

The World of the Megillah: Making Room for Change

Rachel Sharansky Danziger * Torah in Motion * 3/17/2024

1: Between uncle and niece

Esther 2:5-11

(5) In the fortress Shushan lived a Jew by the name of Mordecai, son of Jair son of Shimei son of Kish, a Benjaminite. (6) [Kish] had been exiled from Jerusalem in the group that was carried into exile along with King Jeconiah of Judah, which had been driven into exile by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. (7) He was foster father to Hadassah—that is, Esther—his uncle’s daughter, for she had neither father nor mother. The maiden was shapely and beautiful; and when her father and mother died, Mordecai adopted her as his own daughter. (8) When the king’s order and edict was proclaimed, and when many girls were assembled in the fortress Shushan under the supervision of Hegai, *aldentical with Hege in v. 3*. Esther too was taken into the king’s palace under the supervision of Hegai, guardian of the women. (9) The girl pleased him and won his favor, and he hastened to furnish her with her cosmetics and her rations, as well as with the seven maids who were her due from the king’s palace; and he treated her and her maids with special kindness in the harem. (10) Esther did not reveal her people or her kindred, for Mordecai had told her not to reveal it. (11) Every single day Mordecai would walk about in front of the court of the harem, to learn how Esther was faring and what was happening to her.

אסתר ב':ה'-י"א

(ה) איש יהודי הנה בשושן הבירה ושמו מרדכי בן יאיר בן שמעי בן קיש איש ימיני: (ו) אשר הגלה מירושלים עם-הגולה אשר הגלתה עם יבנה מלך-היהודה אשר הגלה נבוכדנצר מלך בבל: (ז) ויהי אמן את-הדסה היא אסתר בת-דוד כי אין לה אב ואם והנערה יפת-תאר וטובת מראה ובמות אביה ואמה לקחה מרדכי לו לבת: (ח) ויהי בהשמע דבר-המלך ונתן ובהקבץ נערות רבות אל-שושן הבירה אל-יד הגי ותלקח אסתר אל-בית המלך אל-יד הגי שמר הנשים: (ט) ותיטב הנערה בעיניו ותשא חסד לפניו ויבטל את-תמרוקיה ואת-מנותה לתת לה ואת שבע הנערות הראיות לתת-לה מבית המלך וישגה ואת-נערותיה לטוב בית הנשים: (י) לא-הגידה אסתר את-עמה ואת-מולדתה כי מרדכי צנה עליה אשר לא-תגיד: {ס} (יא) ובכל-יום ויום מרדכי מתהלך לפני חצר בית-הנשים לדעת את-שולם אסתר ומה-יעשה בה:

Esther 2:20

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

אסתר ב':כ'

(כ) אין אסתר מגדת מולדתה ואת-עמה כאשר צנה עליה מרדכי ואת-מאמר מרדכי אסתר עשה כאשר היתה באמנה אמו: {ס}

Esther 4:13-17

(13) Mordecai had this message delivered to Esther: “Do not imagine that you, of all the Jews, will escape with your life by being in the king’s palace. (14) On the contrary, if you keep silent in this crisis, relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another quarter, while you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows, perhaps you have attained to royal position for just such a crisis.” (15) Then Esther sent back this answer to Mordecai: (16) “Go, assemble all the Jews who live in Shushan, and fast in my behalf; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens will observe the same fast. Then I shall go to the king, though it is contrary to the law; and if I am to perish, I shall perish!” (17) So Mordecai went about [the city] and did just as Esther had commanded him.

אסתר ד':י"ג-י"ז

(יג) ויאמר מרדכי להשיב אל-אסתר אל-תדמי בנפשך להמלט בית-המלך מפל-היהודים: (יד) כי אם-התרחש תחר'ישי בעת הזאת רוח והצלה יעמוד ליהודים ממקום אחר ואת ובית-אביה תאבדו ומי יודע אם-לעת כזאת הגעת למלכות: (טו) ותאמר אסתר להשיב אל-מרדכי: (טז) לך פנוס את-פל-היהודים הנמצאים בשושן וצומו עלי ואל-תאכלו ואל-תשתו שלשת ימים לילה ויום גם-אני ונערתי אצום כן ובכו אבוא אל-המלך אשר לא-כדת וכאשר אבדתי אבדתי: (יז) ויעבר מרדכי ויעש ככל אשר-צוהה עליו אסתר: {ס}

2. Uncles and nephews

Genesis 31:43-48

(43) Then Laban spoke up and said to Jacob, “The daughters are my daughters, the children are my children, and the flocks are my flocks; all that you see is mine. Yet what can I do now about my daughters or the children they have borne? (44) Come, then, let us make a pact, you and I, that there may be a witness between you and me.” (45) Thereupon Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. (46) And Jacob said to his kinsmen, “Gather stones.” So they took stones and made a mound; and they partook of a meal there by the mound. (47) Laban named it Yegar-sahadutha, but Jacob named it Gal-ed. (48) And Laban declared, “This mound is a witness between you and me this day.” That is why it was named Gal-ed;

Genesis 12:4-5

(4) Abram went forth as ה' had commanded him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. (5) Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot, and all the wealth that they had amassed, and the persons that they had acquired in Haran; and they set out for the land of Canaan. When they arrived in the land of Canaan,

Genesis 13:5-13

(5) Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents, (6) so that the land could not support them staying together; for their possessions were so great that they could not remain together. (7) And there was quarreling between the herders of Abram's cattle and those of Lot's cattle.—The Canaanites and Perizzites were then dwelling in the land.— (8) Abram said to Lot, “Let there be no strife between you and me, between my herders and yours, for we are kin. (9) Is not the whole land before you? Let us separate if you go north, I will go south; and if you go south, I will go north.” (10) Lot looked about him and saw how well watered was the whole plain of the Jordan, all of it—this was before ה' had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah—all the way to Zoar, like the garden of ה', like the land of Egypt. (11) So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed eastward. Thus they parted from each other;.. (13) Now the inhabitants of Sodom were very wicked sinners against ה'.

בראשית ל"א:מ"ג-מ"ח

(מג) ויַעַן לָבָן וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־יַעֲקֹב הַבָּנוֹת בְּנֹתַי וְהַבָּנִים בְּנֵי וְהַצֹּאן צֹאֲנֵי וְכָל אֲשֶׁר־אַתָּה רֹאֶה לִי־הוּא וְלִבְנֹתַי מִה־אֲעֻשֶׂה לְאֱלֹהֵי הַיּוֹם אֹו לְבְנֵיהֶן אֲשֶׁר יֵלְדוּ: (מד) וַעֲמָהּ לָכֵה נִכְרַתָּה בְרִית אֲנִי וְאַתָּה וְהִגַּה לְעֵד בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶךָ: (מה) וַיִּקַּח יַעֲקֹב אֲבָן וַיְרִימָהּ מִצְבֵּה: (מו) וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב לְאֶחָיו לְקַטּוּ אֲבָנִים וַיִּקְחוּ אֲבָנִים וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־גֹל וַיֵּאָכְלוּ שָׁם עַל־הַגֹּל: (מז) וַיִּקְרָא־לוֹ לָבָן יְגַר שְׁהַדוּתָא וַיַּעֲקֹב קָרָא לוֹ גַלְעָד: (מח) וַיֹּאמֶר לָבָן הֲגַל הִגַּה עֵד בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶךָ הַיּוֹם עַל־כֵּן קָרָא־שְׁמוֹ גַלְעָד:

בראשית י"ב:ד-ה'

(ד) וַיֵּלֶךְ אַבְרָם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהֵי ה' וַיֵּלֶךְ אִתּוֹ לוֹט וְאַבְרָם בְּיָחִיזְכָּר שְׁנַיִם וְשִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה בְּצֵאתוֹ מִחָרָן: (ה) וַיִּקַּח אַבְרָם אֶת־שָׂרַי אִשְׁתּוֹ וְאֶת־לוֹט בֶּן־אָחָיו וְאֶת־כָּל־כּוֹשֶׁם אֲשֶׁר רָכָשׁוּ וְאֶת־הַנַּפְשׁ אֲשֶׁר־עָשׂוּ בְּחָרָן וַיֵּצְאוּ לְלֶכֶת אֶרְצָה כְּנָעַן וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶרְצָה כְּנָעַן:

בראשית י"ג:ה'-י"ג

(ה) וְגַם־לְלוֹט הִהְלִיךְ אֶת־אַבְרָם הִגַּה צֹאֵן וַיִּבְקַר וְאֵהָלִים: (ו) וְלֹא־נִשְׂא אִתָּם הָאָרֶץ לְיִשְׁבֹת יַחֲדָו כִּי־הִיגָה רְכוּשָׁם רָב וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לְיִשְׁבֹת יַחֲדָו: (ז) וַיִּהְיֶיֶב בֵּין רַעֲי מִקְנֵה־אַבְרָם וּבֵין רַעֲי מִקְנֵה־לוֹט וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי וְהַפְּרִזִי אֹו יָשֵׁב בְּאָרֶץ: (ח) וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם אֶל־לוֹט אֵל־לוֹט אֵל־נָא תְהִי מְרִיבָה בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶךָ וּבֵין רַעֲי וּבֵין רַעֲי כִּי־אֲנָשִׁים אַחִים אֲנִי וְאַתָּה: (ט) הֲלֹא כָל־הָאָרֶץ לְפָנֶיךָ הַפְּרָד נָא מֵעָלַי אִם־הִשְׁמָאל וְאִם־הַיָּמִין וְאִשְׁמְאֵלָה: (י) וַיִּשְׂא־לוֹט אֶת־עֵינָיו וַיַּרְא אֶת־כָּל־כַּפְּר הַנִּרְדָּן כִּי כָלָה מִשְׁקָה לְפָנָי וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה אֶת־סֹדֶם וְאֶת־עַמֹּרָה כְּגֹוֹה־כְּאָרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּאֶבֶה צָעַר: (יא) וַיִּבְחַר־לוֹ לוֹט אֶת כָּל־כַּפְּר הַנִּרְדָּן וַיִּסַּע לוֹט מִקְדָּם וַיִּפְרְדּוּ אִישׁ מֵעַל אַחֲיוֹ:.. (יג) וְאֲנָשֵׁי סֹדֶם רָעִים וְחַטָּאִים לַה' מְאֹד:

3. Fear of change

Genesis 19:12-23

(12) Then the agents said to Lot, “Whom else have you here? Sons-in-law, your sons and daughters, or anyone else that you have in the city—bring them out of the place. (13) For we are about to destroy this place; because the outcry against them before ה' has become so great that ה' has sent us to destroy it.” (14) So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters, and said, “Up, get out of this place, for ה' is about to destroy the city.” But he seemed to his sons-in-law as one who jests. (15) As dawn broke, the messengers urged Lot on, saying, “Up, take your wife and your two remaining daughters, lest you be swept away because of the iniquity of the city.” (16) Still he delayed. So the agents seized his hand, and the hands of his wife and his two daughters—in ה' mercy on him—and brought him out and left him outside the city. (17) When they had brought them outside, one said, “Flee for your life! Do not look behind you, nor stop anywhere in the Plain; flee to the hills, lest you be swept away.” (18) But Lot said to them, “Oh no, my lord! (19) You have been so gracious to your servant, and have already shown me so much kindness in order to save my life; but I cannot flee to the hills, lest the disaster overtake me and I die. (20) Look, that town there is near enough to flee to; it is such a little place! Let me flee there—it is such a little place—and let my life be saved.” (21) He replied, “Very well, I will grant you this favor too, and I will not annihilate the town of which you have spoken. (22) Hurry, flee there, for I cannot do anything until you arrive there.” Hence the town came to be called Zoar. **Zoar Connected with miš'ar “a little place,” v. 20.* (23) As the sun rose upon the earth and Lot entered Zoar,

בראשית י"ט:ב-כ"ג

(יב) ויאמרו האנשים אל-לוט עד מי-לך פה חתן ובניך ובנותיך וכל אשר-לך בעיר הוצא מן-המקום: (יג) כִּי־משחתים אנחנו את-המקום הנה כִּי־גדלה צעקתם את-פני ה' וישלחנו ה' לשחתה: (יד) ויצא לוט ונדבר אל-חתניו לקחי בנתי ויאמר קומו צאו מן-המקום הנה כִּי־משחתים ה' את-העיר ויהי כמצחק בעיני חתניו: (טו) וכמו השחר עלה ויאצו המלאכים בקוט לאמר קום קח את-אשתך ואת-שתי בנותי הנמצאות פן־תספה בעון העיר: (טז) ויתמהמהו ויחזיקו האנשים בקדו ובגד-אשתו ובגד שתי בנותיו בחמלת ה' עלינו ויצאהו וינחהו מחוץ לעיר: (יז) ויהי כהוציאם אתם החוצה ויאמר המלט על-נפשך אל-תביט אחריך ואל-תעמד בכל-הפכר הנהרה המלט פן־תספה: (יח) ויאמר לוט אליהם אל-גא אדושם: (יט) הנה-נא מצא עבדך חן בעיניך ומגדל חסדך אשר עשית עמדי להחיות את-נפשי ואנכי לא אוכל להמלט הנהרה פן־תדבקני הרעה ומתי: (כ) הנה-נא העיר הנאת קרובה לנו שמה והוא מצער אמלטה נא שמה הלא מצער הוא ותתי נפשי: (כא) ויאמר אליו הנה נבואתי פניך גם לדבר הנה לבתי הפני את-העיר אשר דברת: (כב) מהר המלט שמה כי לא אוכל לעשות דבר עד-באש שמה על-כן קרא שם-העיר צוער: (כג) השמש יצא על-הארץ ולוט גא צערה:

4: Three types of friendship

Rambam on Pirkei Avot 1:6

And there are three types of friends: a friend for benefit, a friend for enjoyment and a friend for virtue.

Indeed, **a friend for benefit** is like the friendship of two [business] partners and the friendship of a king and his retinue;

whereas **the friendship for enjoyment is of two types - the friend for pleasure and the friend for confidence**. Indeed, **the friend for pleasure** is like the friendship of males and females and similar to it; whereas **the friend for confidence** is when a man has a friend to whom he can confide his soul. He will not keep [anything] from him - not in action and not in speech. And he will make him know all of his affairs - the good ones and the disgraceful - without fearing from him that any loss will come to him with all of this, not from him and not from another. As when a person has such a level of confidence in a man, he finds great enjoyment in his words and in his great friendship.

And **a friend for virtue** is when the desire of both of them and their intention is for one thing, and that is the good. And each one wants to be helped by his friend in reaching this good for both of them together. And this is the friend which he commanded to acquire; and it is like the love of the master for the student and of the student for the master.