractate Megillah (15b). It is written in the Talmud **that “the rabbis taught [in a Baraita]: What did Esther see to [make her decide to] invite Haman [to the banquet per Esther 5:4]?”** The Olat Aharon’s answer is **that Haman said to the king,** “There is a certain people, scattered and dispersed among the other peoples **in all the provinces of your realm,** whose laws are different

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¹ Rabbi Aharon Zelig ben Joel Feibush of Ostra (d. 1754), Olat Aharon (Offenbach 1733), page 22a.

from those of any other people and who do not obey the king's laws; and it is not in Your Majesty's interest to tolerate them" (Esther 3:8). **That is, if you will kill them**, you will be able to kill all of them, and thus **they won't call you a murderous kingdom**, for there will be no survivors to call you that.²

As it is known, **Ahasuerus reigned over 127 provinces, which was the entire [known] world. As the Maharsha³ wrote there** (page 11a, beginning "if you keep silent" [Esther 4:14]), **"In the merit of Esther,**' as it says in the midrash,⁴ **'Esther, a descendant of Sarah, who lived to 127 years, came to rule over 127 provinces.'** It's found that the merit of Esther was bad for Israel, for if not for the merit of Esther, Ahasuerus would not have reigned over the entire world and wouldn't have been able to plot to kill Israel, for then [the surviving Jews in the other nations] would have called him **'a murderous kingdom.'**" Up to here are [the Maharsha's] words, in short.

ולפי זה יש לומר דהיינו הך, ששלח מרדכי לאסתר "כי אם-התגרש תתרישי" וכו' "רנח ונהצלה" וכו', אגני פטוח בתקד המקום שיעשה גם לישראל. ומהו הגם? שימתן להם מקום ורינח להציל נפשם, שמדינה אחת תמרוד על המלך ולא תהיה עוד תחת ממשלתו ויוכלו מקצת יהודים לנוס ולהציל נשם נפשם. ואז לא יהיו עוד "בכל-מדינות מלכותו", וממילא תתבטל הגזירה, כי היכי דלא ליקרו ליה מלכותא קטיעתא, וזהו "ממקום אחר".

Answer 1: **According to this, it can be said, that it was thus, that Mordecai sent word to Esther, "Because if you keep silent in this crisis, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place"—meaning "I am certain in the kindness of the Omnipresent⁵ to perform a miracle for Israel."** What is the miracle? **That He will give them a place and space to save their souls, for one province will rebel against the king, and will no longer be under his rule, and then some Jews will be able to flee and save their lives there. Thus, they will no longer be "in every province of your realm,"⁶ and by itself the edict will be nullified, so that he should not be called a murderous nation [by the Jewish survivors elsewhere], and this is the meaning of "from another place."**

"ואת ובית-אביך תאבדו" הַזְכוּת שְׁהֵי לָךְ לְמַלּוּךְ בְּכָל הָעוֹלָם.

Answer 2: **"But you and your father's house will lose"—you will lose the merit that you had to rule the entire world!**

² Pesachim 87b: Rabbi Oshaya was debating an apostate, and said, "[If you seek] to destroy all of [the Jewish people, you cannot, because] they are not [all] with you [in your kingdom]. [If you destroy only] those [Jews] who are with you [in your kingdom], you will be called a *murderous kingdom* [by the surviving Jews elsewhere in the world]."

³ Rabbi Shmuel Eliezer Eidels (1555–1631), Polish rabbi famous for his Talmud commentaries, Chiddushei Halachot and Chiddushei Agadot.

⁴ Gen. Rabbah 58:3 and Esther Rabbah 1:8, both quoting Rabbi Akiva.

⁵ The Hebrew word for "The Omnipresent" is *hamakom* [הַמָּקוֹם], literally, "the place," suggesting one interpretation of the verse's language "saved from another *place*" as meaning "saved by the Omnipresent." But then the Zera Shimshon continues, explaining "another place" to mean a rebellious province.

⁶ Esther 2:3.

"וימי יודע אם־לעת קִזאת" וכו' מי יודע אם זכות המלכות בא לך לרע על ישראל כמו שהיא השעה הזאת, דילמא מתחלה מלכת על כל העולם לפי שלא היה רע לישראל, אכל עתה עוד לא תמלוכי.

Answer 3: **“And who knows, if for a time such as this** you have arrived at a royal position”—**who knows if the merit of a royal position came to you for the worse for Israel, as at this time**, when the concentration of Jews under one rule might allow their destruction. **Perhaps from the beginning, you reigned over the entire world because it was not bad for Israel, but now** that it has become bad, **you will no longer reign.**

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