

Fill Your Own Cup 5786
Winter Series – Session Four - Charvonah

1) Scroll of Esther 1:10

On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was good with wine, he said to Mehuman, Bizetha, Charvona, Bigtha, Avagtha, Zethar and Charcas, the seven eunuchs who attended the presence of King Achashverosh

אסתר א:י

ביום השביעי כטוב לב המלך ביין
אמר למהומן בזתא חרבונה בגתא
ואבגתא זתר וכרפס שבעת
הסריסים המשרתים אתפני המלך
אחשורוש:

2) Scroll of Esther Chapter 7

So the king and Haman came to feast with Queen Esther.
On the second day, the king again asked Esther at the wine feast, "What is your wish, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to half the kingdom, it shall be fulfilled."
Queen Esther replied: "If Your Majesty will do me the favor, and if it pleases Your Majesty, let my life be granted me as my wish, and my people as my request.
For we have been sold, my people and I, to be destroyed, massacred, and exterminated. Had we only been sold as bondmen and bondwomen, I would have kept silent; for the adversary is not worthy of the king's trouble."
Thereupon King Ahasuerus demanded of Queen Esther, "Who is he and where is he who dared to do this?"
"The adversary and enemy," replied Esther, "is this evil Haman!" And Haman cringed in terror before the king and the queen.
The king, in his fury, left the wine feast for the palace garden, while Haman remained to plead with Queen Esther for his life; for he saw that the king had resolved to destroy him.
When the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet room, Haman was lying prostrate on the couch on which Esther reclined. "Is he attempting," cried the king, "a conquest of the queen in my own palace?" No sooner did these words leave the king's lips than Haman's face was covered/was crestfallen.
Then Harbonah, one of the eunuchs in attendance on the king, said, "What is more, a stake is standing at Haman's house, fifty cubits high, which Haman made for Mordecai—the man whose words saved the king." "Impale him on it!" the king ordered.
So they impaled Haman on the stake that he had put up for Mordecai, and the king's fury abated.

אסתר פרק ז

וַיָּבֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהָמָן לִשְׂתוֹת עִם־אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה:
וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאֶסְתֵּר גַּם בַּיּוֹם הַשֵּׁנִי
בְּמִשְׁתֵּה הַיַּיִן מִה־שְּׂאֵלְתֶךָ אֶסְתֵּר
הַמַּלְכָּה וְתַנְתְּנִי לָךְ וּמִה־בִּקְשֶׁתְּךָ עַד־חֲצִי
הַמַּמְלָכוֹת וְתַעֲשִׂי:
וְתַעֲנִי אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה וְתֹאמְרִי אִם־
מִצְאֵתִי חַן בְּעֵינֶיךָ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאִם־עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ
טוֹב תִּתְּנִירְגְּלִי נְפְשִׁי בְּשֵׂאֵלְתִי וְעַמִּי
בְּבִקְשֵׁתִי:
כִּי נִמְכַּרְנוּ אֲנִי וְעַמִּי לְהַשְׁמִיד לְהַרְגוֹ
וּלְאַבֵּד וְאֵלֹהֵי לַעֲבָדִים וְלִשְׁפָחוֹת נִמְכַּרְנוּ
הַחַרְשֵׁתִי כִּי אֵין הַצָּר שׁוֹהַ בְּנִזְק
הַמֶּלֶךְ: {ס}
וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחְשֻׁרוֹשׁ וַיֹּאמֶר לְאֶסְתֵּר
הַמַּלְכָּה מִי הוּא זֶה וְאֵיזָה הוּא אֲשֶׁר־
מָלְאוּ לְבֹו לַעֲשׂוֹת כֵּן:
וְתֹאמְרִי אֶסְתֵּר אִישׁ צָר וְאוֹיֵב הָמָן הֲרַע
הַזֶּה וְהָמָן נִבְעַת מִלִּפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמַּלְכָּה:
וְהַמֶּלֶךְ קָם בְּחִמְתּוֹ מִמִּשְׁתֵּה הַיַּיִן אֶל־
גִּנַּת הַבַּיִתוֹ וְהָמָן עֹמֵד לְבַקֵּשׁ עַל־נַפְשׁוֹ
מֵאֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה כִּי רָאָה כִּי־כִלְתָּהּ אֵלָיו
הֲרַעָה מֵאֵת הַמֶּלֶךְ:
וְהַמֶּלֶךְ שָׁב מִגִּנַּת הַבַּיִתוֹ אֶל־בֵּית
מִשְׁתֵּה הַיַּיִן וְהָמָן נָפַל עַל־הַמַּטָּה אֲשֶׁר
אֶסְתֵּר עָלֶיהָ וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ הֲגַם לְכַבּוֹשׁ
אֶת־הַמַּלְכָּה עִמִּי בְּבֵית הַדָּבָר יֵצֵא מִפִּי
הַמֶּלֶךְ וּפְגַי הָמָן חָפוּ: {ס}
וַיֹּאמֶר חַרְבוּנָה אֶחָד מִן־הַסְּרִיסִים לִפְנֵי
הַמֶּלֶךְ גַּם הִנֵּה־הֵעֵץ אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה הָמָן
לְמַרְדְּכָי אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר־טוֹב עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ עֹמֵד
בְּבֵית הָמָן גְּבַה חֲמִשִּׁים אַמָּה וַיֹּאמֶר
הַמֶּלֶךְ תִּלְהֹו עָלָיו:
וַיִּתְּלוּ אֶת־הָמָן עַל־הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר־הֵכִין
לְמַרְדְּכָי וְחִמַּת הַמֶּלֶךְ שָׁכְכָה: {פ}

3) Jerusalem Talmud Megillah 3:7:4

Rav said, one has to say, Haman be cursed, his sons be cursed. Rabbi Phineas said, one has to say, Harvona be remembered for good.

תלמוד ירושלמי מגילה ג' ז' ד'
רב אמר. צריך לאמר. ארוי המן
ארוים בניו. אמר רבי פינחס. צריך
לומר. חרבונה זכור לטוב.

4) Babylonian Talmud Tractate Megillah 16a

"And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman has made for Mordecai, who spoke good for the king, stands in the house of Haman" (Esther 7:9). Rabbi Elazar said: Harbonah was also wicked and involved in that plot, as he too wanted Mordecai executed. Once he saw that his plot had not succeeded, he immediately fled and joined Mordecai's side. And this is the meaning of that which is written: "It hurls itself at him, and does not spare; he would fain flee out of its hand" (Job 27:22), indicating that when God sends calamity upon a wicked person, his friends immediately flee from him.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת

מגילה טו.

"וַיֹּאמֶר חַרְבוֹנָה וְגו'".
אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר: אֶף
חַרְבוֹנָה רָשָׁע —
בְּאוֹתָהּ עָשָׂה הַיָּהּ, כִּי
שָׂרְיָהּ שְׁלֵא נִתְקַיְמָה
עֲצוּתוֹ, מִיַּד בָּרוּךְ.
וְהֵינּוּ דִקְתִּיב:
"וַיִּשְׁלַח עָלָיו וְלֹא
יִחַמּוּל מִיָּדוֹ בָּרוּךְ
יִבְרַח".

5) Esther Rabbah 10:9

"The king rose in his fury from the wine banquet to the palace garden and Haman stood to plead for his life from Esther the queen, for he saw that the king has resolved to do him harm" (Esther 7:7). "The king rose in his fury from the wine banquet to the palace garden." What did the angel Michael do? He began cutting the saplings before him, adding fury to his fury; he returned to the wine banquet and Haman stood up to plead for his life. What did Michael do? He pushed him [Haman] onto Esther, and she was crying 'My lord, the king, here he is overpowering me before you!' The king said: "Will he also overpower the queen with me in the house?" (Esther 7:8). Haman heard this statement and his face fell. What did Eliyahu, of blessed memory, do? He appeared as Ḥarvona and said to him [to the king]: 'My lord the king, "indeed, here is the gallows that Haman had made for Mordekhai..."' (Esther 7:9). As Rabbi Pinḥas said: One must say 'Ḥarvona, of blessed memory.'

אסתר רבה י' ט'

וְהִמְלִיךְ קָם בְּחִמְתּוֹ מִמְשִׁתָּהּ הַיָּיִן
אֶל גִּנַּת הַבַּיִת (אֶסְתֵּר ז', ז', מָה),
עָשָׂה מִיכָאֵל הַמַּלְאָךְ הַתַּחֲמִיל
מִקְצָץ אֶת הַנְּטִיעוֹת לְפָנָיו,
וְהוֹסִיף חֲמָה עַל חֲמָתוֹ, וְשָׁב אֶל
מְשִׁתָּהּ הַיָּיִן, וְהָמֹן עָמַד לְבַקֵּשׁ עַל
נַפְשׁוֹ, מָה עָשָׂה מִיכָאֵל דְּחָפּוּ עַל
אֶסְתֵּר, וְהִיָּתָה מִצַּעֲקַת אֲדוֹנֵי
הַמַּלְאָךְ הָרִי הוּא כְּבָשָׁנִי לְפָנָיו,
וַיֹּאמֶר הַמַּלְאָךְ הַגָּם לְכַבּוֹשׁ אֶת
הַמַּלְכָּה עִמִּי בְּבֵית. וְשָׁמַע הַמֶּלֶךְ
הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה וְנִפְלֹו כִּפְנָיו. מָה עָשָׂה
אֶלְיָהוּ זְכוֹר לְטוֹב, נִדְמָה
לְחַרְבוֹנָה וְאָמַר לוֹ אֲדוֹנֵי הַמַּלְאָךְ
גַּם הִנֵּה הֵעֵץ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה הַמֶּלֶךְ
לְמַרְדְּכַי וְגו'. דָּאֵמַר רַבִּי פִּנְחָס
צְרִיךְ לוֹמַר חַרְבוֹנָה זְכוֹר לְטוֹב.

6) "Also Charvona Is Remembered for Good", Prof. Yonatan Grossman

<https://etzion.org.il/en/tanakh/ketuvim/megillat-esther/also-charvona-remembered-good>

Even at first glance there is a clear thematic connection between these two scenes: Charvona is active at both parties, and in both cases he advances the plot in a similar way: in the beginning (chapter 1) he goes to bring Vashti, who refuses to present herself and is therefore removed from her position in the palace (perhaps executed). Similarly, in the parallel scene (chapter 7), Charvona tells the king about the gallows that Haman has prepared, and in the wake of this Haman is removed from his position (executed). Moreover, at the conclusion of both scenes, following the removal of Vashti/Haman, we read that "the king's wrath subsided" (2:1, 7:9). After the king calms down, the two Jewish heroes of the story replace them: Esther is chosen to replace Vashti, and in chapter 8 we read how Mordekhai takes the place of Haman.

We may say, in summary, that Charvona's role – in both instances where he is mentioned – is to fuel the king's anger towards someone who is close to him, such that that person's place is vacated for Esther/Mordekhai. Once the idea is formulated thus, it is easy to understand why "Charvona is remembered for good": the future of the "blessed" characters, as the poem refers to them, is dependent on his actions. At the same time, Charvona represents the instability of Achashverosh's realm. The fact that a queen, or a king's second-in-command, can be removed from the palace on the basis of the words of "one of the chamberlains" is clear testimony to the capriciousness of this king who reigns from India to Ethiopia. We may almost say that Charvona holds a sword (*cherev*) in his hand – a "revolving sword" – that may, at any time, strike at one person and lift up another...