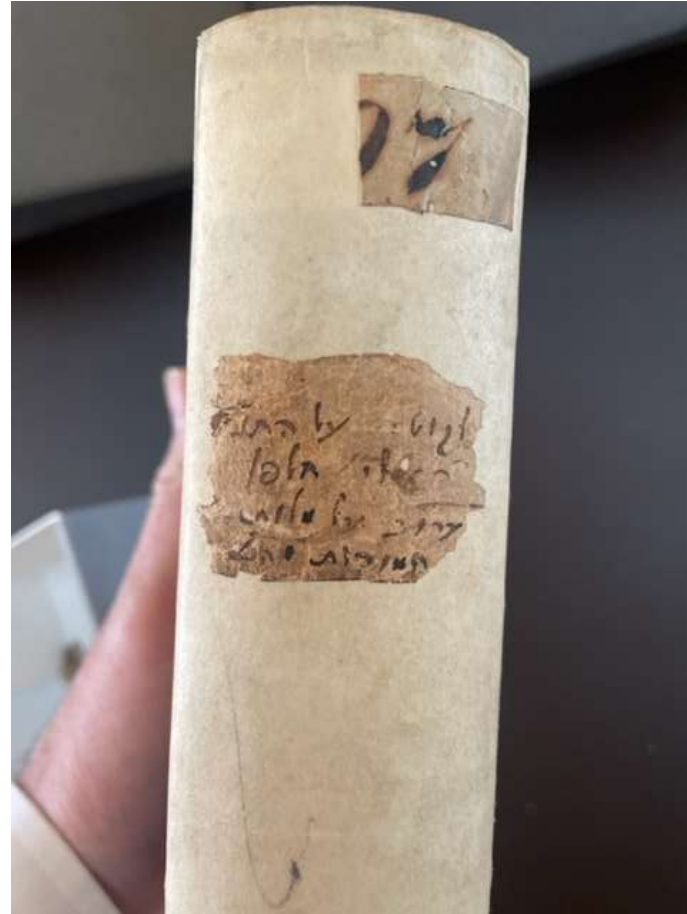


Purim in R. Elijah Menachem Chalfan's commentary on the Torah (Oxford MS. Opp. 227)

Rabbi Eli Brackman



N: 9.48



Ms. Oxon. 722

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לֵאמֹר וַיֵּךְ מִיָּדוֹ מֵי-יָדוֹ דָּרְבָן וְכֵן לִפְנֵי סִידוֹרִי לְהַיִּט
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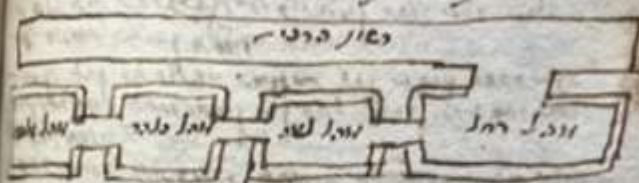
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היה חסדו ורחמי
לפי שכל המעשים
האלהים הם רחמים
ועם כל זאת לא ירד
מלפניו ולא יבטל
אשר עשה לנו
כי נזכרנו לפניו
וכי נשכחנו מלפניו
כי נשכחנו מלפניו
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על הנהגתו ופועליו
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לרבי
שם. פנים חתונתן זעיר ד' לך יתן זהו שומר תלמיד
לך יתן לא יסור ממנו
פ' יחידה ד' פעמים פשוט כפסוק שפד ד' קל' אהבה
למורה נסד יתן כחן שם האשה יתן כשר לא זולת
משפחה ופני החן
לדור הישנה ונהם דער ה' ילי ויבא סמך ורית תלמיד

Joshua Ibn Shuaib - Kabbalah

- Bereishit
- You will find in the verse '*Bereishit*' six '*alefs*,' alluding to the six millennia that the world will exist; in the verse 'Now the earth was astonishingly empty' (*ve-ha-aretz*), there are two '*alefs*,' corresponding to the two thousand years of the Torah; in the verse: 'so that the Torah of G-d will be in your mouth,' alluding to the two thousand years of the Torah, and the two '*alefs*' in the verse: 'until the coming of Shiloh' alludes to the two thousand years of the days of Mashiach. Similarly, the three words in the verse '*Bereishit*' also has an allusion according to the **Kabbalah**. (Ibn Shuaib, cited in Midrashic commentary on the Torah by R. Elijah Menachem Chalfan ben R. Abba Mari. MS. Opp. 722 fol. 3 (1523)).

Joshua Ibn Shuaib - Talmud

- Shelach
- **Rabbi Simeon ben Yoḥai** follows his own opinion since Rabbi Simeon ben Yoḥai said: “If I had stood at Mount Sinai at the moment that the Torah was given to Israel, I would have implored the All-Merciful that he should create two mouths for man; one for him to exert himself in Torah and the other one for his other needs.” But he changed his mind and said: “With one mouth already the world almost cannot exist because of its denunciations; if there were two how much more would there be? (Jerusalem *Talmud Brachot* 2:1). (Derashot al Hatorah R. Joshua Ibn Shuaib, cited in Midrashic commentary on the Torah by R. Elijah Menachem Chalfan ben R. Abba Mari (d. 1550/1), MS. Opp. 722, fol. 316 (1523)).

Joshua Ibn Shuaib – Sefer Yetzirah

- Shelach
- *Tzitzit* has eight threads, and five knots, corresponding to six hundred and thirteen commandments, because *tzitzit* is written incomplete (without a ‘yud’), and the lamed prefix – ‘*l’tzitzit*,’ makes up for the three ‘yuds’ missing from the three times *tzitzit* is mentioned in the parsha. There are thirty-two threads, corresponding to the thirty-two paths (*netivot*) and the eight threads on each corner corresponds to the eight limbs with which a person sins: the eye, ear, nose, mouth, hand, foot, heart and body. **The thirty-two paths of wisdom refer to the whole Torah: the ten sefirot, and twenty two letters of the alef bet, consisting of seven double letters and fifteen plain letters. It therefore states: ‘and you shall remember all the mitzvot of G-d.’** **The Torah, therefore, begins with an ‘bet and ends with a ‘lamed.’** The sages say (*Menachot* 39a) that the ‘*techelet*’ (blue wool of the *tzitzit*) is similar to the sea. The finest way to affix the white and sky-blue strings is to ensure that one-third of the length of the strings is windings and two-thirds are loose hanging strings, because it states: ‘*tzitzit*’ (hanging strings) and it also states: ‘*g’dil*,’ which is translated as: twisted (*maseh avot gedilan*). Even though if the winding is greater than the hanging it does not invalidate the *mitzvah*, the finest way the perform the mitzvah is to ensure that one-third of the length of the strings is windings and two-thirds are loose hanging strings, as a way to remember the three Temples in Jerusalem, because the first two did not last, because it was not twisted, but the third one will last and will never be forsaken or destroyed, for it states (Zachariah 2:9): ‘And I Myself will be a wall of fire all around it, and I will be a glory inside it.’ (Derashot al Hatorah R. Joshua Ibn Shuaib, cited in Midrashic commentary on the Torah by R. Elijah Menachem Chalfan ben R. Abba Mari (d. 1550/1), MS. Opp. 722, fol. 316 (1523)).

Joshua Ibn Shuaib - Midrash

- Korach
- It states in *Midrash*: he gathered for scoffing. He said to them: there was once a widow, who has a sheep, which ate from her house and lay in her bosom. It gave birth to a firstborn. Aaron came and took the firstborn. She sheared its wool, and he took the priestly gift of the ‘first shearing’ (*reishit ha-gez*). The woman said: I will slaughter it. He took the priestly gifts of the ‘foreleg, cheeks and maw.’ In her anger, she said it is all ‘*cherem*’ (dedicated to the Temple). He said: it states in the Torah ‘all *cherem* of an Israelite shall be to the kohen’ (Numbers 18:4). He took the lamb to his house. (Derashot al Hatorah R. Joshua Ibn Shuaib, cited in Midrashic commentary on the Torah by R. Elijah Menachem Chalfan ben R. Abba Mari (d. 1550/1), MS. Opp. 722, fol. 321 (1523)).

Joshua Ibn Shuaib – Mechilta of Rashbi

- Korach
- In the **midrash of R. Shimon ben Yochai** it teaches a great and hidden matter, that Korach was wise and knew the secrets of the *Merkava* (heavenly chariot), and relied of the merit of his three ancestors: Yitzhar, Kehat and Levi, because the verse does not mention Jacob, because Jacob prayed not to be mentioned in connection with their quarrel, as it is stated (Genesis 49:6): ‘my honour, you shall not join their assembly,’ but for the service of the Levites on the platform in the Temple, it says (I Chronicles 6:22, 23): ‘the son of Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, the son of Israel’ (Numbers Rabbah 18:5). R. Shimon ben Yochai writes regarding this that these three ancestors which the verse mentions are Levites from the side of Isaac, because the *kohanim* come from the attribute of Abraham, and the Levites from the attribute of Isaac. For this reason, they engaged in quarrel and judgement. It is known that Isaac had ‘a hundredfold’ (*me-ah she-arim*). Korach saw that his three ancestors had ‘three hundred white mules’ that the sages mention (Sanhedrin 110a) carried the keys [*aklidei*] to Korah’s treasuries. He made a mistake, however, as these three hundred mules did not bear offspring, ‘like this barren mule [*pereida*] that cannot bear offspring’ (*Megillah* 13b), and they were white, for they were a danger and caused him his death. This is the meaning of the teaching of the sages (*Sanhedrin* 110a): ‘Joseph concealed three buried treasures in Egypt that he accumulated from the sale of grain during the years of famine. The location of one was revealed to Korah, concerning which it states (Ecclesiastes 5:12): ‘wealth is kept for the owner to his detriment.’ Despite the merit of his ancestors, it did not help him, since **he used the wealth for sin and transgression**. The location of the second was revealed to Antoninus, son of Asveirus, emperor of Rome, and one remains hidden for the righteous in the future, i.e., in the messianic era. (Derashot al Hatorah R. Joshua Ibn Shuaib, cited in Midrashic commentary on the Torah by R. Elijah Menachem Chalfan ben R. Abba Mari (d. 1550/1), MS. Opp. 722, fol. 321 (1523)).

Joshua Ibn Shuaib – Pythagoras, Ibn Ezra, Nachmanides - Prophecy attainable

- Re-eh
- 1. ‘If there will arise among you a prophet, etc.’ In the *Midrash*, it states: A parable of a king who appoints a minister for his government and instructs him, face to face, to be responsible for his kingdom, conduct himself in particular a way, and not change from this path and instruction for any reason in the world at all, even if a person comes in my name, and brings my writ with my seal, do not believe it, but rather the minister should not do anything other than fulfil his command. Even if a number of righteous and trustworthy people come with my seal, he should not transgress, and if he does, he will forfeit his life. In the same way, we the house of Israel, we heard the Torah at Sinai from His mouth, if a person comes and says he is a prophet and performs a wonder, to transgress a commandment, one should not believe him.
- 2. Some philosophers say that when one strengthens the intellectual soul and humbles the sensual soul (*nefesh hamargeshet*) and the soul of desire (*hanefesh she-mit-av-veh*), you cleave to the active intellect (*sechel ha-poel*). When this happens, he knows the future. For this reason, one finds sorcerers (*kosmim*), who are short in height and ugly, because their natural soul (*nefesh ha-tiv-it*) is weak in them, and their intellect is strong, and their control events and the future telling comes true. They said there was a wise person, his name is **Pythagoras**, who was such a person. They say he was from Charan, and knew the future. Some say this happens due to the time the person is born, in a certain celestial constellation. Some say, he was one of the prophets of the south, as stated by **R. Abraham Ibn Ezra**. Similarly, the verse states: ‘from the south comes my word.’ **Nachmanides** writes: when the power of the intellect overpowers the imagination (*ko-ach ha-me-da-meh*), either due to external influence or the recipient, he becomes a sorcerer. **When it influences his power of speech, he becomes a person with insight and wisdom. When it influences both, he becomes a prophet.**

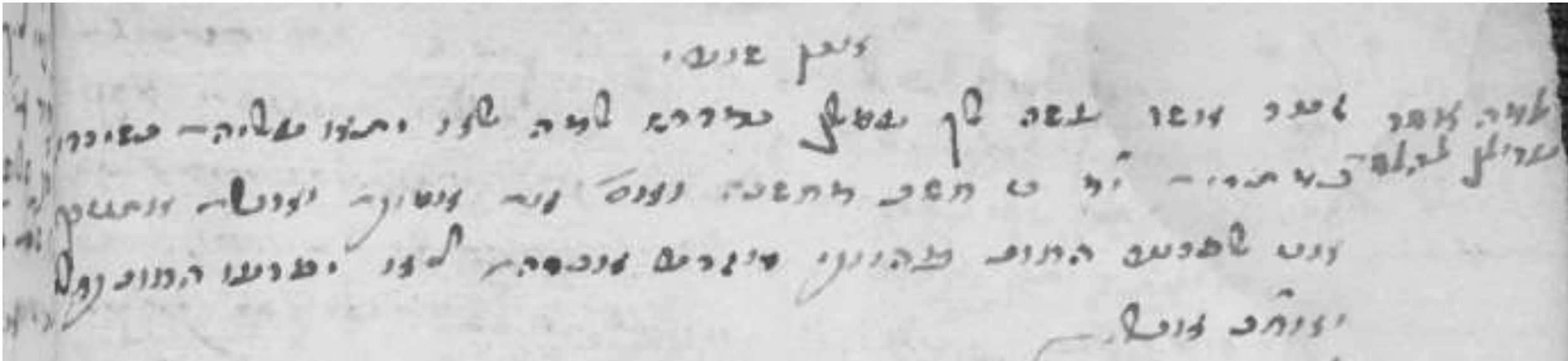
Joshua Ibn Shuaib – Sorcerers have powers

- Re-eh
- The view of the sages that the miracle of the stopping of the sun by Joshua is greater than the splitting of the sea or the Jordan or other miracles, is for two reasons: firstly, it is a greater miracle and change of nature, because it is a great principle that if the universe would decline from its movement even for a moment the earth would be destroyed and revert to void and nothingness. It is only G-d, master of the universe, who is able to move and stop according to His will. Secondly, it is known, that **sorcerers have power in the lower realms**, but have no power whatsoever in the heavenly hosts. This was the context of the Egyptian sorcerers, and why Pharaoh did not free the people until the plague of the firstborns, when G-d performed great judgement in the higher realms. This is the meaning of the verse (Psalms 115:116): ‘The heavens belong to G-d.’ The intention is not literally that ‘The heavens belong to G-d’ and ‘the earth He gave over to man,’ but rather G-d did not give man power in the higher realms. G-d did, however, give man power and wisdom on earth.

Joshua Ibn Shuaib – Healing without knowledge, by chance

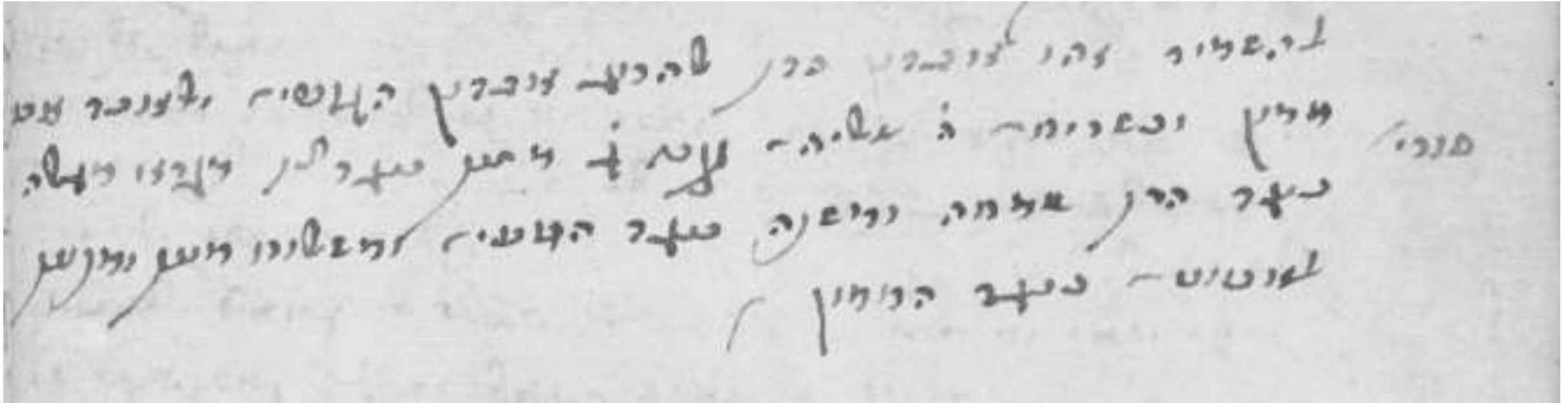
- Re-eh
- The sage already wrote this concept to the Khazar king, citing a parable of an extremely proficient doctor, who healed everyone who saw him, because he understood ailments and the power of healing, becoming famous worldwide. One time, people came to his shop, when he wasn't present, so one person took the instruments of the doctor without any measurements or weights and without knowledge of the illnesses he was curing, and distributed to all without supervision or examination, killing many of the people he was trying to heal, if he had known how to administer the medicine, and healing some of them by chance. Those who were saw they were healed thought the person was wise and a doctor and believed in him. But this was not so, because knowledge is only with doctor who knows the nature of medicine, while this person acting without knowledge, and healed people by chance. The healer is G-d and the medicine are the powers. The healer, who is stupid, acts without knowledge, and people, who are stupid, go astray after them. (Derashot al Hatorah R. Joshua Ibn Shuaib, Midrashic commentary on the Torah by R. Elijah Menachem Chalfan ben R. Abba Mari (d. 1550/1), MS. Opp. 722, fol. 363 (1523)).

R. Joshua Ibn Shuaib – on Zachor (Tetzaveh)



Remember that which Amalek did to you: In midrash: why did Amalek not wage war on them (Israel) when they went down to Egypt? Some explain: because he thought the idea that if he kills them and eradicates them, I will need to repay the debt being that I am from the offspring of Abraham. Rather, let them repay the debt first and then I will destroy them.

R. Joshua Ibn Shuaib – on Purim (Tetzaveh)



Esther 3:13: 'To destroy, kill and obliterate all the Jews, from young to old, child and women, on the thirteenth day of the month, on one day, and they spoils will be for plunder: 'To destroy' refers to the destruction of the law (*dat*); 'to kill' refers to the bodies; 'and to obliterate' refers to the money. When G-d had mercy on them three mitzvot were established corresponding to these three: 'Reading of Megillah' corresponding to the law (*dat*), 'rejoicing and feasting' corresponds to the bodies, and 'sending gifts and gifts to the poor' corresponds to the money.

Esther 3:13

- Accordingly, written instructions were dispatched by couriers to all the king's provinces to **destroy, massacre, and exterminate** all the Jews, young and old, children and women, on a single day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month—that is, the month of Adar—and to plunder their possessions.

Megillah 7a

- Apropos the statement of Rav Shmuel bar Yehuda with regard to the establishment of the holiday of Purim, the Gemara cites a related statement. **Rav Shmuel bar Yehuda said: Esther sent to the Sages: Establish me for future generations. Esther requested that the observance of Purim and the reading of the Megilla be instituted as an ordinance for all generations. They sent to her: You will thereby arouse the wrath of the nations upon us, as the Megilla recounts the victory of the Jews over the gentiles, and it is best not to publicize that victory. **She sent back to them: I am already written in the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia,** and so the Megilla will not publicize anything that is not already known worldwide.**

Megillah 7a

- It was related that **Rav and Rabbi Ḥanina and Rabbi Yoḥanan and Rav Ḥaviva taught** the statement cited below. The Gemara comments: **Throughout the order of *Moed*, wherever this latter pair of Sages is mentioned, exchange Rabbi Yoḥanan and insert Rabbi Yonatan in his place.** They said: **Esther sent to the Sages: Write me for future generations and canonize my book as part of the Bible. They sent to her that it is written: “Have I not written for you three times”** (Proverbs 22:20), indicating that Israel’s battle with Amalek is to be mentioned **three times** in the Bible **and not four times?** Since it is already mentioned three times (Exodus 17:8–16; Deuteronomy 25:17–19; I Samuel 15), there is no need to add a fourth source.

Jerusalem Talmud Megillah

- Rebbi Jeremiah in the name of Rebbi Samuel bar Rav Isaac: What did Mordocai and Esther do? They wrote a letter and sent to our rabbis. So they said to them, do you accept upon yourselves these two days every year? They answered them, are not the troubles which come upon us enough, that you want to add to ours the trouble of Haman? They insisted and wrote them a second letter; that is what is written, *to confirm to them this second [Purim]letter*. What was written in it? They told them, if this is your fear, already it is written and deposited in Archives: *are these not written in the annals of the kings of Media and Persia*.

- Megillah – instead of Hallel
- Yehudim – core – abandonment of belief
- Mishloach Manot – unity – corresponding – dispersion of Jews
- Matanot laevyonim – charity
- Both: Seudah
- Seudah – wine – beyond rationale - faith