

APPENDIX

COMPARING THE EXEGESIS OF ESTHER CHAPTER ONE IN THE BAVLI AND IN ESTHER RABBAH I

A large part of Bavli Megillah Chapter One is devoted to the exegesis of passages of the Book of Esther, in what looks like a systematic compilation prepared for that particular purpose, as indicated in the outline in Chapter Five. To facilitate the work of “comparative Midrash,” I here present side by side the treatment of the same chapter in two distinct Midrash-compilations, that presented by the Bavli on the left, that set forth in Esther Rabbah I on the right. In this way the way in which the two compilations choose to portray the Esther-Scroll becomes abundantly clear, along with the striking points of difference that mark the respective compilations. It is such large-scale comparison as is given here that the true work of comparative Midrash will go forward, an actual, detailed comparison of whole documents first—and then the point-by-point comparison of the details.

In setting forth the two large blocks of material, I mean only to make it convenient for others to form some preliminary hypotheses on the relationship between the Talmud’s and Esther Rabbah I’s approach to the same passages: rhetorical and formal, logical, and propositional. My sense is that the two documents bear only occasional and episodic points in common. They share a common perspective and some sayings as well, but, in the main, the framers of each document pursued their distinctive theory of what be done. This impression surprises me, since I should have assumed that, sharing the conception of a line-by-line commentary to a single text, and holding in common a sizable repertoire of specific comments to various verses, the two compilations ought to yield more traits in common than the occasional and local ones that I see before us.

The upshot is that our Talmud-tractate contains a large composite of scriptural exegesis — one in size and scope without parallel in any other tractate — that exhibits only casual points of commonality with the other large composites of scriptural exegesis that our sages have produced. Whether that fact (if further study proves it is a fact) then helps us to understand how the Talmud has acquired this massive set of materials on a document other than the Mishnah or why its presentation of a Midrash-unit differs, as it seems to, from the counterpart of a Midrash-compilation remains to be seen.

BAVLI TO ESTHER, CHAPTER ONE
[COMPLETE]

I.1 A. “And it was in the days of Ahasuerus...” Said Rabbi Levi and, if you wish, say Rabbi Jonathan: This matter is a tradition that we have from the Men of the Great Assembly: Every place where “and it was” (*wa-yehi*) is said is an expression connoting suffering.

B. “And it was in the days of Ahasuerus” (Est. 1: 1) — there was Haman;

C. “And it was in the days when the judges judged” (Rut. 1: 1) — there was a famine;

D. “And it was, when man began to multiply...and the Lord saw that man’s evil was great” (Gen. 6:1, 5);

E. “And it was, when they traveled from the east...Let us build a city” (Gen. 11:2, 4);

F. “And it was, in the days of Amraphel...they made war” (Gen. 14:1, 2);

G. “And it was, when Joshua was in Jericho...and his bared sword was in his hand” (Jos. 5:13);

H. “And it was that God was with Joshua...but the Israelites took something sacred” (Jos. 6:27, 7: 1);

I. “And there was a man from HaRamataim...for he loved Hannah, but God had closed her womb” (1Sa. 1:1, 6);

J. “And it was, when Samuel grew old...but his sons did not walk in his paths” (1Sa. 8:1, 3);

K. “And it was that David was wise in all his ways, and God was with him...but Saul hated David” (1Sa. 18:14, 9);

L. “And it was, when the king sat in his palace...But you will not build the Temple” (2Sam 7:1, 2Ch. 6: 9);

M. [“And it was” also appears in positive contexts:]

N. But is it not written, “And it was on the eighth day” (Lev. 9: 1)?

O. *And it is taught:* On that day was as [great] a joy before The Holy One, Blessed Be He, as the day on which the heavens and earth were created.

P. *Here is written,* “And it was on the eighth day” (Lev. 9: 1); *and there is written* “...and it was morning, one day” (Gen. 1: 5).

Q. But Nadav and Avihu died [at precisely that time].

R. And it is written, “And it was, in the 480th year...” (1Ki. 6: 1);

S. And it is written, “And it was, when Jacob saw Rachel...” (Gen. 29:10);

T. And it is written, “And it was evening, and it was morning, one day” (Gen. 1: 5);

U. and there is the second [day];

V. and there is the third [day];

W. *and there are more.*

X. [Rather,] said Rav Ashi: Every “And it was” — there are some this way [negative] and some the other way [positive]. Only “And it was in the days of...” is an expression connoting suffering.

Y. There are five [instances of] “And it was in the days of:”

Z. “And it was in the days of Ahasuerus...” (Est. 1: 1);

AA. “And it was in the days when the judges judged...” (Rut. 1: 1);

ESTHER RABBAH I TO ESTHER CHAPTER ONE
[ESTHER 1:1-8]

1:1 Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces...

X:i

I. A. “Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus:”

B. Said R. Joshua b. Qorhah, “[He was called Ahasuerus] because he blackened the face of the Israelites like the sides of a pot [and the word for blacken and the name Ahasuerus use the same letters].”

C. R. Levi said, “It is because he gave the Israelites a headache through their fasting and self-affliction [and the word for make the head ache and the name Ahasuerus use the same letters].”

D. R. Levi said, “It is because he made them drink gall and wormwood [and the word for make drink gall and the name Ahasuerus use the same letters].”

E. And R. Judah b. R. Simon said, “It is because he wanted to uproot the Israelites at their roots [and the word for uproot (cf. Simon, p. 18, n. 2) and the name Ahasuerus use the same letters].”

F. R. Tahalipa bar bar Hana said, “It is because he was the brother of the chief, [and the word for brother of the chief or head and the name Ahasuerus use the same letters] the brother of Nebuchadnezzar.”

G. But was he really his brother? Is it not the fact that the one was Chaldean and the other Median?

H. But [what they have in common is that] this one stopped work on the house of the sanctuary, and the other destroyed it. Therefore Scripture treated them as equivalent.

I. That is in line with the following verse of Scripture: “Even one who is slack in the work is brother to the one who is a destroyer” (Pro. 18: 9).

J. “Even one who is slack in the work:” this refers to Ahasuerus, who stopped work on the house of the sanctuary.

K. “is brother to the one who is a destroyer:” this is Nebuchadnezzar, who destroyed the house of the sanctuary.

2. A. Another comment on the phrase, “[in the days of] Ahasuerus, the [Ahasuerus] [Hebrew: he is Ahasuerus who...].”

B. R. Judah and R. Nehemiah:

C. One of them said, “‘The Ahasuerus’ who killed his wife on account of his ally is the same Ahasuerus who killed his ally on account of his wife.”

D. The other of them [text: R. Nehemiah] said, “‘The Ahasuerus’ who stopped the building of the house of the sanctuary is the same Ahasuerus who decreed that it be built.”

E. But is he the one who made that decree? Was it not Cyrus who made that decree? For it is written, “In the first year of Cyrus the king, Cyrus the king made a decree concerning the house of God...let the house be built” (Ezr. 6: 3).

F. At that time all of his councillors came before him and said to him, “Your father made a decree that it not

BB. “And it was in the days of Amraphel...” (Gen. 14: 1);

CC. “And it was in the days of Ahaz...” (Isa. 7: 1);

DD. “And it was in the days of Jehoiakim...” (Jer. 1: 1).

I.2 A. And, Said Rabbi Levi: This matter is a tradition that we have from our ancestors: Amoz and Amaziah were brothers.

B. *What does this teach us?*

C. [This follows what we have learned] according to what Rav Samuel bar Nahmani said, said Rabbi Jonathan [M: Yohanan]: Every bride who is modest in her father-in-law’s house merits that kings and prophets will descend from her.

D. *From where do we know this?*

E. From Tamar, as is written, “And Judah saw her, and he thought her to be a prostitute, because she covered her face” (Gen. 38:15).

F. Did he think she was a prostitute because she covered her face? Rather, because she covered her face [when she lived] in her father-in-law’s house, and he did not recognize her, she merited that kings and prophets descended from her — kings, from David; prophets, as said Rabbi Levi: It is a tradition that we have from our ancestors: Amoz and Amaziah were brothers [in A]; and it is written, “The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz” (Isa. 1: 1).

F. And Said Rabbi Levi: This is a tradition that we have from our ancestors: The place of the ark is not included in the measurements [of the Holy of Holies, in which it was housed].

G. *It is also taught this way [in a baraita]:* The ark that Moses made measured ten cubits on every side, and it is written, “and the inside of the sanctuary (*devir*) was twenty cubits in length...” (1Ki. 6:20); and it is written, “the wing of one cherub was ten cubits and the wing of the other cherub was ten cubits” [cf. 1Ki. 6:24-25].

H. *Where did the ark stand? Rather, not this way; learn from this, it was standing through a miracle.*

FURTHER INTERPRETATION OF ESTHER

CHAPTER ONE 1:1

I:1 A. “...Ahasuerus:” Said Rav: The brother of the head and the colleague of the head.

B. The brother of the head [means] the brother of Nebuchadnezzar, the evil one, who is called “head,” as is said, “you are the head of gold” (Dan. 2:38). The colleague of the head — he [Nebuchadnezzar] killed, he [Ahasuerus] sought to kill; he [Nebuchadnezzar] destroyed, he [Ahasuerus] sought to destroy, as is said, “And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem” (Ezr. 4: 6).

D. And Samuel said: Because, in his days, the faces of Israel were blackened (*hushharu*) like the sides of a pot.

E. [And Rabbi Yohanan said: Anyone who remembers

be rebuilt, and you decree that it be rebuilt? Now can one king nullify the decrees of another king?”

G. He said to them, “Bring me copies of the state archives.”

H. They brought him copies of the state archives, and therein was written, “Then there was found at Ahmetha in the palace...a roll” (Ezr. 6: 2).

I. And what was written in it? “Make a decree to cause these men to cease” (Ezr. 4:21).

J. He said to them, “Is it written, ‘for all time’? What is written is only, ‘until a decree will be made by me’ (Ezr. 4:21).

K. “Who can see that if father were alive, he would not build it?”

L. Therefore Scripture includes him with the prophets: “And the elders of the Jews built and prospered, through the propesying of Haggai” (Ezr. 6:14). [Cf. Simon, p. 19, n. 5: Therefore it is as if he had himself decreed that it should be built. For that reason the order to rebuild is ascribed to Ahauerus.]

3. A. “[in the days of Ahasuerus], the [Ahasuerus] [Hebrew: he is Ahasuerus who...].”

B. The word “he” appears five times in a pejorative sense, and five times in a positive sense.

C. The five usages in a pejorative sense are these:

D. “He [Nimrod] was a mighty hunter before the Lord” (Gen. 10: 9).

E. “He [Esau] is Esau the father of the Edomites” (Gen. 36:43).

F. “These are [he is] that Dathan and Abiram” (Num. 26: 9).

G. “He is king Ahaz” (2Ch. 28:22).

H. “he is Ahasuerus who....”

I. The five usages in a positive sense are these:

J. “Abram, he is Abraham” (1Ch. 1:27).

K. “These are he, Moses and Aaron” (Exo. 6:27).

L. “These are he, Aaron and Moses” (Exo. 6:26).

M. “And David was he, the youngest” (1Sa. 17:14).

N. “Has not he, Hezekiah” (2Ch. 32:12).

O. “He is Ezra, who went up from Babylonia” (Ezr. 7: 9).

P. R. Berekhiah in the name of rabbis from there [Babylonia]: “We have one that is better than them all: ‘He is the Lord our God, his judgments are in all the earth’ (Psa. 105: 7).

Q. “For the trait of his mercy is for ever.”

4. A. [the] Ahasuerus [who reigned from India to Ethiopia over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces].”

B. R. Levi and rabbis:

C. R. Levi said, “Ahasuerus is the same as Artaxerxes. Why is he called Ahasuerus? Because whoever remembers him gets a headache, [and the word for make the head ache and the name Ahasuerus use the same letters].”

D. And rabbis say, “Artaxerxes is the same as Ahasuerus. Why is his name Artaxerxes? Because he would get mad and then feel sorry [*martiah vehash*, and the letters for those words occur in the name Artaxerxes].”

5. A. [the] Ahasuerus [who reigned from India to Ethiopia over one hundred and twenty-seven

him said “woe” to his head.

F. And Rabbi Hanina said: For everyone was made poor in his days, as is said, “and King Ahasuerus levied a tax.” (Est. 10: 1).

I:2 A. “...this is Ahasuerus:” [1] “This is Ahasuerus” (Est. 1: 1) — he in his wickedness from beginning to end.

B. [2] “This is Esau” (Gen. 36:43) — he in his wickedness from beginning to end.

C. [3] “This is Dathan and Aviram” (Num. 26: 9) — they in their wickedness from beginning to end.

D. [4] “This is King Ahaz” (2Ch. 28:22) — he in his wickedness from beginning to end.

E. [5] “Abraham is Abraham” (1Ch. 1:27) — he in his righteousness from beginning to end.

F. [6] “This is Aaron and Moses” (Exo. 10:26:) — they in their righteousness from beginning to end.

G. [7] “And David, he is the youngest” (1Sa. 17:14) — he in his youth from beginning to end.

H. Just as, in his youth, he [David] humbled himself before someone who was greater in Torah than he, so in his reign he humbled himself before someone who was greater in wisdom than he [i.e., Mephiboshet].

II.1 A. “...who reigns...”

A. Said Rav: He came to power on his own.

B. *Some say this positively; some say it negatively.*

C. *Those who say it positively [do so] because there was no one as worthy to be the king as he; those who say it negatively [do so] because he was not worthy of the kingship, but he paid out a lot of money and rose [to power].*

III.1 A. “...from India to Kush [i.e., Ethiopia]...”

B. Rav and Samuel:

C. One said: India is at the end of the world and Kush is at the [other] end of the world; and the other said: India and Kush are situated next to each other.

D. Just as he ruled over India and Kush, so did he rule from one end of the world to the other.

E. Similarly, you say “...because he rules over all of Trans-Jordan, from Tiphseh to Gaza” (1Ki. 5: 4).

F. Rav and Samuel:

G. One said: Tiphseh is at the end of the world and Gaza is at the [other] end of the world; and the other said: Tiphseh and Gaza are situated next to each other.

H. Just as he ruled over Tiphseh and Gaza, so did he rule over the entire world.

IV.1 A. “...seven and twenty and one hundred provinces.”

B. Said Rav Hisda: At first he ruled over seven; later he ruled over twenty; and finally he ruled over one hundred.

C. But if so, how do you expound, “And the years of the life of Amram were seven and thirty and one hundred” (Exo. 6:20)?

D. *It is different here, because there is an extra scriptural passage. Since it is written “from India to Kush,” why do I need [the statement that this included] “127 provinces”?*

provinces].”

B. R. Isaac and rabbis:

C. R. Isaac said, “He is the Ahasuerus in whose times all troubles came: ‘There was great mourning among the Jews.’

D. “He is [a different] Ahasuerus in whose times all blessings came: ‘The Jews had gladness and joy, a feast and a holiday’ (Est. 8:17).” [Simon, p. 20, n. 6: Thus it was as though there were two different persons and separate reigns.]

E. Rabbis said, “He is the Ahasuerus before Esther went in to him, and he is the same Ahasuerus after Esther went in to him,

F. “for he did not have sexual relations with menstruating women.” [Simon, p. 20, ns. 7, 8: He was sensual. But thus he became a different person, as it were.]

6. A. “...who reigned [from India to Ethiopia over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces].”

B. [“Reigned”] but up to now had not actually ruled.

7. A. “from India to Ethiopia.”

B. But is it not the fact that the distance from Hodu to Cush is negligible?

C. The sense is this: Just as he ruled from Hodu to Kush, so he ruled over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces.”

8. A. Along these same lines: “For he had dominion over all the region on this side of the River, from Tiphseh even to Gaza” (1Ki. 5: 4).

B. But is it not the fact that the distance from Tiphseh to Gaza is negligible?

C. The sense is this: Just as he ruled from Tiphseh to Gaza, so he ruled over the whole world.

9. A. Along these same lines: “From the Temple up to Jerusalem, kings shall bring presents to you” (Psa. 68:30):

B. But is it not the fact that the distance from the Temple to Jerusalem is negligible?

C. The sense is this: Just as the offerings extend from the Temple to Jerusalem, so there will be a parade of messengers with gifts for the Messiah: “Yes, all kings shall prostrate themselves before him” (Psa. 72:11).

D. R. Kohen, brother of R. Hiyya b. Abba, said, “Just as the Presence of God is located from the temple to Jerusalem, so will the presence of God fill the world from one end to the other: ‘And let the whole earth be filled with his glory, Amen and Amen’ (Psa. 72:19).”

10. A. [the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia] over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces:

B. R. Eleazar in the name of R. Hanina: “And is it not the fact that there are two hundred fifty-two hyparchies in the world [many more than one hundred twenty-seven? How can he have ruled over the whole world?]

C. “David ruled them all: ‘And the fame of David went out into all lands’ (1Ch. 14:17).

D. “Solomon ruled them all: ‘And Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms’ (1Ki. 5: 1).

E. “Ahab ruled them all: ‘As the Lord your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my Lord has not sent to seek you and imposed an oath on the kingdom’ (1Ki. 18:10).

F. “Can one impose an oath where one does not rule?

E. *Learn from this, [it is] for a [special] exposition.*

IV.2 *The rabbis taught:* Three [kings] ruled over the entire world, and they are Ahab, and Ahasuerus, and Nebuchadnezzar.

B. Ahab, as is written, "I swear that there is no nation or kingdom to which my master has not sent to fetch you..." (1Ki. 18:10); and if he did not rule over them, how could he extract an oath from them [that Elijah was not there]?

C. Nebuchadnezzar, as is written, "And it will be that the nation or the kingdom that will not place his neck in the yoke of the king of Babylonia..." (Jer. 27: 8).

D. Ahasuerus, as we said

E. [11b] *And are there no others?*

F. *Lo, there is Solomon.*

G. *He did not complete his reign.*

H. *Assume like the one who says that he was king and [then] commoner, but according to the one who says he was king and commoner and king [again], what is there to say?*

I. *Solomon is in another category, for he ruled over the upper and lower [beings], as is said, "and Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord" (1Ch. 29:23).*

J. *And there was Sennacherib, as is written, "Who are there among all the gods of these lands who have protected their land from me?" (Isa. 36: 2).*

K. [No.] *There is Jerusalem, which he did not conquer.*

L. *And there is Darius, as is written, "Darius the king wrote to all the nations, peoples and language-groups who live throughout the entire world: May your peace increase" (Dan. 6:26).*

M. *But there are seven over which he did not reign, as is written, "It was good in the eyes of Darius, and he appointed 120 satraps over the kingdom" (Dan. 6: 2).*

N. *And there is Cyrus, as is written, "Thus said Cyrus, King of Persia, the Lord has given me all the nations of the world" (Ezr. 1: 2).*

O. *There he was merely praising himself.*

INTERPRETATION OF THE REMAINDER OF ESTHER

CHAPTER ONE

I.1 A. **"In those days, when the king sat...in the third year of his reign:"** Said Rava: What is [the meaning of] "when he sat" (*ke-shevet*)? After he stopped worrying (*she-nityashevah da'ato*).

B. *He [Ahasuerus] said: Belshazzar calculated and erred; I have calculated and not erred.*

C. *What is [the meaning of] this?*

D. *As is written, "...for when Babylonia has completed 70 years, I will remember you" (Jer. 29:10); and [as] is written, "...at the completion of 70 years of the desolation of Jerusalem" (Dan. 9:2).*

E. *Add: 45 [years] of Nebuchadnezzar, plus 23 of Evil-Merodach, plus his 2, equal 70. Thinking that the time of the prophecy had lapsed and that the prophecy could no longer be fulfilled,] he took out the vessels of the Temple and used them.*

F. *From where do we know that Nebuchadnezzar ruled 45 years?*

G. For a master said: They were exiled in [year] 7; they

G. "Further evidence of the same fact: 'Then he numbered the young men of the princes of the provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty-two' (1Ki. 20:15)."

H. Where were the rest of them?

I. R. Levi and rabbis:

J. R. Levi said, "They died in the famine in the time of Elijah."

K. Rabbis said, "Ben Hadad came and took them: 'And Ben Hadad, king of Aram, gathered all his army together, and there were thirty-two kinds with him, horses and chariots, and he went up and besieged Samaria and fought against it' (1Ki. 20: 1).

L. We look for twenty, and you mention thirty-two?

M. Some provinces rebelled and he took some men and held them as hostages.

N. R. Berekiah and Rabbis on the verse, "He has caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my reins" (Lam. 3: 5):

O. [Following Simon:] R. Berekiah said, "This means that they took prisoners and hostages."

P. [Following Simon:] Rabbis said, "The prisoners were called *bene ukaifi* because they were curbed with manacles [*arkuf*]. The hostages are called *bene amorai* because they are exchanged [*temuroi*] for their fathers, and so it says, 'The hostages [*bene hataarubot*] also' (2Ki. 14:14), so called because they were substitutes [*meurabot*] for their fathers." [Simon, p. 22, n. 5: This is a digression introduced because of the reference to hostages.]

Q. [Resuming the discussion left off at G:] "Nebuchadnezzar ruled them all: 'And wherever the children of men, the beasts of the field and the fowl of heaven dwell, he has given them into your hand' (Dan. 2:38).

R. "Cyrus ruled them all: 'Thus said Cyrus...all the kingdoms of the earth has the Lord given me' (Ezr. 1: 2).

S. "Darius ruled them all: 'Then king Darius wrote to all the peoples' (Dan. 6:26).

T. "Ahasuerus ruled only half of them!"

11. A. Why over only half?

B. R. Huna in the name of R. Aha and rabbis:

C. R. Huna in the name of R. Aha said, "Said to him the Holy One, blessed be he, 'You have divided my kingdom: "He is the God who is in Jerusalem" (Ezr. 1: 3). As you live, I will divide your kingdom!"

D. Rabbis say, "Said to him the Holy One, blessed be he, 'You have divided the size of my house: "The height thereof three-score cubits" (Ezr. 6:3 [but the first temple was a hundred and twenty cubits high, so 2Ch. 3:4]). By your life, I will divide your kingdom!"

12. A. [If Ahasuerus ruled only half of them, then instead of one hundred twenty-seven provinces,] Scripture should say one hundred twenty-six!

B. Why does Scripture specify one hundred twenty-seven?

C. This is what the Holy One, blessed be he, said to him, "You added one ascent to my house: 'Whoever there is among you of all his people...let him go up' (Ezr. 1: 3).

D. "I therefore will add an ascent to you from what

- were exiled in [year] 8; they were exiled in [year] 18; they were exiled in [year] 19.
- H.** They were exiled in [year] 7 of the conquest of Jehoiakim, [during] the exile of Jehoiachin, which is in [year] 8 of Nebuchadnezzar.
- I.** They were exiled in [year] 18 of the conquest of Jehoiakim [during] the exile of Zedekiah, which is [year] 19 of Nebuchadnezzar.
- J.** For a master said: His first year, he [Nebuchadnezzar] conquered Ninveh; the second, he conquered Jehoiakim. And it is written, "And it was in the 37th year of the exile of Jehoiachin, King of Judah, in the 12th month, on the 25th of the month, Evil-Merodach, King of Babylonia, lifted up the head of Jehoiachin, King of Judah, and removed him from prison" (2Ki. 25:27=Jer. 52:31).
- K.** *[Add:] 8, plus 30, plus 7 equal the 45 [years] of Nebuchadnezzar[s reign]; plus [the] 23 [years] of Evil-Merodach a tradition (gemara'); plus his 2 equal 70.*
- L.** *He [Belshazzar] said: Now they surely will not be saved any more. He took out the vessels of the Temple and used them.*
- M.** *This is what Daniel said to him, "...and you have exalted yourself over the God of Heaven, and they have brought the vessels of his house before you" (Dan. 5:23).*
- N.** *And it is written, "On that very night Belshazzar, King of the Chaldeans, was killed" (Dan. 5:30).*
- O.** *And it is written, "...and Darius the Mede received the kingdom at the age of 62" (Dan. 6: 1).*
- P.** *He [Ahasuerus] said: He certainly erred; I have calculated, but I have not erred.*
- Q.** *Is "[70 years] of the kingdom of Babylon" written? "[70 years] of Babylon" is written.*
- R.** *What is "of Babylon"? Of the exile of Babylon.*
- S.** *How many are lacking? Eight.*
- T.** *Add, and include instead of them, 1 of Belshazzar, and 5 of Darius and Cyrus, and his 2 for [a total of] 70.*
- U.** *When he saw that the 70 [years] were completed and they were not redeemed, he said: Now certainly they will be redeemed no more. He took out the vessels of the Temple and use them.*
- V.** *Along came Satan and danced between them and killed Vashiti.*
- W.** *Did he calculate correctly?*
- X.** *He also erred, for he should have counted from the depopulation of Jerusalem.*
- Y.** *In the last analysis, how many were lacking?*
- Z.** *Eleven.*
- AA.** *How many [years] did he reign?*
- BB.** *Fourteen.*
- CC.** *In his 14th [year], he should have rebuilt the Temple.*
- DD.** *But, we see, it is written, "...then the work of God's house in Jerusalem was stopped" (Ezr. 4:24).*
- EE.** *Said Rava: Those were shortened years.*
- belongs to me."
- E.** So he added him an additional province beyond the half: "a hundred and twenty-seven provinces."
- 13.** A. R. Levi in the name of R. Samuel bar Nahman said, "It is written, 'And the hair of his head like pure wool' (Dan. 7: 9).
- B.** "For no creature has a claim against him."
- 14.** A. R. Yudan in the name of R. Aibu: "It is written, 'I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the peoples there was no man with me; [I shall tread them in my anger and trample them in my fury]' (Isa. 63: 3).
- B.** "Now does the Holy One, blessed be he, require the assistance of the nations, that he should say, 'and of the peoples there was no man with me'?"
- C.** "But this is what the Holy One, blessed be he, said, 'When I shall examine the account books pertaining to the nations of the world and not a shred of merit will be found there before me, at that time: "I shall tread them in my anger and trample them in my fury."'"
- 15.** A. R. Phineas and R. Hilqiah in the name of R. Simon said, "It is written, 'And it shall come to pass in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations' (Zec. 12: 9).
- B.** "What is the point of his saying, 'I will seek'? Is anyone standing in his way?"
- C.** "But this is what the Holy One, blessed be he, said, 'When I shall examine the account books pertaining to the nations of the world and not a shred of merit will be found there before me, at that time: "I will seek to destroy all the nations."'"
- 16.** A. R. Simon in the name of R. Yohanan: "It is written, 'Vengeance is mine, and recompense, against the time that their foot shall slip' (Deu. 32:35).
- B.** "Now is it a mark of power that one should say, 'that their foot shall slip'?"
- C.** "But this is what the Holy One, blessed be he, said, 'When the religious duties that are customarily performed among them will come to an end, so that no shred of merit will be found to their credit before me, then: "Vengeance is mine and recompense."'"
- 17.** A. R. Berekhiah in the name of R. Levi and R. Huna in the name of R. Levi and R. Yudan in the name of R. Levi – all three of them cite a single verse of Scripture [to make this same point], "'Your hand shall be equal to all your enemies, your right hand shall overtake those who hate you' (Psa. 21: 9).
- B.** "May your right hand be available to punish your enemies, may the attribute of justice be present for them, may your right hand show how few good deeds they have done.
- C.** "Thus: 'your right hand shall overtake those who hate you.'"
- 18.** A. Another interpretation of the phrase, "a hundred and twenty-seven provinces:"
- B.** R. Judah and R. Nehemiah:
- C.** R. Judah said, "He conquered seven which were as strong as twenty, and twenty which were as strong as a hundred."
- D.** R. Nehemiah said, "He took the population of seven and conquered twenty, then he took the population of twenty and conquered a hundred."
- 19.** A. How did he conquer them?

FF. [12A] *It is also learned this way [in a baraita]:*
And there remained another year to [the reign of] Babylon; Darius arose and completed it.

GG. *Said Rava: Even Daniel erred in this calculation, as is written, "In the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, studied the books..." (Dan. 9: 2). Since it says "studied," it is clear that [initially] he erred.*

HH. *In any case, the verses contradict each other. It is written, "...completion of Babylon[us] 70 years..." (Jer. 29:10), and it is written, "...of the destruction of Jerusalem..." (Dan. 9: 2).*

II. *Said Rava: This is only for [Cyrus's] order (peqidah). And this is what is written: "Thus said Cyrus, King of Persia, 'All the kingdoms of the earth has the Lord, God of the Heavens, given to me; and He has ordered (paqad) me to build Him a temple in Jerusalem'" (Ezr. 1: 2).*

JJ. *Expounded Rav Nahman bar Rav Hisda: Why is it written, "Thus said the Lord to His anointed (meshiho), to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held..." (Isa. 45: 1)? Was Cyrus the anointed [i.e., the Messiah]?*

KK. *Rather, said The Holy One, Blessed Be He, to the Messiah: I have a complaint for you against Cyrus. I said: "He should build My Temple, and he should gather My exiles" (Isa. 45:13). But he said, "...whoever of you, from among the entire nation...may go up" (2Ch. 36:33; cf. Ezr. 1: 3).*

II.1 A. *"...the soldiers of Persia and Media, the Parthians..."*

B. *But it is written, "...to the kings of Media and Persia..." (Est. 10: 2) [in reverse order].*

C. *Said Rava: They made an agreement with each other: If the kings are from us, the officials are from you; and if the kings are from you, the officials are from us.*

III.1 A. *"During his showing the wealth of the glory of his kingdom..."*

A. *Said Rabbi Yosé bar Hanina: This teaches that he put on the priestly garments.*

B. *Here is written, "...the glory of the beauty of his greatness..." (Est. 1: 5), and there [in describing the priestly garments] is written, "...for honor and beauty" (Exo. 28: 2).*

IV.1 A. *"And at the end of these days:"*

B. *Rav and Samuel:*

C. *One said he was a shrewd king, and one said he was a stupid king.*

D. *The one who said he was a shrewd king [concluded this because] he did a good thing, in that first he brought those far away close [by inviting those from all over the empire before the local people], for he could placate the people of his own place any time he chose to.*

E. *And the one who said he was stupid [concluded this] because he should have invited the people of his own place first, for, if they rebelled against him, the others*

B. R. Judah and R. Nehemiah:

C. R. Judah said, "They were laid out in the shape of a semi-circle, so that when you conquer the outer elements, the inner ones are conquered on their own."

D. R. Phineas said, "The world is circular in shape."

E. R. Abun said, "Like the surface of a qab measure."

F. [Reverting to C:] R. Nehemiah said, "They were like a stream of water, so that when you conquer the outer elements, the inner ones are conquered on their own."

20. A. R. Aqiba was in session and expounded, but the disciples dozed. He wanted to wake them up. He said, "On what account did Esther gain the merit to rule over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces?"

B. "Thus said the Holy One, blessed be he, 'Let Esther, descendant of Sarah, who lived for one hundred and twenty-seven years, come and rule over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces'"

21. A. Said R. Levi, "In any passage in which it is said, 'field,' the meaning is, 'city.'"

B. "...city' means metropolis.

C. "...metropolis' means province.

D. "How do we know that field means city? 'Go to Anatot, to your own fields' (1Ki. 2:26).

E. "How do we know that city means metropolis? 'Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem' (Eze. 9: 4).

F. "How do we know that metropolis means province? 'A hundred and twenty-seven provinces.'"

1:2 in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne in Susa the capital

XI:i

1. A. "in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne in Susa the capital."

B. This is one of the occasions on which the ministering angels wrote out complaints before the Holy One, blessed be he.

C. For they were saying before him, "Lord of the world, the house of the sanctuary is destroyed, and this wicked man is sitting and making a party!"

D. Said he to them, "Days will match days [and there will be recompense in full measure]."

E. That is in line with the following verse of Scripture: "In those days I saw in Judah some treading winepresses on the Sabbath" (Neh. 13:15). [Simon, p. 25, n. 5: And this was in the days of Artaxerxes/Ahasuerus....The troubles which came upon the Jews, of which the king's banquet was the starting point, were a punishment for the desecration of the Sabbath.]

2. A. [With reference to the verse, "In those days I saw in Judah some treading winepresses on the Sabbath" (Neh. 13:15):]

B. R. Helbo said, "...those days' were a time of wailing."

C. R. Bibi said, "The word for 'that' [carries letters that may be read,] 'woe for those days,' as in the following: 'Wail, woe worth the day' (Eze. 22:1: 1)."

D. Said R. Isaac, "Let there be a lament for those days: 'And lament with a doleful lamentation' (Mic. 2: 4) [following Simon, p. 26]."

3. A. "when King Ahasuerus sat [on his royal throne in Susa the capital]."

B. Said R. Isaac, "The nations of the world have no permanent place of settlement."

would have joined them.

IV.2 A. His students asked Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai: Why were the Jews of that generation worthy of being destroyed?

B. He said to them: You say [why].

C. They said to him: Because they enjoyed the feast of that evil man.

D. If so, those in Susa should have been killed; those throughout the entire world should not have been killed.

E. They said to him: You say [why].

F. He said to them: Because they bowed to the idol [cf. Dan. 3:1 ff].

G. They said to him: And is there favoritism in the matter [in that they were saved]?

H. He said to them: They only did it for show, so The Holy One, Blessed Be He, did it only for show, and that is what is written, "...because he did not afflict from his heart" (Lam. 3:33).

V.1 A. "...in the courtyard of the palace garden."

B. Rav and Samuel:

C. One said: "[A guest] worthy of the courtyard [was received] in the courtyard; one worthy of the garden [was received] in the garden; one worthy of the palace [was received] in the palace.

D. And one said: He seated them in the courtyard, but it did not hold them, [and] in the garden, but it did not hold them, until he brought them into the palace, and it held them.

E. *In a baraita one taught:* He seated them in the courtyard and opened two doorways for them, one to the garden and one to the palace.

VI.1 A. "White (hur), cotton and blue..."

A. What is "hur"?

B. Rav said: Netting *hori hori*.

C. And Samuel said: He spread white wool for them.

VI.2 A. "...cotton..." (karpas)

A. Said Rabbi Yosef bar Hanina: Striped pillows.

VII.1 A. "...on silver rods and pillars of ivory, couches of gold and silver..."

B. *It is taught:* Rabbi Judah says: [A guest] worthy of silver [was assigned] to [a] silver [couch]; one worthy of gold [was assigned] to [a] golden [couch].

C. Said to him Rav Nehemiah: If so you would cause jealousy at the feast. Rather they [the bodies of the couches] were [made] of silver and their legs of gold.

VIII.1 A. "...on a floor of marble, alabaster, [mother of pearl, and mosaics]."

B. Said Rav Asi: Stones that shine back at their owner, as it says, "...like jewels of a crown sparkling on His land" (Zec. 9:16).

IX.1 A. "...and shell [mother of pearl] and onyx marble" (dar ve-soharet)

B. Rav said: rows by rows (*dari dari*).

C. And Samuel said: There is a precious stone [found] in seaports, and it is called *dara*. He placed it in the middle of the feast, and it gave them light like the noon [sun].

D. *One of the house of Rabbi Ishmael taught:* He proclaimed freedom (*deror*) for all merchants.

X.1 A. "And the serving was in golden vessels, and [the] vessels (kelim) were different (shonim) [from each other]."

C. They objected, "Lo, it is written, 'when King Ahasuerus sat...'"

D. He said to them, "What is written is not, 'when the king was sitting,' but, 'while the king was sitting,' meaning, it was a settlement that was no lasting settlement [but only temporary]."

E. "But Israel's settlement is a real settlement: 'While Israel dwelt in Heshbon' (Jud. 11:26).

4. A. "on his royal throne:"

B. R. Kohen in the name of R. Azariah: "The words, 'on his royal throne' are not written fully spelled out but defectively. He came to take his seat on the throne of Solomon but they did not let him.

C. "They said to him, 'No king who is not a world-ruler can sit on it.'

D. "He went and made himself a throne like that one.

E. "That is in line with the fact that the words, 'on his royal throne' are not written fully spelled out but defectively."

5. A. And what is the greatness of that throne, "Moreover the king [Solomon] made a great throne of ivory" (2Ch. 9:17)?

B. Said R. Aha, "Is it not written, 'Now Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria' (2Ki. 10:1)."

C. And said R. Hoshia the Elder, "As he had seventy sons in Samaria, so he had seventy in Jezreel."

D. [Continuing B:] "And each had two palaces, one for winter, one for summer: 'And I will smite the winter house with the summer house' (Amo. 3:15)."

E. R. Judah b. R. Simon says, "Each had four: 'And the houses of ivory shall perish' (Amo. 3:15)."

F. Rabbis say, "Each had six: 'And the great houses shall have an end' (Amo. 3:15)."

G. And here merely: "Moreover the king [Solomon] made a great throne of ivory" (2Ch. 9:17).

H. R. Hoshia the Elder said, "[The answer to the question, A, is this:] That it was made like the chariot of the One who spoke and brought the world into being, the Holy One, blessed be he, and so Scripture says, 'There were six steps to the throne' (2Ch. 9:18).

I. "The six corresponded to the six firmaments."

J. But are there not seven firmaments?

K. Said R. Abun, "The one of the king is reserved [and not counted]."

L. [Continuing I:] "The six corresponded to the six earths: [Simon, p. 27, n. 4:] earth, ground, earth, valley, dry ground, forgotten [supposed...to be the names for different levels of the earth's surface].

M. "[Simon:] There is also settled world, but that is not counted, since it is written, 'And he will judge the world in righteousness' (Psa. 9:9).

N. "The six further corresponded to the six divisions of the Mishnah: seeds, appointed times, women, damages, Holy Things, purities.

O. "The six further corresponded to the six days of creation.

P. "The six further corresponded to the six matriarchs: Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Leah, Bilhah, and Zilpah."

Q. Said R. Huna, "The six further corresponded to the six religious duties that pertain particularly to the king: 'He shall not multiply wives to himself, he shall not multiply horses to himself, neither shall he greatly

B. *It should say "strange" (meshunim).*

C. Said Rava: A small voice called out to them: Your predecessors were destroyed (*kalu*) because of vessels (*kelim*), and you are repeating (*shonim*) with them.

XI.1 A. **"And royal wine, much (rav) [befitting a king.]"**

B. Said Rav: This teaches that they served each and every person wine that was older than he.

XII.1 A. **"And the drinking was according to law, [there was no compulsion]:"** *What is "according to law"?*

B. Said Rabbi Hannan in the name of Rabbi Meir: According to the law of the Torah. Just as the law of the Torah is that there is more eating than drinking, so the feast of that evildoer was more eating than drinking.

XII.2 A. **"...no compulsion..."**

B. Said Rabbi Eleazar: This teaches that they served each and every one the wine of his own country.

XIII.1 A. **"...to do according to the desire of each and every man (ish va-ish)."**

B. Said Rava: [This means] to do according to the desire of Mordecai and Haman — Mordecai, as is written, "A Jewish man (*'ish*) [was in the fortress of Susa...]" (Est. 2: 5); Haman [as is written], "an oppressing man (*'ish*) and enemy" (Est. 7: 6).

XIV.1 A. **"Also, Vashti the queen made a party for the women in the royal palace..."**

B. *It should say "in the women's palace" [i.e., separate parties for the men and the women].*

C. Said Rava: Both of them had immoral intentions.

D. *That is what people say: He with big pumpkins [12b] and his wife with small pumpkins.*

XV.1 A. **"On the seventh day, when the king's heart was happy from wine..."**

B. *Until now was his heart not happy from wine?*

C. Said Rava: The seventh day was the Sabbath.

D. When Israel eat and drink, they begin with words of Torah and praises [of God], but when idolators eat and drink, they begin with words of foolishness. Thus was the feast of that evildoer.

E. Some said: The Median women were the most beautiful; and some said: The Persian women are the most beautiful. Said Ahasuerus to them: The vessel that I use is neither Median nor Persian, but Chaldean. Do you wish to see her? They said to him: Yes, but only if she is naked.

F. For **With the measure that a man measures do others measure him (M Sot. 1: 7).**

G. This teaches that evil Vashti used to bring the daughters of Israel and strip them naked and make them work on the Sabbath.

H. This is as is written, "After these things, when the anger of King Ahasuerus had subsided, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what had been decreed concerning her" (Est. 2: 1); as she had done was decreed concerning her.

XVI.1 A. **"And the queen Vashti refused..."**

multiply to himself silver and gold' (Deu. 17:16-17); 'you shall not wrest judgment, you shall not respect persons, neither shall you take a gift' (Deu. 16:19).

R. "When the king ascended the first step, the herald proclaimed, 'He shall not multiply wives to himself.'"

S. "At the second step, the herald proclaimed, 'He shall not multiply horses to himself.'"

T. "At the third step, the herald proclaimed, 'He shall not multiply to himself silver and gold.'"

U. "At the fourth step, the herald proclaimed, 'You shall not wrest judgment.'"

V. "At the fifth step, the herald proclaimed, 'You shall not respect persons.'"

W. "At the sixth step, the herald proclaimed, 'You shall not take a gift.'"

X. "So too: 'And arms on either side by the place of the seat' (2Ch. 9:18).

Y. "When he took his seat, he says to him, 'Know before whom you take your seat, before the One who spoke and brought the world into being.'"

6. A. They say:

B. "When Solomon died, Shishak, king of Egypt, came up and took the throne away from them."

C. Said R. Samuel bar Nahman, "Shishak is the same as Pharaoh, and why is he called Shishak? Because he came in greed [which uses the same consonants as the name, Shishak] against the Israelites and said to them, 'Lo, I am taking the throne in payment for the marriage-settlement of my daughter.'"

D. He made war against Nerah, the Ethiopian, who took it away from him.

E. Then Asa made war against Zerah the Ethiopian, and won and took it away from him.

7. A. It has been taught: Asa and all the kings of Judah were enthroned upon it.

B. When Nebuchadnezzar came up and destroyed Jerusalem, he took it away into exile to Babylonia, then from Babylonia to Media, from Media to Greece, from Greece to Edom.

C. Said R. Eleazar b. R. Yosé, "I saw its remnants in Rome."

8. A. Nebuchadnezzar sat on it, Cyrus sat on it, Ahasuerus wanted to sit on it, but they did not let him.

B. They said to him, "No king who is not a world-ruler can sit on it."

C. He went and made himself a throne like that one.

D. That is in line with the fact that the words, "on his royal throne" are not written fully spelled out but defectively.

9. A. "And the top of the throne was round behind" (1Ki. 10:19):

B. Said R. Aha, "It is like an arm-chair with a footstool" [Simon, p. 28].

10. A. "And there were arms on either side:"

B. When he went up on the first step, the lion extended his paw to him.

C. On the second, the eagle stretched out its talon.

D. "By the place of the seat:"

E. So they received him.

F. And by the seat itself there was a golden sceptre at the rear, with a dove with a golden crown in its mouth,

G. so that when the king was seated on the throne, the

B. Since she was an immoral woman, as a master said: “Both of them intended to commit an immoral act [cf. Mid. to Est. 1:9B],” why did she not go?

C. Said Rabbi Yosé bar Haninah: This teaches that leprosy broke out on her.

D. *In a baraita one taught:* Gabriel came and made her a tail.

XVII.1 A. “**And the king was very angry, [and his anger burned in him]**”

A. *Why was it burning in him to such an extent?*

B. *Said Rava: She sent to him [the following message]: Son of my father’s stable boy! My father drank wine with a thousand men and did not get drunk, but you have been rendered a fool by your wine.*

C. Immediately “and his anger burned in him” (Est. 1:12).

XVIII.1 A. “**And the king said to the sages....**” *Who are the “sages”?*

B. The rabbis.

XIX.1 A. “**...who know the times...**”

B. *What Times?*

C. Who know [when] to intercalate the years and [how] to set the months.

XIX.2 A. *He [Ahasuerus] said to them [i.e., the sages]: Judge her for me.*

B. *They said: What should we do? If we tell him, “Kill her,” tomorrow he will become sober, and will require her of us. If we tell him, “Leave her alone,” she has disgraced the kingdom [and we will appear implicated].*

C. They said to him: Since the time when the Temple was destroyed and we were exiled from our land, [the ability to offer sage] advice has been taken from us, and we do not know how to judge capital cases. *Go to Amon and Moab, who dwell in their [ancestral] places like wine that rests on its dregs.*

D. *And the reason they gave him was that it is written, “Moab has been safe since his youth; and he is settled on his lees. He has not been poured from vessel to vessel, nor has he gone into exile. Therefore his taste (ta’am) [here taken in its popular rabbinic sense, as ‘reasoning, advice’] has remained, his fragrance is strong” (Jer. 48:11). Immediately:*

XX.1 A. “**And the closest to him were Carshena, Shetar, Admata, Tarshish, [Meres, Marsena, Memuhan]...**”

B. Said Rabbi Levi: This entire verse was said about the sacrifices [i.e., each name can be interpreted as a reference to a sacrifice].

C. “Carshena” — The ministering angels said before The Holy One, Blessed Be He: Master of the World, has anyone offered one year old lambs (*karim benei shanah*) before you as Israel has done?

D. “Shetar” — Has anyone else offered to you two pigeons (*shetei torim*)?

E. “Admata” — Has anyone else built you an altar of earth (*adamah*)?

F. “Tarshish” — Has anyone else served before you in the priestly garments, regarding which is written, “...beryl (*tarshish*), lapis lazuli, and jasper” (Exo. 28:20)?

G. “Meres” — Has anyone else stirred (*mersu*) blood

golden crown was just barely resting on his head.

11. A. Said R. Aibu, “It is written, ‘For the kingdom is the Lord’s and he is the ruler over the nations’ (Psa. 22:29).”

B. “And yet you say here, ‘when King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne’?”

C. “In the past dominion resigned in Israel, but when they sinned, its dominion was taken away from them and given to the nations of the world.”

D. “That is in line with the following verse of Scripture: ‘I will give the land over into the hand of evil men’ (Eze. 30:12).”

E. R. Isaac explained this verse, “Into the hand of evil stewards.”

F. [Continuing D:] “In the future, when the Israelites repent, the Holy One, blessed be he, will take dominion from the nations of the world and restore it to Israel.”

G. “When will this come about? ‘When saviors will come up on Mount Zion’ (Obadiah 1:21).”

12. A. “in Susa the capital.”

B. R. Phineas in the name of R. Hananel said, “Said the Holy One, blessed be he, to Cyrus, Cyrus made mention [not only of the temple but also] of the city and the country: ‘To build him a house in Jerusalem which is in Judah’ (Ezr. 1: 2).”

C. “‘I too will mention [along with your throne] the name of your capital: ‘in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne in Susa the capital.’”

1:3 in the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for all his princes and servants, the army chiefs of Persia and Media and the nobles and governors of the provinces being before him,

XII:i

1. A. “in the third year of his reign he gave a banquet.”

B. R. Judah and R. Nehemiah:

C. R. Judah said, “It was the third year of the making of the throne. Once the work of making the throne had come to an end, ‘he gave a banquet for all his princes and servants.’”

D. R. Nehemiah said, “It was the third year beyond the abrogation of the right to rebuild the temple. When three years had passed after he had stopped the project, ‘he gave a banquet for all his princes and servants.’”

2. A. [“in the third year of his reign he gave a banquet.”]

B. Said R. Samuel bar Imi, “That man had four good qualities.”

C. “He spent three years before he got the crown and the throne.”

D. “He waited four years until he found for himself an appropriate wife.”

E. “And he did nothing at all without taking advice from others.”

F. And R. Phineas said, “Anyone who did him good did he inscribe: ‘And it was found written that Mordecai had told’ (Est. 6: 2).”

3. A. “he gave a banquet for all his princes and servants.”

B. Antoninus made a banquet for Rabbi. He said to him, “[Simon, p. 30:] Is it possible that you cannot provide [for the servants] a lamp with spiced oil?”

C. He said to him, “Why should I take these seriously?”

D. He said to him, “They might put on thick oil into the

[of the sacrifices] before you?

H. “Marsena” — Has anyone else stirred (*mersu*) the meal-offering before you?

I. “Memukhan” — Has anyone else prepared (*hekhinu*) a table before you?

XXI.1 A. “**And Memukhan said...**”

B. *One taught:* Memukhan is Haman. And why is his name called Memukhan? Because he is [always] ready (*mukhan*) [to be the cause] for suffering.

C. Said Rav Kahana: From here [one may conclude that] a fool acts precipitously.

XXII.1 A. “**...that every man should be master in his house...**”

B. Said Rava: Were it not for the first [set of] letters [that the king sent], not even a tattered remnant of Israel would have remained.

C. *They said: What is this that he has sent us “...that every man should be master in his house..”? It is obvious; even a weaver should be an official in his own house.*

lamps [Simon: for us also] and spoil the meal.”

E. He said to him, “How do you know that might happen?”

F. He said to him, “From the case of Ahasuerus: ‘he gave a banquet for all his princes and servants [Simon, p. 30, n. 7: giving the servants the same treatment as himself].’”

4. A. “the army chiefs of Persia and Media.”

B. It was taught in the name of R. Nathan concerning ten shares:

C. Ten shares of lewdness are in the world, nine in Alexandria, and one in the rest of the world.

D. Ten shares of wealth are in the world, nine in Rome and one in the rest of the world.

E. Ten shares of poverty are in the world, nine in Lud and one in the rest of the world.

F. Ten shares of witchcraft are in the world, nine in Egypt and one in the rest of the world.

G. Ten shares of stupidity are in the world, nine in the Ishmaelites and one in the rest of the world.

H. Ten shares of good health are in the world, nine in the Ishmaelites and one in the rest of the world.

I. Ten shares of vermin are in the world, nine in the Persians and one in the rest of the world.

J. Ten shares of loveliness are in the world, nine in Media and one in the rest of the world.

K. Ten shares of ugliness are in the world, nine in the East and one in the rest of the world.

L. Ten shares of physical strength are in the world, nine in the Chaldeans and one in the rest of the world.

M. Ten shares of courage are in the world, nine in Judea and one in the rest of the world.

N. Ten shares of beauty are in the world, nine in Jerusalem and one in the rest of the world.

O. Ten shares of wisdom are in the world, nine in the Land of Israel and one in the rest of the world.

P. Ten shares of Torah are in the world, nine in the Land of Israel and one in the rest of the world.

Q. Ten shares of hypocrisy are in the world, nine in Jerusalem and one in the rest of the world: “For from the prophets of Jerusalem has hypocrisy gone forth into all the earth” (Jer. 23:15).

5. A. Another comment on the clause, “the army chiefs of Persia and Media.”

B. There are cases in which Scripture speaks first of Persia then of Media, and cases in which Scripture speaks first of Media, then of Persia.

C. When the royal family is in Media, Persia is secondary to it, and when the royal family is in Persia, Media is secondary to it.

6. A. Why is it called “Persia”?

B. [Since the Hebrew word for Persia uses letters that may be read “divide” or “divisions,” the reason is that] it received dominion in parts:

C. one in the time of Tardah,

D. another in the time of Ardaban,

E. and another in the age to come: “And this shall be peace, when the Asyria shall come into our land” (Mic. 5:4).

7. A. And why is it called “Media”?

B. [Since the Hebrew word for Media uses letters that may be read “acknowledge,” the reason is that] it

acknowledges the Holy One, blessed be he.

C. Said R. Hiyya b. Abba, “The kings of Media were without blemish.

D. “The Holy One, blessed be he, has complaint against them only on this account [idolatry], which their fathers handed on to them.”

8. A. “and the nobles [and governors of the provinces being before him].”

B. R. Eleazar said, “These nobles formed the two legions of the king, for a king is called Augustus – that is, caesar – only if they call him by that title first.”

C. And what were they?

D. Said R. Isaac, “The Decumanian and Augustan legions.

E. “They are the ones who gave the advice to Nebuchadnezzar to go up and destroy the house of the sanctuary, so the Holy One, blessed be he, exterminated them and replaced them with others.”

F. And what were they?

G. R. Judah b. R. Simon in the name of R. Eleazar said, “The Joviani and Herculanei.”

9. A. [Another comment on “and the nobles:”]

B. R. Huna said, “They are his counsellors and viceroys.”

C. R. Isaac said, “Counsellors: ‘Then Daniel answered with counsel and advice [and the word for advice is the same as represented her by “counsellors”]’ (Dan. 2:14).”

10. A. “and the nobles and governors of the provinces being before him.”

B. R. Eleazar and R. Samuel bar Nahman:

C. R. Eleazar said, “[Simon, p. 32:] They were placed as in the state-room of Geder.

D. “There the king sits to give justice from above, and all the people sit before him on the ground.”

E. And R. Samuel bar Nahman said, “It was like a great basilica of the palace which is full of people.

F. “There the king reclines on his couch, and all the people lie spread out before him.

G. “That is the sense of the statement, ‘and the nobles and governors of the provinces being before him.’”

1:4 while he showed the riches of his royal glory and the splendor and pomp of his majesty for many days, a hundred and eighty days.

XIII:i

1. A. “A fool spends all his spirit” (Pro. 29:11): this is Ahasuerus.

B. “But a wise man stills it within him” (Pro. 29:11): this is the Holy One, blessed be he, who calmed Ahasuerus in the same manner as in the following: “Who stills the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves and the tumult of the peoples” (Psa. 65: 8).

2. A. “while he showed the riches of his royal glory [and the splendor and pomp of his majesty for many days, a hundred and eighty days].”

B. Both the house of R. Yannai and Hezekiah say, “Each day he opened and show them six treasure-troves.”

C. And R. Hiyya bar Abba said, “He showed them [Simon, p. 33, n. 2:] various expensive

- articles.”
- D.** R. Judah bar Simon said, “He showed them the banquet-[dishware] from the Land of Israel.”
- E.** R. Levi said, “He showed them the garments of the high priest.
- F.** “Here we find the language: ‘his glorious kingdom,’ and elsewhere the word for glory’ appears in reference to the garments of the high priest: ‘And you shall make holy garments for Aaron, your brother, for splendor and for glory’ (Exo. 28: 2).
- G.** “Just as the word for glory there refers to the garments of the high priest, so the word for glory here refers to the garments of the high priest.”
- 3. A.** R. Berekhiah in the name of R. Helbo said, “[Simon, p. 33:] The stream of Kibraya rolls equally over its own ground and over other ground [Simon, p. 33, n. 5: and similarly Ahasuerus was not particular about whose property he used].”
- 4. A.** Whence did that wicked man get rich?
- B.** Said R. Tanhuma, “Nebuchadnezzar – may his bones rot – collected all the money in the world, and he was stingy about spending his money.
- C.** “When he was dying, he said, ‘Now am I going to leave all this money to Evil-Merodach?’
- D.** “He went and gave orders and made big ships of brass. He filled them with money and dug trenches on the Euphrates and covered them with the water of the Euphrates.
- E.** “And the day on which Cyrus went and gave orders to build the house of the sanctuary, the Holy One, blessed be he, revealed [the treasures to him].
- F.** “That is in line with this verse: ‘Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held, to subdue nations before him, that the gates may not be shut’ (Isa. 45: 1); ‘And I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places’ (Isa. 45: 3).”
- 5. A.** “for many days:”
- B.** These were days of trouble.
- 6. A.** So too: “And it came to pass in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died” (Exo. 2:23).
- B.** Were they many days?
- C.** Not at all, but because they were days of trouble, Scripture treated them as though they were many days.
- 7. A.** So too: “And it came to pass after many days that the word of the Lord came to Elijah” (1Ki. 18: 1).
- B.** Were they many days?
- C.** Not at all, but because they were days of trouble, Scripture treated them as though they were many days.
- D.** How many were they?

- E. R. Berekiah in the name of R. Helbo in the name of R. Yohanan: "One month in the first year, one in the second, and twelve months in the middle, fourteen months in all."
8. A. So too: "And if a woman have an issue of her blood many days" (Lev. 15:25):
- B. On this R. Hiyya repeated, "'days' means 'two,' 'many,' three.
- C. Are they many days?
- D. Not at all, but because they were days of trouble, Scripture treated them as though they were many days
9. A. "a hundred and eighty days:"
- B. The last day was like the first day.
10. A. There is the following case:
- B. There was a man named Bar Buhin.
- C. Our masters went to him in connection with the fund for support of sages. They heard his son say to him, "What are we going to eat today?"
- D. He said to him, "Raw vegetables."
- E. He said to him, "One bushel to the *mina* or two to the *mina*?"
- F. He said to him, "Two to the *mina*. These are withered, so are cheap."
- G. They said to one another, "How are we going to go to that man. Let's do our business in town and then come to him."
- H. They went and did their business in town, and then came to him. They said to him, "Give us what is required for the religious duty [of supporting sages]."
- I. He said to them, "Go to the lady of the house, and she will give you a basket of denars."
- J. They went to his wife and said to her, "Your husband says to give us a contribution of a basket of denars."
- K. She said to them, "Heaped up or level?"
- L. They said to her, "He said simply, a basket."
- M. She said to them, "I will give it to you heaped up, and if he doesn't like it, I'll tell him I gave the extra from my dowry."
- N. They said to her, "May your Creator make up whatever you may lose."
- O. He said to them, "And how did she hand it over to you, heaped up or smooth?"
- P. They said to him, "We said simply a basket, and she said to us, 'I will give it to you heaped up, and if he doesn't like it, I'll tell him I gave the extra from my dowry.'"
- Q. He said to them, "Well, that was my plan all along. But why didn't you come to me first?"
- R. They said to him, "We heard your servant say to you, 'What are we going to eat today?' And you said to him, 'Raw vegetables.' And he said to you, 'One bushel to the *mina* or two to the *mina*?' And you said to him, 'Two to the *mina*. These are withered, so are cheap.'
- S. "So we said to ourselves, 'Imagine someone with all that money eating raw vegetables bought at the rate of two bushels to the *mina*!'"

- T.** He said to them, “True enough, with myself I’m cheap, but with the religious duty of my Creator, I’m not cheap and I’m not stingy at all.”
- 11. A.** Bar Lufini was marrying off his daughter in Sepphoris to someone from Acco, so he put up stalls selling wine from Sepphoris to Acco, with golden lamps strung from the one town to the other.
- B.** They said, “They did not leave that place before he had sunk to giving them beans from the threshing floor and wine from the vat.”
- C.** Said R. Abin, “And they served it in smoky jars.”
- 12. A.** But here, by contrast, [“a hundred and eighty days:”]
- B.** the last day was like the first day.
- 13. A.** R. Hiyya had a friend in Ashna.
- B.** He made a banquet for him and fed him everything that was created on the six days of creation.
- C.** He said to him, “What your God is going to do for you is more than this!”
- D.** He said to him, “Your meal has a limit, but the meal of our God, which he is going to make for the righteous in the age to come, has no limit: ‘Eye has not seen, O God, besides you what he shall do for him who waits for him’ (Isa. 64: 3).”
- 14. A.** R. Simeon b. Yohai had a friend who lived nearby in Tyre.
- B.** One day he came to him. He heard his servant saying to him, “What are we going to eat today, thin lentil soup or thick lentil soup?”
- C.** He said to him, “Thin.”
- D.** He began talking with him, and the friend noticed [and realized he had overheard the conversation. Therefore] he sent word to his household: “Get out for him all those silver dishes.”
- E.** He said to him, “Will my Lord pay me the honor of drinking with me today?”
- F.** He said to him, “Yes.”
- G.** When he went into his house, he saw all the silver dishes and was surprised. He said to him, “Would someone who has all this money eat thin lentil soup?”
- H.** He said to him, “Indeed so, my lord. As for you, your Torah-learning wins you honor, but as for us, the only honor we have is money. Without it no one honors us.”
- 15. A.** Bar Yohania wanted to make a banquet for the aristocrats of Rome. R. Eliezer b. R. Yosé was there. He said, “Let us consult someone from our home-town.”
- B.** He came to him, and he said to him, “If you want to invite twenty, make enough for twenty-five, and if you want to invite twenty-five, make enough for thirty.”
- C.** He went and made enough for twenty-four and invited twenty-five.
- D.** The upshot was that they lacked one dish.
- E.** Some say it was artichokes, some, date-berries.

- F. He took out a gold dish and set it before him, and he took it and threw it in his face, saying to him, "Now am I going to eat gold? And do I want your gold?"
- G. He went to R. Elezar b. R. Yosé and told him the story.
- H. He said to him, "By your life, my lord, I should not tell you this, for you gave me advice on what to do and I didn't do it. But why I tell you is simply: I want to know whether God has revealed to you sages the secrets only of the Torah, or perhaps also the secrets of being a good host too [literally: a banquet]?"
- I. He said to him, "True enough, he has also shown us the secrets of being a good host."
- J. He said to him, "How do you know them?"
- K. He said to him, "From David: 'So Abner came to David to Hebron, with twenty men with him. And David made a feast for Abner and the men that were with him' (2Sa. 3:20)."
- L. "What Scripture says is not, 'he made a feast,' but 'and for the men that were with him a feast.'"
- 16. A. ["a hundred and eighty days:"]
- B. But here, by contrast, the last day was like the first day.

1:5 And when these days were completed, the king gave for all the people present in Susa the capital, both great and small, a banquet lasting for seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace.

XIV:i

- 1. A. "And when these days were completed, [the king gave for all the people present in Susa the capital, both great and small, a banquet lasting for seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace]."
- B. The word for "were completed" is written out [including consonants that can be omitted].
- 2. A. "the king gave for all the people present...a banquet lasting for seven days."
- B. Rab and Samuel:
- C. One said, "Seven days over and above the prior one hundred and eighty."
- D. The other said, "Seven included in the the prior one hundred and eighty."
- 3. A. ["for all the people present in Susa the capital, both great and small:"]
- B. Said R. Simon, "That Susa, the capital, was like a vast [Simon, p. 37] feasting place,
- C. "with plenty of food and drink."
- 4. A. ["for all the people present in Susa the capital, both great and small:"]
- B. Said R. Hanina bar Papa, "The great men of the age were there and gave their blessing," [Printed text: BRK. Simon: "but they fled," reading BRH.]

5. A. ["for all the people present in Susa the capital, both great and small:"]
 - B. Said R. Said R. Hanina bar Atel, "There were Jews at that banquet.
 - C. "Said to them that wicked man, 'Can your good in the age to come do better than this?'
 - D. "They replied, 'Eye has not seen, O God, beside you, what he shall do for him who waits for him' (Isa. 64: 3).
 - E. "'If we speak of merely a banquet like this banquet that he is going to make for us in the future, then we may say to him, 'We have already eaten it at the table of Ahasuerus [and therefore the prophet speaks of something still finer]!'"
6. A. "in the court of the garden of the king's palace."
 - B. R. Judah and R. Nehemiah:
 - C. R. Judah said, "The garden was outside and the court inside."
 - D. R. Nehemiah said, "The garden was inside and the court outside."
 - E. Said R. Phineas, "I shall sustain the views of both of you. When he wanted, he made it into a courtyard, and when he preferred, he made it into a garden.
 - F. "How did he do this? He would spread out a hanging and make it into a court, or roll up a hanging and make it into a garden."
7. A. Another interpretation of the clause, "in the court of the garden of the king's palace:"
 - B. It is called that way because it cost a lot of money.
- 1:6 There were white cotton curtains and blue hangings caught up with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and marble pillars, and also couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl, and precious stones.*

XVIII:i

1. A. "There were white cotton curtains and blue hangings caught up with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and marble pillars:"
 - B. Aqilas translated [into Greek the words for white cotton curtains] [Simon, p. 38] *eirinson karpasinon* [woolen and flaxen].
 - C. R. Bibi said, "'*taynun*' [Simon: "probably *ianthinon*, violet." He explains that this seems to be a rendering of the word for blue.]
2. A. ["There were white cotton curtains and blue hangings caught up with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and marble pillars:"]
 - B. [As to the word for white/*hur*], said R. Isaac, "They are garments worn by free people [*bene horin*]."
3. A. "caught up with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and marble pillars:"
 - B. Said R. Samuel bar Nahman, "Come and notice the character of the cloak of that wicked man. For everybody stretches a couch on cords

- of wool or flax, but this wicked man used cords of fine linen and purple.”
4. A. “to silver rings and marble pillars:”
 B. R. Hiyya the Elder and R. Simeon b. Halafta:
 C. One said, “They were rolled up like the curtain of the ark [Simon, p. 39: bottom to top].”
 D. The other said, “[Simon, p. 39:] They were furled like the sail of a ship [from side to side].”
5. A. “and marble pillars:”
 B. Said R. Levi, “The quarry for these pillars was revealed to no creature except for that wicked monarchy.”
 C. They objected: “And all manner of precious stones and marble stones in abundance” (1Ch. 29: 2) [showing that Solomon must have known it too].
 D. Solomon would put pearls on this side and pearls on the other and marble in the middle.
 E. It would have been easier for Ahasuerus to make the pillars out of silver and gold than to bring pillars of marble from Peraq Onsin to Media.
 F. Do you think they were small?
 G. Said R. Mattenah, “I slept on the blossoms of one of them, and it was my full length and breadth.”
6. A. “and also couches of gold and silver:”
 B. R. Judah and R. Nehemiah:
 C. R. Judah said, “The one who was worthy of silver was given a silver [couch], and the one worthy of gold was given a gold one.”
 D. Said to him R. Nehemiah, “If so, you turn out to introduce [hatred by reason of] envy into the banquet of that wicked man. But they were made of silver and plated with gold.”
 E. And R. Tahalipa bar bar Hana said, “They were of gold, with silver fastenings.”
 F. Samuel said, “The outer [Simon, p. 39] legs were of gold and the inner, silver.”
7. A. “on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, [mother-of-pearl, and precious stones].”
 B. Said R. Nahman, “Come and take note of the prosperity of that wicked man. You can see it from the character of the house, paved as it was with precious stones and pearls: ‘on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, [mother-of-pearl, and precious stones].’”
8. A. “on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl, and precious stones.”
 B. R. Nisa of Caesarea said, “It was like a pearl that is much prized by its owner.”
 C. “It was like a pearl that freed its owner: ‘And proclaim liberty throughout the land’ (Lev. 25:10), [the word DR and DRR, liberty, share the same letters].”
9. A. “on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl, and precious stones.”
 B. Said R. Huna, “There is a place in which they call pearl by the word given for ‘mother-of-pearl.’”

10. A. “and precious stones.”

B. R. Bibi b. Abuna said, “This is wares for sale: ‘Current money with the merchant’ (Gen. 23:16) [since the word for precious stones shares the consonants of the word for merchandise].”

1:7 Drinks were served in golden goblets, goblets of different kinds, and the royal wine was lavished according to the bounty of the king.

XVI:i

1. A. “Drinks were served in golden goblets.”

B. The libations served by that wicked man were only in golden cups [and he alone had the means to do such a thing].

C. It was objected: “And all King Solomon’s drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold” (1Ki. 10:21).

D. R. Phineas in the name of R. Isaac said, “But don’t people find revolting drinking out of gold anyhow?”

E. “These were cups of finely cut crystal, in which people could see the reflections of their faces, and they were as beautiful and as costly as golden utensils.” [Simon: “In fact these were vessels of finely cut crystal in which the face is beautifully mirrored as in gold.”]

2. A. “goblets of different kinds.”

B. [We read “different” to mean “unique.”] He brought his own goblets and goblets from Elam, and his own turned out to be lovelier than those of Elam.

C. He brought his own goblets and goblets of the house of the sanctuary, but they turned out to be lovelier than his.

D. [The matter may be compared] to a matron who had a pretty servant girl. Whenever she looked at the servant girl, her face changed [expression, out of jealousy].

E. Likewise, so long as the utensils of the house of the sanctuary were facing his utensils, his utensils changed and became leaden.

3. A. [“goblets of different kinds:”]

B. R. Tahalipa bar bar Hana said, “They were utensils that turned in a brief time.”

4. A. [“goblets of different kinds:”]

B. Said R. Samuel bar R. Nahman, “They were utensils that destroy those who use them, and the difference [between those utensils and all others] in the damage [that they do].

C. “For what is it that caused Belshazzar to be completely exterminated? Was it not because he made use of the utensils of the Temple?”

D. “For thus Scripture states, ‘Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out

- of the temple in Jerusalem' (Dan. 5:2).
- E. "And immediately thereafter: 'In that night Belshazzar, the Chaldean king, was slain' (Dan. 5:30)."
5. A. "and the royal wine was lavished according to the bounty of the king."
- B. Later it is written, "And drank wine before the thousand" (Dan. 5:1).
- C. While here: "and the royal wine was lavished according to the bounty of the king."
- D. "[Simon, p. 41:] according to the cups in the hand of the king."
- 1:8 And drinking was according to the law, no one was compelled; for the king had given orders to all the officials of his palace to do as every man desired.*

XVII:i

1. A. "And drinking was according to the law:"
- B. It was according to the law of each locale.
- C. There are places in which it is desired first to eat, then to drink, and there are places in which they drink and then they eat.
- D. It was according to the law of each nation.
- E. To the Cuthaeans, for example, who do not drink wine in cups, they brought wine in leather bottles.
2. A. "no one was compelled:"
- B. to drink wine straight.
3. A. ["no one was compelled:"]
- B. Rab said, "No one was compelled to drink libation-wine."
- C. Said R. Benjamin b. Levi, "No one was compelled to drink to excess." [Or following Simon, p. 41, n. 4: a large loving cup used by the Persians.]"
- D. For there they drink heavily,
- E. thus "no one was compelled" to drink to excess.
4. A. "for the king had given orders to all the officials of his palace to do as every man desired:"
- B. [Cf. XV:i.7:] Said R. Samuel bar Nahman, "Come and take note of the prosperity of that wicked man. You can see it from the character of the house, paved as it was with precious stones and pearls: 'on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, [mother-of-pearl, and precious stones.'"
5. A. "[for the king had given orders] to all the officials of his palace to do as every man desired:"
- B. To arrange it for the great nobles of state that each one should be free to play with his children and household.
6. A. "[for the king had given orders to all the officials of his palace] to do as every man desired:"
- B. Said to him the Holy One, blessed be he, "I cannot carry out my obligations for all of my creatures, and yet you want to do what every man desires?"
- C. "Under ordinary circumstances, if two men want to marry the same woman, can she be

- married to both of them?
- D.** “But either this one or that one.
 - E.** “And so too in the case of two ships that lie in harbor, one waiting for a north wind, the other for south wind, can the same wind carry them both?
 - F.** “But either this one or that one.
 - G.** “Now tomorrow, two men are going to come before you for justice, one a Jew, the other an oppressor and enemy of the Jews. Can you do as both of them desire?
 - H.** “But you are going to have to raise up one and crucify the other.”
7. A. R. Huna in the name of R. Benjamin bar Levi said,
 “Now in this world, when the north wind blows, the south wind does not, and when the south wind blows, the north wind does not.
- B.** “But of the age to come, when the exiles are gathered in, the Holy One, blessed be he, has said, ‘I will bring [Simon, p. 42] a strong clearing wind into the world, that will combine both winds: ‘I will say to the north, give up, and to the south, keep not back, bring my sons, from afar, my daughters from the end of the earth’” (Isa. 43: 6).
 - C.** “Who is this one who does the will of those that fear him? It is the Holy One, blessed be he, of whom it is written, ‘He will fulfil the desire of those who fear him, he will also hear their cry and save them’ (Psa. 145:19).”