

# V'nahafoch hu: Bringing to Light the Purim We Don't See

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## The Story of Purim in Under 200 Words

(adapted from URJ.org)

In Persia, King Ahashverosh held a banquet and ordered his queen, Vashti, to dance before his guests. She refused and was banished.

Ahashverosh, then, held a pageant to choose a new queen. Mordechai, a Jew, encouraged his cousin, Esther, to enter the competition. She won but did not reveal that she was Jewish.

One day, Mordecai overheard two men plotting to kill the king. He reported what he had heard to Esther, who reported the information to the king, and the men were killed. Mordechai's deed was recorded in the king's diary.

Meanwhile, Haman demanded that all bow down to him. As a Jew, Mordechai refused. Therefore, Haman decided to kill all the Jews in Persian, and convinced King Ahashverosh to go along.

However, Mordechai alerted Esther to Haman's plot, and Esther, in turn, revealed her Jewish identity to the King, convincing him to save the Jews. Haman was hanged; Mordechai received his estates and position. Thus, the fate Haman had planned for the Jews became his own.

The holiday of Purim celebrates the bravery of Esther and Mordechai and the deliverance of the Jewish people from the cruelty of oppression.

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### Esther 1:10-11

(10) On the seventh day, when the king was merry with wine, he ordered ... the seven eunuchs in attendance on King Ahasuerus, (11) to bring *Queen Vashti* before the king *wearing a royal diadem*, to display her beauty to the peoples and the officials; for she was a beautiful woman.

### Megillah 12b

The Gemara continues to detail what occurred at the feast. **So too, at the feast of that wicked man, Ahasuerus, when the men began to converse, some said: The Median women are the most beautiful, while others said: The Persian women are the most beautiful. Ahasuerus said to them: *The vessel that I use*, i.e., his wife, **is neither Median nor Persian, but rather Chaldean. Do you wish to see her? They said to him: Yes, provided that she be naked.****

### Esther 2:12-14

(12) When each girl's turn came to go to King Ahasuerus at the end of the twelve months' treatment prescribed for women (for that was the period spent on beautifying them ... (13) and it was after that that the girl would go to the king.... (14) She would *go in the evening and leave in the morning* for a second harem in charge of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch, guardian of the concubines. She would not go again to the king unless the king wanted her, when she would be summoned by name.

### Esther 2:8

(8) When the king's order and edict was proclaimed, and when many girls *were assembled* in the fortress Shushan under the supervision of Hegai, Esther too *was taken* into the king's palace under the supervision of Hegai, guardian of the women.

### Esther 2:16-17

(16) Esther *was taken* to King Ahasuerus, in his royal palace, in the tenth month, which is the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. (17) The king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she won his

grace and favor more than all the virgins. So he set a royal diadem on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

### **Esther 2:20**

(20) But Esther still did not reveal her kindred or her people, as Mordecai had instructed her; *for Esther obeyed Mordecai's bidding, as she had done when she was under his tutelage.*

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### **Esther 8:11-12**

(11) to this effect: The king has permitted the Jews of every city to assemble and fight for their lives; if any people or province attacks them, they may *destroy, massacre, and exterminate its armed force together with women and children, and plunder their possessions*— (12) on a single day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, namely, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, that is, the month of Adar.

### **Esther 9:1-17**

(1) And so, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month—that is, the month of Adar—when the king's command and decree were to be executed, the very day on which the enemies of the Jews had expected to get them in their power, the opposite happened, and the Jews got their enemies in their power. ... (5) So the Jews struck at their enemies with the sword, slaying and destroying; they wreaked their will upon their enemies. (6) In the fortress Shushan the Jews killed a total of five hundred men. (7) They also killed ... (10) the ten sons of Haman ... (16) The rest of the Jews, those in the king's provinces, likewise mustered and fought for their lives. *They disposed of their enemies, killing seventy-five thousand of their foes*

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### **Esther 1:12 - Vashti**

(12) But Queen *Vashti* refused to come at the king's command conveyed by the eunuchs. The king was greatly incensed, and his fury burned within him.

### **Esther 6:13 - Zeresh**

(13) There Haman told his wife *Zeresh* and all his friends everything that had befallen him. His advisers and his wife *Zeresh* said to him, "If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish stock, you will not overcome him; you will fall before him to your ruin."

### **Esther 4:16-17 - Esther**

(16) "Go, assemble all the Jews who live in Shushan, and fast in my behalf; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens will observe the same fast. Then *I shall go to the king, though it is contrary to the law*; and if I am to perish, I shall perish!" (17) So Mordecai went about [the city] and did just *as Esther had commanded him.*

### **Esther 9:29-32**

(29) Then Queen *Esther* daughter of Abihail wrote a second letter of Purim for the purpose of *confirming with full authority* the aforementioned one of Mordecai the Jew. ... (32) And Esther's ordinance *validating* these observances of Purim was recorded in a scroll.

### **Esther 9:30**

(30) Dispatches were sent to all the Jews in the hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the realm of Ahasuerus with an ordinance of "*equity and honesty:*"