**Purim and Genesis – How the Beginning of the Bible Connects to the End**

So with no further ado, let me, sort of, jump in and tell you guys about what I have found over here. One of the things that I often talk to you about or sometimes talk to you about, in Aleph Beta videos, is that there are, sort of, two ways to begin. You can either begin with a close reading of Biblical text and, if you start that way, as you begin to uncover layers of meaning and as you begin to see more and more of kind of the puzzle in the text, the sort of hidden layers of meaning in the text.

**Studying Purim's Background in the Torah and Midrash**

Every once in a while if you just sort of stop and you pull out a Bereishit Rabba or a Midrash Rabba and you look at what the Sages say, in the text, you will -- you'll be astounded and you'll read something and it's like oh, my gosh, I can't believe it. Somebody saw this long before me and what I've taken a year to uncover and say in, you know, two hours or three hours the Sages were saying in three lines and it's right over here.

So what happens is you could start with text and you can end up with Rabbinic commentary, with these commentaries of the Sages. But in Rabbinic commentary, I'm not really talking about the Acharonim, I'm not talking about the Rishonim, we're not talking about the Middle Ages, I'm not talking about the classical commentators I'm talking about earlier commentators before that, notably the Midrash.

So you could start with the text and you can end up with the Midrash. You can also do it the other way. The second way to do it is you scan through Midrash and you find something and you say that is really strange. That's really odd. I wonder where the Rabbis got that from and then you go back and you look at the text closely and you can sort of piece together where they got it from as like, okay, that's where they got it from.

So I want to show you a little bit of that dynamic and sort of keep the following in mind. That the Sages when they wrote the Midrash were not writing a methodology textbook. Which is to say that they would tell you things, but they wouldn't always tell you where they saw it or how they found it. So when you read Midrash they will often tell you stuff, but the backstory is not always there.

The analogy I give sometimes; I took my car into the mechanic today to get fixed. So this is an apt mechanic analogy. You know, the guy tells me your power steering fluid pump is gone and here's what I got to do to fix it. Now, he doesn't tell me how he knows that. Well, I can quiz him about that. I say well, how do you know that the power steering fluid pump is gone? He could start telling me about it, but he's more likely than not to say, you know what if you really want to know the answer on that I'll tell you a little bit of it. If you want to know the answer to that you can go to mechanic school and you could study it, but that's not my job right now. My job is just to figure out what's going on with your car and to fix it.

Similarly, with the Rabbis. When they wrote their book, which is to say the Midrash, they weren't giving you the handbook on how to become a mechanic. They weren't telling you how to discover what they discovered, they were just telling you what they discovered.

What we're kind of doing in Aleph Beta is kind of the backstory to that. Looking at the patterns underneath the text which, I think, the Rabbis were looking at too. So what they'll sometimes tell you also is the tip of the iceberg stuff. They'll occasionally make this comment and the comment isn't everything, but if you're a perceptive reader you can look at that comment and you could say huh, that looks like the tip of an iceberg and you could discover the rest of the iceberg.

That's precisely what I want to do with you today. I want to share with you my screen, I want to show you what I'm looking at in the Megillah and I want to suggest to you that there's kind of one of these tip of the iceberg things going on. So with no further ado, let me share a screen with you and see what I can show you. I'm going to move over some of this Facebook stuff over here and we will try and share the following screen. Where is it? Okay. Right over here.

Okay, so hopefully by now, you guys should be able to see this screen. I am going to make this screen bigger because I like you guys, that's why. I like you so much. I'm actually going to make this screen bigger just for you, so you guys can see this. Okay. So now, it is bigger and don't worry about all that Hebrew text. If you do not understand Hebrew, that's fine. I will translate for you.

I just want to show you what it is that you're looking at it. What you're looking at is -- the right-hand side of the screen is talking about Genesis, the left-hand side of the screen is talking about Esther. Now, why do we have Genesis on the right-hand side of the screen is a very good question. We will get to that, okay, but for now, just kind of stick with me and let's look at the left-hand side of the screen.

(Irrelevant 00:05:45 - 00:07:21)

Anyway, here we are and let me show you what I'm talking about over here in this screen share. So take a long over here, with me, at the fourth chapter of the Book of Esther and you will find something interesting. I'm just going to highlight it here so you can see. Right over here, we are going to turn this a color. What color are we going to turn this? Let me see, I have another document here where we can sort of look in it. Let's turn it yellow. Okay.

Here we are in Chapter 4. Here's what's happened. Things are going badly for the Jews in Shushan. Haman has just initiated this terrible decree and as a result of it, Mordecai is in mourning; not only Mordecai, but everybody else. Let's read the beginning of Chapter 4. Genocide is coming. "U'Mordechai yada et kol asher na'asah," Mordecai knows everything that's happening, "vayikra Mordechai et begadav," he tears his clothes, "vayilbash sak va'eifer," and he puts on sackcloth and ashes, "vayeitzei b'toch ha'ir," and he goes out inside the city, "vayiz'ak ze'akah gedolah u'marah." You see over here, in the yellow, I have outlined "vayiz'ak ze'akah gedolah u'marah," and he lets out this great and bitter cry.

Now, the reason I have that in yellow is because the Midrash, in Bereishit Rabba, actually picks up on that and the Midrash says the following. It says that, that text of "vayiz'ak ze'akah gedolah u'marah," in Hebrew, and he let out a great and bitter cry, that resonates with the text somewhere else in the Bible. Because as it happens, those words "vayiz'ak ze'akah gedolah u'marah," are actually quoted from somewhere. The author of the Book of Esther seems to be almost incontrovertibly quoting from the **Book of Genesis.**

**Biblical Connections to Purim**

What he's saying in the Book of Genesis, I'm going to show you the place where you can find that, is right down over here. Right there. We're going to highlight that in yellow also. So over there, on the right-hand side of the screen, here's what happens. This story of Jakov and Esau. Jakov deceives Isaac, Yitzchak, and his brother Esau, takes the blessing and when he does that and when Isav finds out what happened, "vatyitz'ak tze'akah gedolah u'marah." Now, Isav lets out this great and bitter cry.

Now, that language is almost exactly the same as the language of Mordecai. If you want to come up and see that yellow over there with Mordecai. See how close that is, right. "Vayiz'ak ze'akah gedolah u'marah." The only difference really is the Zayin and the Tzaddi.

In Esau's case, "vayitz'ak tze'akah gedolah u'marah." In Jakov's case, "vayiz'ak ze'akah gedolah u'marah." But that is a trivial difference between them. Seen in the large picture there is no doubt that Esther 4 is evoking Genesis 27, the story of Jakov and Esau. However, you might say why? Why is that the case?

The Rabbis had a theory and they shared that theory. I'm just going to tell you what that theory is.

The theory quoted by the Rabbis, in Bereishit Rabba is this. Anyone, the Rabbis say, who thinks that God is a vatran, "yivatru chayav." Anybody who thinks that God just, kind of, let's things slide, that there is no justice in the great heavenly court for things that happen, doesn't know what's going on. His life should be -- they should let his life slide, so to speak, because God just bides His time. It may take centuries, but there is always justice.

The proof that the Rabbis have for this is this text comparison that we're just talking over here. The text says because of the bitter tears that Jakov once caused Isav to shed, when Jakov deceived him and got the blessing from his father, because that happened it took centuries, but there would come a time when the descendant of Isav would provoke payback tears, so to speak, on the part of a descendant of Jakov. That is what takes place in the Purim story when as a result of Haman's genocidal decree "vayiz'ak ze'akah gedolah u'marah," Mordecai lets out a great and bitter cry. So this is what the Sages say.

What I want to suggest here -- and again, the Sages are making a remarkable claim now. What they're saying is, is that if you really want to understand the Book of Esther you have to look back at Genesis 27 because the story of Esther is just what goes around comes around. There is a story of unfinished business over here. There's unfinished business, as my father, the psychiatrist, used to say -- alav hashalom -- in Genesis 27, Jakov runs away after tricking Esau, after tricking his father and there is an epilogue to that story and the epilogue to the story is here.

Now, what's interesting about this, to sort of begin to fill in the pictures that the Sages are saying, like do the Sages have any further evidence for this? What were they thinking? What I want to suggest to you and really the purpose of this webinar over these next couple of sessions is to point this out and maybe one of these days we'll create an Aleph Beta, fully-featured animated class on this. In a way, what I'm about to share with you is a kind of epilogue to the Purim series which we just released. If you haven't seen it yet, go check out our site and right there in the front center of Aleph Beta is our new Purim course which is fantastic, if I may say so. I really enjoyed putting it together. I think we called it "[Mishloach Manot, a Secret Purim Story Hiding in Plain Sight](https://www.alephbeta.org/playlist/mishloach-manot-matanot-laevyonim)."

What this is, I think, is an epilogue, in a way, to that story. So you'll understand what we're doing here even more deeply, if you take a look at our animated course on Aleph Beta. But I'm going to kind of just jump in and show this to you. But I want to suggest to you is what the Sages are talking about over here with "vayiz'ak ze'akah gedolah u'marah," is one of those tip of the iceberg moments. Which is to say, there is a lot going on beneath the scenes that the Sages see and I want to begin to unearth some of the rest of the iceberg.

**Studying the Background to Purim in the Bible**

Let's go back to what it was that happened after Jakov tricked Isav and we have that first "vayitz'ak tze'akah gedolah u'marah ad me'od," when Isav lets out a great and bitter cry. He says, "baracheini gam ani avi," please could you also give me a blessing, my father? And father basically says no, "ba achicha b'mirmah vayikach birchatecha," your brother came in stealth and took your blessing. To which Isav says, "hachi kara shemo Yaakov," that's why they called him Jakov, "vaya'akveini zeh pa'amayim," he tricked me or he heeled me twice, "et b'chorati lakach v'hinei atah lakach birchati," once he took my firstborn, now he's taking my blessing and he begs his father, "vayomar halo atzalt li brachah," didn't you save me a blessing.

To which Isaac, then gives Isav sort of this consolation prize blessing and Isav weeps and says, "vayisa Eisav kolo vayeiv'k," he lifts up his voice and he cries. By the way, let's actually put that in yellow, as well. At that point, "vayis'tom Eisav et Yaakov al habrachah asher beiracho aviv," Isav hates Jakov because of this blessing that his father gave him. Now, vayis'tom doesn't just mean hate. Vayis'tom is a deep and abiding hatred. It is a sense of a deep abiding grudge, a seething grudge. "Vayomer Eisav b'libo," and Isav then says in his heart -- by the way, actually while we're at it let's put that in some color over here. Let's turn that red -- "Vayomer Eisav b'libo," and Isav says in his heart, "yikrivu yemei eivel avi v'ahargah et Yaakov achi," soon my father will die and I'm going to kill my brother Jakov.

This is this threat, but this threat never actually gets out of Esau's heart. In other words, Isav has this in his heart that he's going to kill his brother Jakov. But if you actually play it out in the Book of Genesis that never happens. Right? So there's this implied threat. He's so angry he could kill his brother. He pledges to himself, he swears to himself that he's going to kill his brother once his father dies, but interestingly it never happens. There is sort of a quasi-reconciliation story between Jakov and Esau.

There's that moment, 21 years later, where Isav comes to Jakov with 400 men. He looks like he's going to kill him, but there's this moment that they reconcile.

However, there is a descendent of Isav that doesn't seem to buy the reconciliation story, a grandson, a grandson of Esau, a child of Eliphaz, the child of Esau, by the name of Amalek. And Amalek doesn't seem to get the hint. He doesn't seem to believe in the reconciliation. Amalek argues that the rift between Jakov and Isav will live to fight another day, so to speak and Amalek shows up. After the Jews leave Egypt, Amalek shows up. Amalek will eventually show up again in the Purim story, in the form of Haman, who is ascribed by the text to be a descendent of Agag. Agag, of course, was a king of Amalek described in the Book of Samuel, in Samuel 1. So there's this sort of cascade down into history from Amalek to Agag to Haman.

I want to sort of meditate upon that with you for a moment. If it's true that there's this moment that Isav pledges that he's going to kill Jakov, but he never really does it, what were the Sages really saying when they said that the heavenly court abides justice over a course of centuries and there would be a time when a descendent of Esau, namely Haman, would cause a descendent of Jakov to let out a great and bitter cry? It's not just the great and bitter cry, of course, what does Haman try to do? He's trying to kill everyone; every man, woman and child. In essence, he's trying to kill Jakov in his generation because in Esau's generation killing Jakov meant killing one person. In Haman's generation it doesn't mean killing a person anymore. It means killing every last man, woman and child; every last person. That's the only way you kill Jakov.

So it sounds like there's this descendent of Amalek, this descendent of Agag that wants to make good on this ancient vow, so to speak, by Esau. Which is to completely wipe out Jakov.

Let me just show you a couple of pieces here, again, in the text. Remember "vayitz'ak tze'akah gedolah u'marah," and over here also "vayisa Eisav kolo vayeiv'k." Isav really has two responses. One is he lets out this great and bitter cry. The other is "vayisa Eisav kolo vayeiv'k," he raises up his voice and he cries. You're actually going to find both of those things generations later with Jakov because look at what Jakov does.

"Vayiz'ak ze'akah gedolah u'marah," over here, he lets out this great and bitter cry, but just like Esau, where we had crying after the great and bitter cry we have it with Jakov, so to speak, or Mordecai in the times of Haman, as well. Right over here. We have both of them; the great and bitter cry followed by "eivel gadol laYehudim tzom u'bechi u'mispeid," this mourning to everybody and then everyone is fasting and they're crying and they are involved in hesped, they're involved in eulogizing.

So you have both of those things and just to point out something else. Well, "vayomer Eisav b'libo" let's wait for that because we're actually going to see that same language in the Megillah. But let's begin to actually precipitate some of the other pieces of this. Maybe, precipitation is a good word because look at this. One of the issues that the blessing -- like, what was that blessing about, that blessing that was stolen? The blessing was actually about this.

You see these words over here? Let's put these in a color. Let's put this in light green, for the time being. "Mishmanei ha'aretz yihiyeh moshavecha u'mital hashamayim mei'al," the dew of the heaven. Right, similarly, that's what Isav -- this blessing that Isav should have gotten and, of course, the blessing that Jakov, in fact, gets is this. "Vayitein l'cha Hashem Elokim mital hashamayim," let God give you mital hashamayim.

Let me ask you, when did that actually happen? When in Jewish history, did that blessing happen when the recipient of the blessing here, in this case Jakov, the stolen heirloom blessing, gets "vayitein l'cha Elokim," gets this Divine gift, "mital hashamayim," from the dew of the heavens, "rov dagan v'tirosh," all grain and oil.

If you think about that, I want to suggest that that actually happens in the desert after the Jews, after the Israelites come out of Egypt. Because you're actually going to find this language. I don't have it up on the screen right now, but it's a little bit of a pain in the neck to show you, but if you open up in Parashat Beshalach, which we just read a couple of weeks ago, in synagogue. But if you open up in Parashat Beshalach and you actually follow what happens there, when the manna comes to Israel, is described in these terms. Because the manna sits on this bed of dew that comes "mital hashamayim." There's this dew that comes from heaven and when the people ask what it it? Moses says, "hu halechem asher natan l'cha Hashem," it's the bread that God Himself gave you.

It evokes that language over here. "Yitein l'cha," God's going to give you, "mital hashamayim," from the heavens and God once did that. He gave us from the heavens this bread, this sustenance. That's really what the blessing was about. God giving sustenance to you and ultimately it's in the Land of Israel, but before that it's this manna which evokes this sort of sense of the blessings.

You see it also here, in the beginning of the blessing. "R'ei rei'ach b'ni k'rei'ach sadeh asher beiracho Hashem," the blessing is, Isaac says, that you smell like the field that God has blessed. Lo and behold, when the Jews, when the Israelites get the manna in the desert, even though they're in a desert it's described as the manna on the face of the field and it's evoking this imagery. There's this stuff that comes from the dew of heavens and it's bread that came from God and it's rei'ach hasadeh and it's this smell of the field and it seems like it's a precursor to this manna.

However, now, think of the word manna, how do you say it in Hebrew? What's the Hebrew word for manna, everybody? Unfortunately, I think, my comments froze over, I don't think I can see my comments, but if I could see my comments -- let's see while I speak -- can I see my comments? Let's see. Yeah. All right, so tell me, how do you say manna in Hebrew? You say it's the mahn. Spell it, Mem- Nun, the mahn.

What does that remind you of in the Megillah? [Isn't it curious the name of our nemesis, Haman, spell it](https://www.alephbeta.org/playlist/story-of-haman-in-eden) [in Hebrew. Ha-man, the mahn.](https://www.alephbeta.org/playlist/story-of-haman-in-eden) I mean, it's kind of crazy, but it's almost like what was stolen? If you were Esau, what would you be so mad about? With the hindsight of generations, that tal hashamayim, on the face of the field, that dew of the heavens on the face of the field that becomes the manna and it's like, I don't know, I'm upset, I'm angry. Right?

So it's almost like what goes around comes around. Here's this guy whose name is manna, this thing that he thought was stolen from him, right and all of a sudden he's plotting this genocide and sort of what goes around comes around.

Now, let me begin to, again, tease out a little bit of the rest of the iceberg. The Rabbis, when they began to focus on this, were focused on these words right over here, "vayiz'ak ze'akah gedolah u'marah," and he let out a great and bitter cry. What I want to show you is the textual support for what they're saying is very, very there.

Let me begin to show it to you. Look at this. Let's put this in orange. Here it is. The descendant of Jakov, Mordecai, let's out this great and bitter cry and immediately after that what do we hear? We hear, "Vayavo ad lifnei sha'ar hamelech ki ein lavo el sha'ar hamelech bil'vush sak," he gets as far as what? The gates of the palace because you can't come into the gates of the palace wearing sack clothes and ashes. "U'v'chol medinah u'medinah mekom asher d'var hamelech v'dato magi'a eivel gadol layehudim," we hear that in all the places and in all of the provinces of the palace, wherever the kings word went, "eivel gadol layehudim," there was great mourning among the Jews.

Now, let's go back to the Jakov and Isav story and ask ourselves, after Esau's great and bitter cry, do we have anything that reminds us of this, "eivel gadol layehudim," great mourning? Was there great mourning after "vayitz'ak tze'akah gedolah u'marah?" Well, it turns out that there is. Let's just color it. Let's go back onto the right side of our text and look at this. Right after "vayitz'ak tze'akah gedolah u'marah," right after Isav lets out his great and bitter cry what happens?

What happens is, after he cries, "vayomer Eisav b'libo," Isav says in his heart, "yikrivu yemei eivel avi," -- there's that same word -- soon the mourning for my father will come, i.e. my father will die and then I will kill Jakov, my brother. It's fascinating.

So in both cases you have a great and bitter cry followed by mourning. By the way, it's not just any old kind of mourning. Look over here on the left-hand side of the page and I want to show you something kind of interesting about this mourning, which Mordecai and his countrymen have experienced, in the times of the Megillah.

It's a very weird kind of mourning because normally when you mourn for somebody or when you mourn for something, what happens or what has happened? Someone has died, somebody has already died. Well, there's something weird about the mourning in the case of the Megillah. Which is that nobody has already died. The threat of death is not in the past as it normally is for mourning, it's actually in the future. Right? "Eivel gadol layehudim," they are preemptively mourning. They are worried that they are going to die in the future and now they're mourning.

Almost as if because maybe if we're all going to die, there's going to be like no one left to mourn us so we may as well start mourning now. But whatever the reason is, it's strange, it's strange, wouldn't you say, to mourn before the fact and to mourn a future event. But isn't it fascinating that if you go to our Jakov and Isav story, lo and behold, you have like almost exactly the same thing; mourning in the future.

Look at what Isav says, the anticipation of death, "yikrivu yemei eivel avi." In the future father is going to die and we're going to mourn him and then I'm going to kill my brother, Jakov.

So in both of these cases you have this, sort of, preemptive mourning which is really, really kind of odd. Again, this sort of buttresses the connection. It's like this isn't just a weird -- this isn't just like a one-time thing. It's not like the Sages just picked a certain piece of language out of the hat. "Vayiz'ak ze'akah gedolah u'marah." There's another connection here. There's this "eivel gadol layehudim" connection. There's this mourning connection.

Now, let's begin to fill in a little bit of the rest of the picture and I want to sort of do two things at once with you, to deepen or actually widen the connections textually, to show you that there are more connections and then begin to explore what the meaning of these connections might be. The Sages are talking about tit for tat, is there anything more that we can say about the meaning? Is there any way that we can sharpen the understanding that the Sages are trying to give us here?

Let me begin by widening the connections before deepening them. Widening them, I mean, in the sense of showing you more of them to sort of buttress the fact that this is real and then we're going to try and figure out what it might mean.

Let me show you something. Let's look at some verbs over here. We're going to put this in, let's call it, purple, a purple highlight. What happens? "Vatavonah na'arot Esther v'sarisehah vayagidu lah," here's Mordecai, he's outside this wrought iron gates at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, right, and he is in mourning and he's feeling terrible. So Esther hears about this, "vayagidu lah." So what happens is that the ladies in waiting for Esther come, "vayagidu lah," and they tell her about it. That's verb number one.

The next thing that happens is "vatit'chalchal hamalkah me'od," she trembles greatly. Let's put this in light red. And now, the next great verb is "vatishlach." Let's put that in purple, as well.

So the ladies in waiting tell her about Mordecai's misfortune, she then sends clothes. "Vatishlach begadim l'halbish et Mordechai," she sends clothes to Mordecai and then after that, the next great verb after "u'l'hasir sako mei'alav v'lo kibel," she's trying to get him to take off his sack clothes and he won't do it, but after she sends these clothes the next thing she does is this. Put this in purple, too.

"Vatikra Esther laHatach," Esther goes and she calls Hatach, one of her servants and instructs Hatach to do something and when she instructs Hatach to do something, what does she do? Here's our next verb, "vat'tzaveihu," she commands him. She commands him to find out about Mordecai. What it is, that Mordecai is up to. Why is he not wearing these clothes?

Now, let's just look at this for a moment. Let me just make sure I've got them all. Yeah. So you have a series of four verbs. Verb number one, "vayagidu," and they told her what was happening with Mordecai; verb number two, "vatishlach," and she goes and sends; verb number three, "vatikra," and she goes and calls; verb number four, and she issues this command.

So here's my question for you, can we see these verbs in the Jakov and Isav story and would they appear not just in the Jakov and Isav story, but would they appear in order and would they appear in order right after the yellow and the orange? So in other words, right after Isav lets out his great and bitter cry, right after "eivel gadol layehudim," right after the mourning in that story, might we have these verbs?

The crazy thing is we do. Let me show. This is crazy, just absolutely crazy. Let me show you what I'm talking about over here. I'm sorry, I think I left out one actually, hold on. Okay. So let me take you down over here. Here's our yellow, "vayitz'ak tze'akah gedolah u'marah," Isav lets out this great and bitter cry. Here is our other yellow, "vayeiv'k," he cries. Here is "yikrivu yemei eivel avi," that the mourning of my father is going to come. So after that, oh, fascinating, look at that. "Vayugad" -- let's put that in purple -- "vayugad l'Rivkah," and it was told to Rebecca what it was that Isav was up to. So put that in purple. "Vayugad l'Rivkah et divrei Eisav b'nah hagadol," she was told what was in Esau's heart and immediately after that, look at our next verb, "vatishlach," the same verb, in order.

So she sent and what does she do? "Vatikra," and she calls. The same verb, in order. She goes and she sends for Jakov and what does she do? She tells him Isav is trying to kill you and now, listen to me and then she issues a command. In Hebrew, there are verbs that can take the form of commands. "B'rach l'cha" is a command form of I'm commanding you to run away.

So what do you have? A, vayugad; B, vatishlach; C, vatikra and then a command following exactly the same thing over here, after our yellow, after our orange. Vayagidu, verb one; verb two, vatishlach; vatikra, following that a command. Okay, that's crazy. It's just crazy. It's there. Right? It's literally the same text happening.

So if we take all of that and we say so what does it mean, why? What's the meaning of that? So let's begin to read this through and begin to sort of understand this meaning. We're going to read through these five verses and see what it is the Sages suggest to us. What I want to do and sort of ask you to think about -- I wish I could see your comments.

(Irrelevant 00:35:51 - 00:37:23)

So back to this text. So what does this mean? So let's read through this again and let's see if we can understand what it might mean. Okay, let's go through this and see what we can find.

"U'Mordechai yada et kol asher na'asah," and Mordecai knew everything that happened, okay, "vayikra Mordechai et b'gadav," and he rips his clothes, "vayilbash sak va'eifer." Now, let's just understand, there is this genocidal decree that has just befallen Mordecai. Why is it that Mordecai does not mourn where everyone else mourns? After he lets out this great and bitter cry, what does he do? He's going to go and he's going to set himself up "ad lifnei sha'ar hamelech," he's going to come right up to the gates, "ki ein lavo el sha'ar hamelech bilevush sak," because he can't go into the "sha'ar hamelech bilevush sak," he can't actually go into the gates.

Now, think about what is his goal? His goal is actually to get word to Esther. Esther is his ace in the hole. If he could just let Esther know what's going on, he thinks, we can be saved, right. But the problem is he can't because he's wearing these clothes of mourning and you can't get all the way into the palace gates because they don't let you do that. You can't walk into the White House wearing rags. You have to be wearing a three-piece suit. So Mordecai leaves central Shushan where all the Jews are ensconced in their Jewish quarter wearing their rags and he actually comes right outside the wrought iron gates at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. He's the one guy in sack clothes and ashes.

Why's he doing that? He's sort of trying to get Esther's attention. Now, you might say, well, you know, what he couldn't do is -- there is an alternative, right? Dress up in a three-piece suit, pretend everything is okay and pretend that nothing has gone wrong. You're going to be the Jew who doesn't mourn and you're going to walk right into the palace and somehow get to try to encounter Esther and then sort of take here aside and tell her what's going on.

However, he does not do that. Instead, he stays in clothes that force him to remain outside the palace gates, which is risky. Because how is he even going to know Esther's going to see him. Esther does see him and sends clothes to him, but you don't even know that's going to happen.

Now, what does that remind you of in the Isav story? In the Jakov and Isav story, if you imagine Mordecai playing Jakov, Jakov also had a sort of challenge. He also wanted to get to a powerful person. The powerful person, in his case, wasn't a queen. The powerful person, in his case, was a father. A father who could bless him, who could make everything good. The same way that Esther can make everything good. But he has a challenge, right?

Which is, what clothes do I wear? There are clothes that'll get me into father and there are clothes that won't. The problem is the clothes that are going to get me into father are not truth telling clothes. Will I wear my brother's clothes, Esau's clothes and dress up like someone that I'm not? It's almost like that's Mordecai's challenge. Like, right now I'm in mourning and it's fascinating in a way. It's almost like there's an inverse story of Jakov and Isav happening here.

Which is to say, in the Jakov and Isav story, Jakov had this challenge how am I going to get into my father's place? The only way I can get into my father's place is to wear clothes that are better, nicer than my regular clothes and he does put them on.

In Mordecai's case it's the exact reverse. Mordecai has regular clothes and what does he wear? He actually wears worse clothes because the worse clothes reflect the truth of the situation. So it's almost like there's a kind of tikkun (rectification) going on here. That it's almost like the story is being redeemed on some level.

There is this threat -- this threat leftover from the Jakov and Isav story. How is Mordecai dealing with this threat centuries later? In a way, he has the same challenge as Jakov did, but he begins by doing the opposite thing. Rather than donning the beautiful, deceptive clothes that might get him into the palace, into the inner sanctum of his father, what is he doing instead? He is putting worse clothes on that don't even have a chance and kind of taking a risk and staying out and truth telling. Like, this is who I am, I am in mourning now. Can you see that mourning? What kind of mourning? The mourning that Isav once felt, I'm feeling that now.

Let's keep on reading.

Steven Geller, over here is posting on Facebook, a very interesting point which we should actually talk about. We are going to talk about it. The question is whether we'll have time to talk about it tonight. We have about 15 more minutes tonight. I think I'm going to go until about 8:10 Eastern Time or so. Steven wants to know, what was the transgression that led the Jews to deserve to be killed by Haman? Was it participating in the feast with the vessels from the Temple? If so, that connects to the feast made by Isaac by Jakov pretending to be Esau.

So Steven is wondering, isn't it interesting if we actually go and predict why it was that the Jews got into this story in the first place and talking about what the Sages say about that. So Steven we will get to your point. If you don't understand what Steven's talking about I'll get to it, but let's just wait for a second. I want to finish looking at this and then we'll actually back up towards the beginning of the Megillah and try to address Steven's issue of what happened, like, how come this happened, exactly, centuries later?

What was going on in the times of the Megillah that made this sort of happen. So Steven we will get there.

Anyway, let's continue. So here is Mordecai and it seems like he's on this sort of redemptive path. After he lets out this great and bitter cry, he comes right up to the palace gates of the king and everyone's feeling "eivel gadol layehudim," this great terrible -- this great sense of mourning, "tzom u'bechi u'mispeid" and what happens next?

"Vatavonah na'arot Esther v'sarisehah vayagidu lah," so along comes the "na'arot Esther," and they tell Esther what's been happening. If you think about that, what does that remind you of in the Jakov and Isav story? Telling a woman what's been happening regarding eivel, regarding mourning. Telling a woman what's been happening regarding mourning.

Well, let's go back over here in our Jakov and Isav story. Here is the mourning, "yikrivu yemei eivel avi." This is Isav speaking in his heart and saying the time will soon come when my father will die and I'm going to kill Jakov and all of a sudden, "vayugad l'Rivkah," a woman is told, right. In this case it's the mother. Here another woman is told, told about the mourning thing, but this time told that Jakov is in mourning. And what happens? "Vatitchalchal hamalkah me'od."

Now, this is fascinating. What does that remind you of? Who trembles greatly in the Jakov and Isav story? What does Esther's trembling remind you of? Come on boys and girls. Who trembles greatly in the Jakov and Isav story, you know. Facebook comments, talk to me. Who trembles greatly in the Jakov and Isav story? Esther trembles greatly. Who is she evoking? What trembling is she evoking?

Let's see if we can find it. Right over here. That is correct, Eitan Zerykier and Josh Shpayer and Eugene. Right, it is Yitzchak, it is Isaac and it's right over here. "Vayecherad Yitzchak charadah gedolah ad me'od." Let's turn that into red. Isaac trembles greatly when what happens? When he realizes he's been deceived. But here's the fascinating thing. What about Esther. Esther trembles greatly; the same -- well, not quite the same language, the me'od, the vatitchalchal is slightly different, but it's the same idea. She's trembling greatly, but fascinatingly Isaac trembled greatly when he realized he was deceived. Esther trembles greatly, but she's not deceived.

In a way, Mordecai had a chance to deceive here, didn't he? Had Mordecai worn beautiful clothes, had he not acknowledged the mourning that he was in fact in, he would have deceived her and then maybe if she'd been trembling like she would have realized that she was deceived, but in fact what is happening is a kind of redemptive kind of trembling. Rather than the first time around, in the Book of Genesis, where the protagonist trembles because they've been deceived, here the protagonist trembles because she's confronted with the terrible truth. Here is the person that she cares about that's in terrible mourning and she doesn't even know why and she's got to figure it out. So Esther's forced to figure out a terrible truth, rather than Isaac being forced to grapple with a terrible lie.

"Vatitchalchal hamalkah me'od," and now, what does she do? It's fascinating. "Vatishlach begadim l'halbish et Mordechai." Now, what, boys and girls, does that remind you of? A woman sends clothes to dress up Mordecai in better clothes. When else does a woman send clothes l'halbish. Let's actually just look at this. Let's turn this into a color. We'll turn this in text into purple. Look at that language, "vatishlach begadim l'halbish et Mordechai." When does a woman send clothes to dress up somebody that she loves, in the Jakov and Isav story? That too resonates, of course, but interestingly that resonates earlier in the story, right. Because all of this stuff, all of our resonance is now, look, they're all towards the end of the story.

Now, we're going back to the beginning of the story, almost as if Mordecai and Esther are buying themselves a chance to replay the beginning of the story. Look at the very beginning of the story. Rebecca, the girl, the woman, what did she do? She didn't know how her son is going to be able to get this blessing, so she gives him these beautiful clothes. Let's see if we could find it. Where is it? Where is it? Where is it? Here.

"Vatikach Rivkah et bigdei Eisav b'nah hagadol," she takes the beautiful clothes of Isav and now, look at this language over here, "vatalbeish et Yaakov b'nah hakatan." Let's just put this in our right color. You see how close that is. "Vatishlach begadim l'halbish et Mordechai." Esther is sending these clothes so that Mordecai can get dressed up in nice clothes, just like, once upon a time, Rebecca sent clothes to dress up Jakov and fatefully Jakov had a choice; do I accept those clothes or not?

Now, that choice ultimately becomes a choice about deception or not deception. Fascinatingly, Mordecai has the same choice also and to this I refer you back to our course on Aleph Beta, on Mishloach Manot Would You Confine. We just released it yesterday. What I argued is that right at this moment when Esther sent clothes to Mordecai, Mordecai has a choice; will he deceive or will he not deceive.

You see, because if he takes the clothes, what is he really saying? Esther doesn't know the truth. Esther's off in the palace. She's unaware. She doesn't see everyone mourning out there in Shushan.

That's a good point, Daniel Rice. We'll get to you in one second on your Facebook comments.

So Esther doesn't know what's happening in Shushan, she's ensconced in the palace. She doesn't even know there's a genocidal decree. All she sees is this one guy mourning and she doesn't even know that she's mourning. Why is she sending clothes to him? She's sending clothes to him because she's unaware.

If he's mourning, you don't go in a mourner's house and send somebody clothes. That's not a nice thing. They want to be in mourning. Why is she sending clothes?

She's sending clothes because she thinks that he is poor. She thinks that he is destitute so she's sending clothes. She's trying to get him to dress up nicely. She doesn't understand and now, Mordecai has a choice because he has to choose; do I accept those clothes or not accept the clothes. He's trying to provoke a conversation with her; a conversation in which he comes to understand the truth about him not wearing clothes because he's poor, but wearing clothes because I'm in mourning.

He needs to somehow communicate through his actions what has actually befallen the Jews. He need to get the word through to the palace so it is crucial for him not to accept those clothes. Because if he accepts the clothes, what is he saying? Thank you, Esther, I was poor very much. Thank you, I appreciate that I was local tragedy. He has to basically say, I'm taking your clothes, I'm throwing them in the dumpster, I am not poor, guess again. Which is exactly what he does.

He makes a fateful choice. A choice that is different than Jakov's choice. Jakov takes the clothes from his mother; Mordecai doesn't take the clothes from Esther. "V'lo kibel," he doesn't take the clothes and that changes everything. That sets the story on an arc in which, I believe, they have another chance to play the story. All of these resonances which we've seen; yellow, orange, red, purple -- right -- going to the end of the story; yellow, orange, red, purple all those things which take us to the end of the story. All of a sudden, we've reached the end of the story and now we have an act, a fateful act of Mordecai not accepting clothes.

What I want to suggest that's going to do is that's going to throw us back to the beginning of the story, to this moment in the story, to the moment when Rebecca sends clothes and now, what I'm going to show you next week is that as we continue to read this story of Esther 4, you are going to continue to see the resonances of the Jakov and Isav story. But it's almost like they've bought the chance, Jakov and Esau, to do this again.

I want to argue to you that there are four -- at least four acts in the Megillah and fascinatingly each of these four acts is a replay of the Jakov and Isav story. It's like the movie, Groundhog Day. It keeps on happening and until you can get it in exactly right. There are these four redemptive acts. You can read the entire -- what I want to suggest is the Sages weren't talking about one line, when they talk about "vayiz'ak ze'akah gedolah u'marah." They were talking about the entire book. The whole book. You can read it with reference to the Jakov and Isav story. The whole thing, in four acts. It's Groundhog Day.

What we've just seen, this stuff right over here, is act three, I want to show you. There's an act four, a final redemptive act. Maybe even an act five, we'll discuss that next week; acts four and five.

What I want to do now is take you into acts one and two for our -- well, we really, we don't have much time. We have five minutes left. Let me see if I can at least tease act one and it goes back to Steven Geller's question over here. Which is, what precipitated this? Why was it that the hatred of Isav lay dormant until the times of Mordecai and Esther specifically? What was happening in the times of

Mordecai and Esther which all of a sudden precipitates this Divine decree that no, now is the moment where the cry, the great and bitter cry of Isav is going to be echoed by Jakov? What happened?

So Steven suggests, back in this comment over here, he says, what was the transgression that led the Jews to deserve to be killed by Haman, was it perhaps participating in the feast with the vessels of the Temple? Was it perhaps -- and this is what the Sages say.

**Understanding the Midrashic Commentary on Purim**

The Sages say that it all started with the feast. That in the beginning of the story, Ahasuerus makes this huge party and everyone comes and it seems like the Sages argue that the vessels from the looted Temple, the First Temple, were actually used in that feast. It's not explicit in the text, but it's somewhat implied in the text and the Sages say that that was the case. So the Sages view, in the Midrash is that the participation in that feast was problematic.

Now, it's kind of interesting because there's a problematic feast in the Jakov and Isav story and that is the food which is coming to -- the food that is coming to Isaac via Jakov. So I want to kind of elaborate on this for a moment and see what we can find. Let me just take a quick look at your comments and see if there's anything that I can respond to in my last minutes, as I kind of take you back into the beginning of act one.

Yes, Eugene Nakdimon is correct. It's not peshuto shel mikra, even according to Rashi. That's true, it's not the simple meaning of the text, it's Midrash. What we would sort of want to find, if we can, really is the simple meaning of the text. In other words, that if the Sages are right about "vayiz'ak ze'akah gedolah u'marah" over here echoing this event, what was there in the simple meaning of the text, in Esther, which is provoking this sort of din in Shamayim, this sort of Heavenly calculus. What is making this happen? So it could be the vessels of the Temple, but the problem is that's not there in the text.

What is there in the text that seems to be provoking it? I'll put you that challenge on Facebook. What do you think is in the text that sort of provokes it? Let's see what we can find.

Yeah, Josh, I have to tell you the truth. Josh says as always I'm astonished at both the matanot connection -- and I think he's referring there to the videos that we had in Aleph Beta -- as well as the four verbs from tonight. Crazy, right? Those four verbs are crazy. Every time I think I've heard about it in the Megillah, there's a whole new angle. I have to tell you, I feel exactly the same way. It's like -- I want to tell you a quick story.

I was teaching the Megillah, recently. I was in Israel, I was teaching it at an advanced group of teachers and principal and one of the principals raises her hand and says didn't you write a book on the Megillah, The Queen You Thought You Knew, and I said, yeah. She said is this in the book, what you're teaching? I said no, no, no, this is all new stuff. I just came up with this last year and the book was written like three years ago, four years ago.

She says but you're saying that it's not in the book. So like why did you go -- you wrote a book on the

Book of Esther, why did you go back to Esther after you wrote the book? I kind of laughed to myself. It's like just because you write a book on something it doesn't mean you understand the whole thing, right.

That's the nature of Biblical text. It is so fascinating that you could go back to it and back to it and you could write five books on the Book of Esther. This is just mind-boggling what's there that you discover year after year after year that you wouldn't have even imagined.

So let me see what else you guys are saying. Eugene Nakdimon and I suggest the opposite. That the Jews participated in the feast of Ahasuerus was the equivalent of utilizing the vessels of the Temple. That's what the Sages meant.

Aha, interesting, okay. That eating in the feast was like they're eating the vessels of the Temple. Okay, kind of interesting.

So let's take a look at what Cath Darnell says. One Jew, Mordecai, disses Haman, so it’s the ultimate revenge to punish all Jews for the transgression of one. Yes, that's true, Cath, but I would ask you to wonder exactly what was it that was a method of dissing Haman? Do you find that interesting? What was it that one Jew did to dis Haman that sort of propelled all of this? Come on, boys and girls, what did he do? What did that one Jew do and what resonance does that hold to you from the Jakov and Isav story? What does it remind you of in the Jakov and Isav story that great offense that Mordecai did?

I'm waiting to see if anybody hits it on the comments. I'll give you five more seconds, guys, because I think I've got a bit of a delay with you. What was the thing that Mordecai didn't do that reminds you of something in the text of Genesis 27? That is correct, Seth Kosowsky (ph) and Eitan Zerykier. Mordecai doesn't bow. Why would that be such a big deal?

Well, boys and girls, let's take a look at Genesis 27. What was the blessing? What's the whole fight about? It's not just about sustenance, the manna or the mahn. What's supposed to happen to the manna? Look at this, "ya'avducha amim," let nations serve you, "v'yishtachavu l'cha l'umim," and let nations bow to you. That was the blessing. Nations would bow to you. "Hevei g'vir l'achecha," you're going to be above your brother, "v'yishtachavu l'cha bnei imecha," and your mother's children are going to bow to you. Your brother is going to bow to you.

Now, if there's a descendent of Esau, generations later, that thinks that that blessing was stolen and thinks that Isav was the legitimate recipient of that blessing and thinks that Isav should have been the one to whom this blessing went -- the blessing that your mother's children, your brother, will bow to you, then what happens when a child of Jakov, called Mordecai, doesn't bow? He's violating the terms. He's violating the blessing. All of a sudden, the anger of Haman, the anger of Amalek, the smoldering rage like an ember bursts into flame. It's like I've got to kill everybody.

So that's one piece of the puzzle, but that's not the whole piece of the puzzle. There's other stuff going on in the Megillah that actually reminds us of events that took place back in Genesis 27; a whole kaleidoscope of events. So let me give you a challenge. The challenge I want to give you is for next week. We're going to come back for webinar number two next week and I've shown you act three, in the story. There's an act one and there's an act two before this, earlier in the Megillah. Can you figure out what some of the elements of act one and act two are? What are the events that precipitate this?

What was happening in Shushan? What's happening with Mordecai? What's happening with Esther? What happened between them?

By the way, with respect to this, watch the Aleph Beta presentation which we've put together. It's a lot of fun. [Our presentation on Mishloach Manot, the animated series](https://www.alephbeta.org/playlist/mishloach-manot-matanot-laevyonim). We just put it up last week, take a look at it, tell your friends about it, send out word.

Look at that, what was happening that Mishloach Manot over there that Mordecai sent to Esther which is in the beauty contest, in the palace, in the king's harem. That's a piece of the story too. How does that relate to the story of Jakov and Esau?

Read through the beginning of the Megillah with the story of Jakov and Isav in mind and ask yourself what is happening in the times of the Megillah that precipitates all this? See if you can gather the threads, see if you can pull them together and I'll come back with you next week.

We're going to close the official part of the webinar here. What I am going to do is spend just a moment scrolling through these questions and see if I can answer any of them.

Daniel Reit (ph) says can you please post this document with the color coding for us to use in the meantime when we prepare for next week? Absolutely, Daniel. So I am going to post that for you. I've actually conveniently put together act one, act two, act three just the text without the outlines, but you can at least see what we've done over here, so we will post that and we will hopefully get that out to you -- hopefully tomorrow, we're going to have our people at Aleph Beta try to put that up for you. So Daniel, we will do that.

Let me see what else we've got over here. Okay, so Daniel, you're actually anticipating part of this. I wouldn't begin to give away the store. Look at this comment by Daniel, that not only does Rebecca give clothes to Jakov, back in Genesis 27, she also gives food to him; think about that going back in the text and see if we can find anything there.

Any other comments from you guys? Okay, I think that's pretty good. All right boys and girls, so I'm going to bow out now.

Come back next week, look at your homework, see what you can find and watch our Aleph Beta video on Purim. In the meantime, we will post this. This is recorded. Tell your friends you can hear this recorded. Come back and see us next week. We will see you then.

Thanks very much and until then have a good week, to the rest of you. This is David Fohrman signing out.

Welcome back. This is David Fohrman. We're here. I'm here with you today and we are a day and change away from Purim. This is Part 2 of a webinar that I began with you this last week, same time, same channel.

We were talking about resonances of the Jakov and Isav story in the Book of Esther and what it is that we might make of that. By the way, in terms of that, you might think of the famous Purim song, Shoshanat Ya'akov tzahalah v'sameichah, and if you think about that in light of the kind of resonances which we had seen last week, I think it's particularly interesting. I have a daughter Shoshana who actually spent some time thinking about this last year. The song kind of resonates with her name, Shoshana.

Shoshanat Ya'akov might be seen as a play on the idea of Susa, as if to say there was a Jakov in Susa or a descendant of Jakov in Susa, and that descendant of Jakov in Susa experiences tzahalah v'sameichah, experiences great hope and great joy, which is the language of the Book of Esther that describes the Jews' anticipation of a possible victory in the war.

It says, birotam yachad techeilet Mordechai, when they saw together the techeilet of Mordecai, they saw the clothes of Mordecai, the special clothes of Mordecai, they were thrilled. This, of course, is a reference to the very end of the Book of Esther, after the death of Haman. So after the death of Haman, you have that moment where -- and I talked about this in my book, The Queen You Thought You Knew -- where strangely before the war, but after the death of Haman, the Jews are celebrating in the streets.

It seems like the strangest of things because there's nothing to celebrate yet. There's a war coming and you don't know whether you're going to win or not. So, who celebrates before that?

The argument that I made in the book is that the celebration was itself a PR. It was a PR game almost. It was a way of trying to convince folks or try to at least bluff people into believing that the palace was on the side of the Jews, to bluff the lieutenant governors and all the local militias and all that and to see that they were on the side of the Jews.

What happens is, the entire Jewish Quarter of the old city comes out rejoicing in this parade and Mordecai is parading through the streets wearing these beautiful clothes. "Teshu'atam hayitah lanetzach," their salvation was forever.

In light of the resonances we have in the Jakov and Isav story, the song Shoshanat Ya'akov seems to be suggesting that there was a dramatic replay of the Jakov story. Later on, centuries later, in the times of Mordecai and Haman, it was as if the Jakov story was being replayed, but this time, "teshu'atam hayitah lanetzach," this time the salvation would be forever. The salvation of Jakov was short-lived.

He always had to worry about Isav looking over his shoulder. He always had to worry about someone hunting him down. First Eliphaz, in the words of the Midrash, but then others, and then there's Isav who, 20 years later, Jakov's still afraid of him. However, there's another moment, a moment when somehow the story of Jakov and Isav is put to bed forever, perhaps. "Teshu'atam hayitah lanetzach," the salvation in the times of Mordecai and Esther.

I think we began to see something of it and what I would like to explore with you tonight is why it should be that "teshu'atam hayitah lanetzach," why it should be that this salvation upon seeing the clothes of Mordecai should last forever. Of course, seeing the royal clothes of Mordecai in a, kind of, bluff is something that's very reminiscent of the story of Jakov and Esau. Right? That's what Jakov does when he is wearing the special clothes, the clothes of his brother in the, kind of, bluff.

Maybe there's a difference between a kosher bluff and a not-so-kosher bluff. Somehow the bluff that takes place in the time of Mordecai is perhaps one of the kosher varieties.

So we'll talk about this a little bit -- perhaps later, but what I want to do is briefly take stock of what it is that we saw last week. Or maybe, I'll think what we'll do is, I'll kind of rely upon you having seen the webinar last week. If you haven't seen it, I think what I'll do is the following.

Kind of, last week what I did, was I began to show you what seemed like an unmistakable series of parallels between the story of Mordecai and Esther, beginning in Chapter 4, and the story of Jakov and Esau. I don't think that we talked that much about what the meaning of the parallels are. We just showed that they were there.

We suggested that we could perhaps find the larger story, the rest of the parallels, and then, sort of, try to define the meaning -- define the meaning from them, and that's what we're going to do today.

I suggested to you that there were various chapters in the story, that Perek Dalet or Chapter 4 of the Book of Esther is -- are various acts in this story. I suggested to you that Chapter 4 of the Book of Esther is actually Act 3 in the story. But there's an Act 1, there's and Act 2, there's an Act 3, there's at least an Act 4, maybe an Act 5.

My thesis is, and I haven't completely worked this through but I've seen enough to believe that this is true, that the entire Book of Esther can be read with reference to the Jakov and Isav story. Almost like this, sort of, repeating story. The analogy, for those of you see films, is Groundhog Day. Right?

Groundhog Day is that film where you get stuck in a day and you just have got to replay it over and over and over again until you finally get it right.

It's almost like that's happening now. It's like Mordecai and Esther are stuck in this day. The day of Jakov and Isav and Isaac, back with the blessing, and somehow, they've got to replay it over and over and over again in different ways, shapes, and forms, until everyone gets it right and they can finally put the ghosts of that story to bed.

I suggested last week that the -- let me just grab my coffee over here. Okay. I do have, by the way, my daughter, Shalva, who's in attendance off camera. She insisted, but she's right over there. You guys can't see her but she's listening and, Shalva, it's great to have an actual audience for this. This is really fantastic.

Anyway, so let me come back with you into this. The resonance that, sort of, starts it off, the corner piece over here, is something that Chazal say, something the Sages in the Midrash, in Esther Rabbah.

Let me show you my screen over here and I'll bring you back into this document. You can, kind of, see what we're talking about here. Okay. So hopefully, you can see this screen. Let us move everything around and make this a little bit bigger for you.

Okay. So here's what I want to show you, over here. I'm going to move this over just a tad. Okay.

This is where we start our story, right? The story that the Sages tell us begins -- Shalva, could you just close that door over there? We can turn off Imu. Imu, have a very happy evening. Regards from our webinar. Would you like to say hi to all of our webinar people? This is Imu Shalev. Imu, give us a rousing hello.

Imu Shalev: I just walked in onto -- I walked into a webinar? Rabbi Fohrman: You walked right into a webinar.

Imu Shalev: Rousing hello, everyone.

Rabbi Fohrman: It's a rousing hello. Imu, come say hi in your jacket. This is Imu. Imu Shalev: Hello, everyone.

Rabbi Fohrman: All right. Anyway. This is Imu. Imu, a very happy evening to you. Imu Shalev: Enjoy.

Rabbi Fohrman: See you.

Okay, so we began with "vayizak ze'akah gedolah u'marah," you see it right over here. Yeah, if you could just close that door, that'll be fantastic. "Vayizak ze'akah gedolah u'marah," Mordecai lets out this great and bitter cry and Chazal suggest, the Sages of the Midrash say, that that echoes a great and bitter cry in the times of Jakov and Esau. This is the great and bitter cry that Isav screamed out when he realized that he had been deceived.

The Sages derive from here that anybody who says that God is a vatran, that God just lets things slide, doesn't know what he's talking about. It took centuries, but there would be a payback for Esau's tears. It happened in the times of Mordecai and Esther.

Interestingly, in the times of Esau, Isav pledges that he is eventually going to kill Jakov for this deception, "yikrivu yemei eivel avi" soon the times of my father's death will come. Mourning will come.

I'll show you where that is, right over here, in that text. Here's the "vayizak tze'akah gedolah u'marah," of Isav followed by his lifting up his voice and crying. Here's where he says "yikrivu yemei eivel avi," soon my father's death will come, "v'ahargah et Ya'akov achi," and I'll kill my brother Jakov. He never does it, though.

Enter the Sages and they say that he's going to do it in the times of Mordecai and Esther. Doing it in the times of Jakov, doing away with Jakov would mean doing away with one person. But doing away with Jakov during the times of Mordecai and Esther means doing away with every man, woman, and child. A complete genocide, not even leaving one survivor, which is, essentially, the intent of Haman. This actually is the intent of Haman.

The Sages see in this an astounding thing. If you really actually stand back and take stock of what it is that the Sages are saying, they're saying that, seemingly, what gives Amalek and Haman the chance to even get as far as they do in legislating a genocidal decree that would destroy every man, woman, and child, is a kind of payback going back centuries to the moment when Isav was tricked.

There would come a time when there'd be a descendant of Esau. Of course, Esau's grandchild is Amalek, Amalek's descendant is Agag, Agag's descendant is Haman. There would come a time when Haman, a descendant of Esau, would now threaten a descendant of Jakov and would invoke another "vayizak tze'akah gedolah u'marah," another great and bitter cry on the part of Mordecai.

What I began to show you last week is that what the Sages are talking about here is not a lone connection, but a whole bunch of other connections. They all, kind of, flow from this. If you look here at this document, if you look at all of these colors, this is what we talked about last week, all of these various connections.

So, we're going to back to these, but we're going to get back to it in the context of meaning. What's the meaning of all of these connections? How is it that we understand that?

In order to do that, what I want to do -- the strategy I want to undertake with you tonight, for the balance of the time that we have together, is to try to retell this story to you. So this is a challenging approach, but here's our game plan. Listen up. Shalva, listen up. Here's our game plan. You're ready? Here's what we're going to do.

What we're going to do is we're going to try to retell the story of Act 1, Act 2, Act 3, and Act 4. Actually, read the Book of Esther now with reference to the Jakov and Isav story. The way we're going to do it is I'm going to, sort of, try to uncover the textual resonances, then we'll try to reflect on their meaning in real time, and see if we can, sort of, use the Jakov and Isav story as a kind of commentary, a running commentary, on the Book of Esther.

That is going to be the plan. Let's see if we can do it. Let's see if I can get my notes together and we'll see what we can find here.

Okay. Let me take you into what I think is Act 1. I want to argue that Act 1 takes place in Chapter 2. Let me show you the text. In Chapter 2, just to set the scene, the king has deposed his wife Vashti. No queen. King doesn't like having no queen so he organizes a beauty contest through which he hopes to get another queen. He's going to get Esther. He doesn't know he's going to get Esther, but he hopes that he's going to Esther.

Actually, you know, while we're at it, before we get to Act 1, let me show you the prologue to Act 1. The prologue to Act 1 is actually at the end of Chapter 1. Some of you guys, by the way, I think, mentioned this in your Facebook comments. We had some comments on Facebook last week about this.

Ah, look. I didn't even put Chapter 1 over here, so we don't have it here on the screen, but let me see if I can show it to you. I'll just quote it.

At the very end of Chapter 1, here's what happens. There's a fellow by the name of Memucan, right? The fellow by the name of Memucan comes and he is the one that has this idea that there's going to be this great beauty contest. King, this is how you're going to find a replacement queen.

The language that Memucan, who the Sages, by the way, identify as Haman just going by a different name, the language that he used is that we've deposed Vashti and now "malchutah yitein hamelech lirutah hatovah mimenah," the king is going to give her queenship, which is to say, Vashti, "lir'utah hatovah mimenah," to her rei'ah, to her fellow that is greater than she.

Now, the Sages in the Midrash play our favorite game of, where have we heard these words before? They come up with actually an amazing connection, because there is another time when that language is actually used in the Book of Esther.

I am actually going to put it out to you guys over there on Facebook. We'll put it out to Shalva, who is right over here, off camera, and we will ask you, Shalva, if you know the other moment in the Hebrew Bible where you have another piece of language that resembles this. Where else in the Hebrew Bible do we have someone saying something that sounds like "u'malchutah yitein hamelech lirutah hatovah mimenah," that her queenship is going to be given to her fellow that is greater than she.

So all you guys out there -- and, by the way, my wife -- thank you, Rina, for coming -- has just shown up. She's also off camera. So we have Shalva and Rina here in the audience. So, guys over there on Facebook, I'm asking you, in your comments, where else do we have kingship given to your colleague that is greater than you? Write in if you know. I'm giving you guys ten seconds out there on Facebook. See if you can come up with the answer.

Tick tock, tick tock.

Rina Fohrman: Is it Saul?

Rabbi Fohrman: Yes, but, Rina, you can't just tell everyone. If you tell everyone, then it's no fun for everyone else, but -- Rina Fohrman: I'm sorry.

Rabbi Fohrman: It's okay. But, Shalva, we can let you give the answer if you like. Let's see. All right, guys. Anybody? So the answer is -- Shalva, what's your answer? Oh, you don't want to say.

Okay. well, the answer actually is, it happened in the times of Saul. By the way, it's just in this last week's haftarah. In this last week's haftarah, you have this moment where Saul meets his demise. It is this moment where he is making war against Amalek and he spares the king, a fellow by the name of Agag, who the Book of Esther identifies as the ancestor of Haman Ha'Agagi, Haman the Agagite.

Samuel says to Saul that because you allowed Agag to live in defiance of God's word, "kara Hashem et mamlechut Yisrael mei'alecha," God has torn away the kingship from you "u'netanah," and has given it "l'rei'acha hatov mimeka," to your colleague who is greater than you, who ends being King David.

The Sages pick up on this and say something fascinating. They say, anybody who says that God doesn't give second chances doesn't know what they're talking about, because with the same language that the kingship was taken away from Saul, it was given back to his descendant. The Sages identify Saul, who, of course, hails from the tribe of Benjamin, as an ancestor of Esther. They say that with the same language that the kingship was taken away from Saul, it was given back to Esther, who becomes queen.

She becomes queen and has herself a mission. What's the mission? To finish the failed job, the unfinished job of Saul. He is going to be the one who is going to prosecute a war against Agag to try and finish the job against Amalek.

Of course, the irony of all of this, is that who is the guy who says this in the Book of Esther? It's Memucan. Who is Memucan? The Sages say it's Haman. So, ironically, Haman is the one who in the words of the Book of Esther evokes that language of Samuel and, unknowingly to him, puts in place a beauty contest from which Esther, his nemesis, will arise to finish the job against him.

Once you see this, you understand, of course, why it is throughout the Book of Esther that even when the Jews prosecute the war against their enemies, "u'babizah lo shalchu et yadam," they never take any booty, they never pillage any booty. Because, of course, why was it that Saul failed? Not just because he kept alive Agag, but because he also took from the shalal, he took from the booty of Amalek.

So this is kind of the beginning. I just want you to reflect on this. I believe this is the beginning of the resonances in the Book of Esther of the previous Jakov and Isav story or the previous Amalek story. If you just put into relief these two Chazal, these two comments of the Sages that we talked about, it really is quite fascinating what it is that you have here.

What you have really is the Sages, sort of, looking at the connections and saying almost two opposite things. Right? What do they say about "vayizak tze'akah gedolah u'marah," the great and bitter cry that

Isav lets out, which is evoked later by the great and bitter cry of Mordecai?

They say that God is a very stern God and a very just God and anybody who says that God just lets things slide, doesn't know what he's talking about. That's one, sort of, extreme in this story. God isn't Someone Who lets things slide. God is a just God and justice may take centuries, but there was payback for those tears of Esau.

Then, in almost the same breath, along come the Sages and, in identifying the beginning of these replays of the Jakov and Isav story or of the Amalek story in the Book of Esther, comes along and say almost the opposite thing, which is, anybody who says God doesn't give second chances, doesn't know what he's talking about. You put those two together, there is justice, justice can sometimes take a long time, but there's also compassion. The compassion is that you get a chance for a second chance. You get a chance to replay the story.

The greatest kindness of God is the ability to be able to get another crack at the bat centuries later, and to be able to make right what wasn't made right in previous generations. Therefore, the story of the Book of Esther is not just the story of payback, it's also the story of opportunity. It's the story of Esther to make right what happened before, what happened before with Agag, but by implication also what happened before, going all the way back to Jakov and Esau.

So the very first beginning of these replays is going to be at the end of Chapter 1, "u'malchutah yitein hamelech lirutah hatovah mimenah." We're going to call that the prologue. Okay?

Let's move to Act 1, what I want to argue to you in Act 1. Act 1, I'm going to argue, takes place in Chapter 2, Verse 9. Chapter 2, Verse 9 is right over here and this is really the beginning of -- we're just going to turn this into green or something -- the beginning of this year's Purim course which we put out here in Aleph Beta. I think we call it The Hidden Story of Mishloach Manot.

In that story, I made the argument to you, and you can go back and you can watch the videos, but the argument that I made to you there was that the language of the text over here in Chapter 2, Verse 9, suggests that there was an antecedent to the idea of "mishlo'ach manot ish l'rei'eihu" in the Book of Esther and mishlo'ach manot (the sending of gifts) first happens when Esther receives a little gift in the palace.

She is in the beauty contest. She's in the harem. It's a disastrous moment. Her life seems like it's over. She's crying herself to sleep every night, for all we know. She's one of 10,000 women whose lives are irrevocably changed, who are going to be in the harem and are never going to get out. The chances that she's going to be chosen queen are next to nil.

All of the sudden, here's this moment where, "vayevahel et tamruke'ah v'et manote'ah lateit lah," where all of the sudden she opens up her perfumes and inside the perfumes there are these gifts, there are these chocolate chip cookies.

If you add up the references, it almost sounds like the mitzvah (commandment) in Chapter 9 of "mishlo'ach manot ish l'rei'eihu," is a coded reference to the first example of "mishlo'ach manot ish l'rei'eihu." The gifts are right over here, that "manote'ah lateit lah."

Here is Hegai delivering gifts. Who are the gifts going to? The gifts are going to Esther. Who is Esther? Esther is the fellow, "lirutah hatovah mimenah," she is the colleague greater than you. Later on in the Book of Esther, you give "mishlo'ach manot ish l'rei'eihu." why? Because the very first gifts were given to a fellow, were given to Esther, who's known as the fellow. Who were they given by? They were given by Mordecai. They were sent by Moredecai.

Now, if you think about this moment over here -- and let me challenge you guys out in Facebook, in Facebook land, if you guys are out there. In Chapter 2, Verse 9, what does this remind you of, if anything, in the Jakov and Isav story? Right? This moment. This moment when Mordecai, wrapped inside these perfumes, somehow manages to smuggle in, through Hegai, by messenger, these foodstuffs that he is giving to Esther. This little gift to Esther.

So how does that remind you or does it remind of anything that happened in the Jakov and Isav story? What do you say guys? What do you say folks out there in Facebook land? Does this remind you of anything in the Jakov and Isav story? We'll give you 10 seconds to meditate upon that, and if you want you can add your voice to the comments over here. It only takes longer than 10 seconds to type up a comment, but we'll give you thoughts over here. I've lost one of my participants, one of my live participants over here. Okay. Yes, so as Adam Israel Bernavsky (ph) says, that is correct. Because the story of Jakov and Isav also involves the meat.

Remember, there was this food that was supposed to go -- yes, I think it is, the bringing in the meat to Isaac. There was this food that was supposed to go to Isaac and all of a sudden there is this gift, and a gift from who? It's a gift from parent to child, right. That's what happens. Rebecca says, here, take this meat, and gives the meat to Jakov. What happens? In our story there's also a gift from parent to child of food. The gift over here is an adoptive parent. It's Mordechai who brings in and is like a father to Esther. It says "v'lakach lo l'bat," he takes her in as if his very own child. So Esther's like a daughter and her parent gives this gift of foodstuffs to Esther.

Not only does he give that gift of foodstuffs to Esther, if you notice something there's a particularly interesting quality of these foodstuffs, which is that it sounds like they came wrapped in perfumes. Of course, that's because the perfumes was what all the girls were supposed to get, and here Mordechai smuggles in seemingly inside the perfume these manot, these little foodstuffs. If you think about perfumes, there's this drenching, overwhelming smell right. So if you think about that, that also reminds you of something. Food that goes along with perfume designed to change your smell so that you smell different. Well, what does that remind you of in the Jakov and Isav story? Remember what happens in that story. Not only does -- that's right.

Not only does Jakov have his food from mom, but he's got something else from his mom. He's got clothes from mom. What do those clothes do? Those clothes don't just change his texture. They change his smell. Because remember when Jakov draws -- excuse me, Isaac draws Jakov close, he smells him and says, "rei'ach beni k'rei'ach hasadeh asher beircho Hashem," the smell of your clothes is so beautiful. It's the smell that he wants to smell, and here are these perfumes coming from the palace are the smells that the king wants to smell, together with this food. So, smell designed to disguise together with food.

Finally, there's something else going on over here. Look at the very next verse. Look at Verse 10. What does this remind you of in the Jakov and Isav story? You can comment on Facebook if you want, but let's turn this into yellow if we can. "Vayevahal et tamrukeha v'et manoteha lah," immediately after Jakov goes -- excuse me, Mordechai goes and gives these foodstuffs to Esther. It seems like inside those manot -- and I made this argument in the course -- that inside those manot there's this little note. The note tells Esther what she learns in Verse 10. "Lo higidah Esther et amah v'et molad'tah ki Mordechai tzivah aleha asher lo tagid." Esther never told her birthplace and where she came from because Mordechai had commanded her not to say anything. Well, what does that remind you of in the Jakov and Isav story, boys and girls? Anybody?

Well, right along with the meat that Rebecca gave to Jakov, what else did Jakov sort of understand from that situation? Now, whether Rebecca commands it or not is unclear, but if you take a look, here -- let's actually go down into the Jakov and Isav story. What ends up happening is here is a girl who's not being upfront about who she is and where she comes from. Of course, Jakov is going to go and take these foodstuffs from parent and he's also going not be upfront about who he is and where he belongs. He's worried that that's information that will get him into trouble right. So here's Esther who's worried about this information -- not to reveal his identity, as Adam Israel Bernavsky says, and both Esther and Jakov are worried about revealing their identity.

So it sounds like if you add that all up, this is kind of the beginning of the replay. It's that here's this moment in history where there's a parent giving a child food. Food together with this perfume that makes you smell differently than you did before, together with this kind of indication that you're not supposed to tell where you're from --and this language over here "ki Mordechai tzivah aleha asher lo tagid," Mordechai had commanded her not to tell. Look how much that resonates in the Jakov and Isav story. Let me take you into the Jakov and Isav story for a second. Listen to this. Here.

"Rivkah amrah el Yaakov banah," I'm just reading from right over here. Rebecca says to Jakov, I overheard your father, and your father wants food and now listen to my voice. "la'asher ani m'tzaveh otach," to that which I am commanding you. Fascinating. She issues this command, "leich na el hatzon," go do this and this is what I want you do. Here is Mordechai, the parent who's also issuing this command and the commands are eerily similar.

What's happening is that there's this nascent deception story which is being set up, and it seems like this is one brick in the puzzle. The way I would interpret this if there was this decree in the heavenly books, that Esau's tears would be repaid, that there would come a moment when Isav would win the right to inflict pain upon the children of Jakov in such a way that they would cry out with a great and bitter cry, what else would be the catalyst of that? Why did it take so long? Why is it happening?

The catalyst would be when a parent once more would give a child things, would give a child food and there would be this perfume and there would be this change in smell and there would be this command from parent to child and child would understand that I'm not going to reveal my identity. All that sort of comes together.

I also want to point something out here, which is that there's a kind of subtlety here, in both stories, in the story of Jakov and in the story of Esther.

Here I refer you to a course that I did which you can find on Aleph Beta called Jakov man of truth. In that course -- I think I also actually produced a video on it, a kind of review of Rebecca's lawyer. I forgot exactly what we named the course, but we put it out in the fall. Basically, I made the argument you can sort of defend Rebecca's position in the story of Jakov and Esau, kind of along the following.

I made the argument that it may not have been that the deception, in the case of Jakov and Esau, was with malice and forethought. It wasn't first-degree deception. It wasn't something that was this bald- faced thing, go in and deceive your father. It was much more subtle than that. If you look carefully, in the beginning it didn't even seem like there was a plan to deceive. All that Rebecca actually says, if you actually pay attention to the text, is go in and go to your father and you present your father with food, and you go get that blessing. That's almost like you can do it. it doesn't mean deceive him. It just means go present yourself. You say, hey -- in affect what's he going to do? He's going to say, I'm Jakov. I heard you say to my brother, go fetch me food. I can bring you food, too. I'd like to make a claim on this blessing. Could you bless me? That's what really Rebecca is saying.

Jakov sort of comes back and says, no, I'm going to seem as if I'm deceiving him. Seem as if I'm deceiving him, not really deceiving him. I'll seem as if I'm deceiving him. He's going to touch me. He's going to feel me. He's going to feel I'm smooth and my skin is smooth. He's going to say, Jakov, come on, one act of getting you food doesn't change you. You're still the same Jakov I always know. Forget it. Let's wait until Isav comes back. I'll give him the blessing. To which his mother says, well, clothes make the man. If you wear these, if you're so worried about your smooth skin, so wear these clothes, but she still never says deceive him. It's almost like she's trying to scaffold for him. She's trying to get him to go and kind of present himself and stand up in his britches and make this argument and make this claim for this blessing, but Jakov swore to -- just can't do it. When he finally gets in front of his father, the words just come out of his mouth.

This is the argument which I made. It's actually made originally by a rebbi of mine, Rav Kook in Baltimore, ninth grade rebbi in mechinah of Ner Israel. He basically said that if you look carefully, Jakov's the first one who deceives. It wasn't even with malice and forethought. It was just -- the words just blurt out of his mouth. Who are you? He says, "anochi Eisav b'chorecha," I'm Esau. It's like the clothes overtake him and his sense of self is so weak that all he can do is say, I don't know. I'm Esau. At that point, it's downhill from there.

Something like that may well be happening in the story. Again, I refer you back to our course this year, with mishloach manot. In that course I argue to you that there's this similar slippery slope towards deception, which also wasn't malice and forethought. It was really - it just sort of happened.

Because in the beginning, remember, when Esther is in the harem, and when Mordechai comes to her and says, you don't have to tell everybody you're a Jew -- what does that really mean, you don't have to tell everybody you're a Jew? It doesn't mean that you're supposed to deceive anybody. That wasn't the point. The point is of course you're never going to be chosen queen. Nobody thinks you're ever going to be chosen queen. It's just make life easy for yourself in the palace. You don't have to be such a hero and broadcast to everybody who you are. It wasn't like you're going to deceive the king. You're going to be in the harem for the rest of your life. So you just don't have to advertise who you are.

Never in a million years is Mordechai thinking that if you get chosen queen, you should never tell the king who you are. Of course, the king on the second day is going to say, oh you know, what, their accent. Where is it from? What happens is that Esther just keeps on going with Mordechai's decree that sort of outlived its usefulness, but Esther just keeps on going with that decree. She sort of gets herself into this situation where she's being deceptive with the king. So it's really a very similar story. The question is in both stories. Can the protagonists pull themselves out of the position into which they've gotten themselves?

Anyways, I'm getting ahead of myself. Act 1, I want to suggest, is this of antecedent to the genocidal decree of Haman, the antecedent to the moment where Isav will come back with a fury and demand the demise of all the Jews, is this moment where something has happened to evoke the story. There is a parent giving food to a child with smell that disguises him and there is this sense that you don't have to tell everybody who you are. That is the beginning of Act 1. What happens next?

The next thing that happens is the beginning of Chapter 3. Look at the beginning of Chapter 3. Fascinating. "Achar had'varim ha'eileh," after these things, "gidal hamelech Achashverosh et Haman ben Hamdata Ha'agagi vay'naseihu." The king elevated Haman and caused him to be elevated.

The reason why I'm struggling so much with translating is because it really is weird. It just seems redundant -- "gidal hamelech Achashverosh et Haman... vay'naseihu." How would you even translate this? Gidal hamelech, it's just the wrong way to say it. "Achar had'varim ha'eileh gidal hamelech Achashverosh et Haman," the king made great Haman. Vay'naseihu, and elevated him, but it's just a blatant redundancy. "Vayasem et kiso mei'al kal hasarim asher ito," and made his throne higher than any of the other advisors.

Why do we have to have all of that language? What's that gidal hamelech? That's strange language. You wouldn't say "gidal hamelech Achashverosh." It sort of has that image of -- what is he, a Macy's float on the parade that you just blow them up and blow them up and gets bigger and bigger and bigger? What is that, that the king made Haman bigger? It evokes this image of literally puffing up Haman and making him bigger and bigger. It wouldn't have been so terrible if it had just said vay'naseihu, that he elevated him. Why do I have to hear gidal?

Well, boys and girls, that language also evokes something in the story of Jakov and Esau. What does that evoke in the story of Jakov and Esau? That specific language of "gidal hamelech Achashverosh et Haman." Where do you have Gimmel-Daled-Lamed in the Jakov and Isav story?

Well, let's read the beginning of the story. "Vayehi ki zakein Yitzchak." It happens when Isaac was old, "vatich'hena einav marot," and he couldn't see so well. "Vayikra et Eisav," he calls to Esau, b'no hagadol, his older son.

By the way just so you know gadol there is spelled choser, which is to say without the Vav. So it's Gimmel-Daled-Lamed, the same way that you spell it right over here. So let's put this in pink, b'no hagadol. So Isav is b'no hagadaol over here. What is the king doing? The king is elevating, we're making great Haman and there we have gidal, "gidal Hamelech Achashverosh et Haman." Haman is made great.

Now, what's particularly remarkable about this is why exactly is Haman, this child of Esau, made great when Isaac is calling Isav b'no hagadol? Well, let's looks at the event that immediately proceeds this in Chapter 3. What's the last event that happens in Chapter 2? The last event that happens in Chapter 2 is the attempted assassination of the king, by Bigthan and Teresh. Let's read it over here.

"Bayamim haheim," in those days, "u'Mordechai yosheiv b'sha'ar hamelech," when Mordecai sat in the gates of the king, "katzaf Bigtan v'Teresh shnei sarisei hamelech," there were these two interlopers, "mishom'rei hasaf," from the king's guard, "vayivakshu lishlo'ach yad," they wanted to assassinate the king. "Vayivada hadavar l'Mordechai," Mordecai finds out about this, "vayageid l'Esther Hamalkah," and he gets word over to Esther, Esther tells the king. "Vayevukash hadavar vayimatzei," it's all found out, "vayitalu shneihem al eitz," and they are killed, "vayikateiv b'sefer divrei hayamim lifnei hamelech," and it's remembered.

Now, if that's the last thing that happened in Chapter 2, isn't Chapter 3 a little strange? I mean, if you were reading the Megillah and you didn't know Chapter 3 and somebody said to you okay, so the last event that happens is there's this assassination plot and the king is that close from dying. He's like really going to die, but Mordecai scoops in, in an amazing act of loyalty, saves the day and not only does he save the day, but he tells the queen and the queen tells the king b'sheim Mordechai, in the name of Mordecai. So the king knows who is benefactor is. The benefactor is Mordecai.

That's the last story and then in the next chapter, the next thing that's going to happen is that the king is going to take one of his servants and he's going to elevate him above all of the other servants, who do you accept that to be? Well, you would imagine, if you connect Chapter 2 to Chapter 3, it would be obvious that the one who would be elevated would obviously be the one who just benefited the king.

But it's not. Instead of Mordecai being elevated, Haman is elevated. The person who you wouldn't expect to be elevated is elevated. There's a switch.

What does that remind you of in the story of JE? Oh, yes, Isaac. He wanted to bless one of his children. He thought he'd bless one of his children. As a matter of fact, Isav had a mission, didn't he, in the JE story. What exactly was his mission? Look at this language and listen to how chilling this is. Let's read it one more time. "Vayehi ki zakein Yitzchak," and when Isaac was very old, "vatich'hena einav meir'os," and he couldn't see so he calls Esau, "b'no hagadol," he calls Isav his older son, "vayomer eilav," and he says to him, "b'ni," my child, "vayomer eilav," and he says to him, "hineini," here I am.

"Vayomer," and Isaac says, "hinei na zakanti lo yadati yom moti," I'm old, I don't know when I'm going to die. I'm fearful that I might die at any moment and therefore, "sa na keilecha tel'yecha v'kash'techa," take off your arms, "v'tzei hasadeh," and go out into the field, "v'tzudah li tzayid," and hunt for me some game. "V'asei li mat'amim ka'asher ahavati," and make me some food that I love. I want to just eat some delicacies, "v'havi'ah li," and bring it to me, "v'ocheilah," so that I may eat, "ba'avor t'varech'cha nafshi b'terem amut," so that I will bless you before I die.

Isaac wants food before he dies. What does that remind you of in the Megillah? Isaac wants food before he dies. Well, in the olden days, how did you get rid of the king if you wanted to assassinate him? Isaac is afraid that he's going to die in any moment and he wants food. He's looking for a child to give him food before he dies. In the olden days, how would you get rid of the king if there was an assassination plot from one of the close members of the king's guard? You poison the king by putting poison in his food.

There was another time when there was a king who was worried about eating food before he died. There was a time before he died and therefore, what happened? He couldn't trust his food and he turns to his servant and there's a servant -- a trusted servant -- who's able to give him the right food so that he doesn't die and that is Mordecai. The one who's able to get rid of the poisoned food and give him the good food before he dies and you would expect that he'd be rewarded, but he's not. There's the switch and Haman was rewarded. The child of Jakov is switched out for the child of Esau.

Why? It's all payback. It's all part of the payback of the heavenly throne. Here is this moment where you would have expected Jakov, the child of Jakov, who's served the king so well, who gave the food to the king before he died to be elevated, but in fact there's a switch. Why? Because there was a time earlier where Isav had done exactly what master had ordered. He had given Isaac food before he died and did the right thing, but Jakov and usurped him and all of a sudden Jakov got the blessing from master instead of the child who actually served father and did what he did.

So there would be a time of payback, taking the idea of our Sages one step further. The time of payback would happen in the times of Shushan would be exactly the same situation. There would be a master who would be worried about dying and worried about food before you're dying as a child who loyally serves him, a child of Jakov, accept that that child Jakov, would be switched out for a child of Esau. It's all part of this unfolding plan. It's the time for payback.

So again, act one; act one is here's this moment. This moment where there is this parent, Mordecai, who's giving this food to Esther, that's all aboveboard. That's all nice, but it's just too similar to this previous story; the parent giving food for the child, wrapped in these perfumes that changes the way he smells. Saying, that you don't really have to say who it is that you are. It's like in shamayim, in heaven, the machinery of justice is turning and this somehow catalyzes the next event. Because the next event is that there is this child who serves father and serves father loyally, but somehow he's not rewarded, the child of Isav is rewarded. It's beginning the payback scheme.

Of course, what's the next thing that happens in the payback scheme? Let me just look at my notes here for just a moment. So let's keep on reading. Right, you guys on Facebook, you're all following me over here? It's crazy, right? I mean, it's just the story just falls into place.

Here's the third element of the payback scheme. The next thing that happens -- let's go to -- I don't even know if I have this up here. Let me see if I have it up here. Yes. Let's go to three. Chapter 3.

The next thing that happens is "kol avdei hamelech asher b'sha'ar hamelech kor'im u'mishtachavim l'Haman," everyone's bowing to Haman. Let's put this in blue. Everyone's "kor'im umish'tachavim l'Haman," all who? The "avdei hamelech asher b'sha'ar hamelech," so all these international coterie of servants they're all bowing to Haman. Let's put this in blue, also. "Ki chein tzivah lo hamelech," because that's what the king instructed, but "Mordechai lo yichra v'lo yish'tachaveh," but Mordecai is not bowing.

What does that remind you of in the JE story? We began to talk about this a little bit last week. What does bowing remind you of in the JE story? Bowing, insisted upon by the king, by the master, well, that happens in this story too. Let's go back into the Genesis story and if you look carefully at the language of the blessing, in the Genesis story, remember how bowing was part of it.

Let's look at the blessing. "V'yitein l'cha ha'Elokim mital hashamayim u'mishmanei ha'arezt v'rov dagan v'tirosh." We talked about this last week. The giving of bounty to the recipient of this blessing. "Mital hashamayim," from the dew of the heavens, "u'mishmanei ha'aretz rov dagan v'tirosh," and we talked about the resonance of the manna over here. The manna came "mital hashamayim," from the dew of the heavens and it was "yitein lecha, hu halechem asher natan l'cha Hashem," it was the bread that God had given.

All of a sudden, one more time manna shows up in the Purim story. Except this time it's not manna, but there's a person by the name of manna, Haman. Manna was supposed to go to Esau, but it didn't and now, there's a man, a child of Esau, who in his name embodies the manna. And there's these laws with the manna, but remember the first time the manna was given, the Jews couldn't keep the laws very well and along came Amalek.

Well, the second time around there's this man by the name of manna, Haman, in the times of the story of the Megillah. Somehow the Jews can't keep the laws there either because what's the law of the manna this time? Look at what you're supposed to do to the recipient of the blessing who was supposed to have been Esau.

"Ya'avducha amim," let nations serve you, "v'yish'tachavu l'cha l'umim," and let nations bow to you. Well, when would it happen that Isav would finally get that blessing that was denied him in the times of Jakov? It's when a child of Esau, by the name of Haman, would get master, not God, but Ahasuerus shining his face upon him and saying yes, let servants, of international coterie of servants all bow to you. It's like the blessing is finally coming true for Esau, but then look at what it says. "Hevei g'vir l'achecha," you will lord over your brother, "v'yish'tachavu l'cha bnei imecha," and your mother's child, the child that your mother likes better, i.e. Jakov, will bow to you.

However, who doesn't bow to Haman? It's Mordecai. How would that make him feel, in light of the blessing? If this is the moment that I'm getting the blessing of Esau, if this is the moment that I should shine, what is Jakov's descendent doing not bowing to me? Is he trying to steal the blessing from me one more time?

That becomes the final straw that breaks the camel's back and leads to genocide. So it's really -- in sort of this prologue to the genocidal scheme, it's really three things happening. Thing number one; it's the manot. The manot that you get with the smell and the manot that you get with the disguise and you don't have to tell everybody who you are. That's element number one.

Element number two is the switch. Here is this moment where the king has been served by this child who saves him from death with food and all of a sudden there's a switch.

Element number three, this bowing thing that's evoking the blessing of bowing and Mordecai doesn't bow and that's it. Along comes the descendent of Esau, imposes his genocidal decree and "vayiz'ak ze'akah gedolah u'marah," and Mordecai lets out this great and bitter cry. Now, he's being victimized. Now, the wrath of Isav has come back. Just when you thought it was safe to get back in the water, just when you thought it was safe, right, centuries later, the scheme of Isav is back.

Adam Israel Borowski (ph), how would Haman even know the blessing different time? Good point, except it's not Haman who's saying this, it's the Megillah saying it. In other words, the author of the Megillah is using this language, putting it into the words of Haman and is sort of giving you this larger than life 50,000 feet look at how it looks from heaven. What does it look like from heaven? Why is it, Haman doesn't know why he's so angry, but there's something historically that's getting him angry.

There's a sort of unconscious memory in the nation of Amalek which is being riled up by what's happening and it is God, through ru'ach hakodesh (Divine spirit), in the Megillah that's giving us this sense of the meaning of what's happening.

Okay, so I'm just about out of yime with you. What I want to leave you with is the notion that what the Megillah is, is really -- and again, this goes on more. We could spend another three hours, literally, on this and I would not be able to finish telling you even the parts that I've researched on this. So I'm going to give you a challenge. We've see really acts one, two and three, but there's at least another act four and five for you to kind of uncover.

So what I want to suggest to you is that if you go forward, in the Megillah, it seems like the Megillah is the chance, the opportunity that Mordecai and Esther have centuries later to be able, in Groundhog Day style, to replay these events in a cathartic way that will somehow put the smoldering embers of this story to rest in a way that will allows the Jews to live to fight another day. That will not allow them to be destroyed in this genocide.

You can begin to see it by going back and interpreting some of the language that we saw last week. Let me take you into that and with that I'll sort of let you go tonight. Let's go to where the Sages are, right, after this yellow. "Vayiz'ak ze'akah gedolah u'marah," the letting out of this great and bitter cry.

"Vayavo ad lifnei sha'ar hamelech ki ein lavo ad sha'ar hamelech bil'vush sak." Let's think about that in light of the JE story. Here Jakov is letting out this great and bitter cry and then the next thing that happens is what? Here is Mordecai. The ace in the hole is Esther. He's somehow got to get word to Esther. Esther's in the palace. Isn't it interesting the choice that Mordecai makes right now?

I mean, if I'm Mordecai and everybody's mourning outside in the old city of, you know, Shushan and I decide no, I've got to go and I can't just mourn with everybody. I have to get word to Esther. Isn't his choice of action kind of strange here? What does he do? He puts on sack clothes and ashes and he gets as far as the palace gates, but will not go into the wrought iron gates inside 1600 Pennsylvania Avenues because "ein lavo el sha'ar hamelech bil'vush sak," you're not allowed to go into the gates of the palace wearing rags.

So why does he wear rags? Why can't he just rationalize to himself. You know what, this isn't time for me to mourn. Everybody else is mourning, I don't have to mourn. I'm going to make my way all the way to the queen. I'm going to see as far as I'm going to get. I'm going to try to get to the queen. I'm going to dress in a business suit. God will forgive me. I can dress in a business suit.

Isn't is fascinating that you're not doing that? It's like somehow the whole pain and suffering of the story of JE was brought upon someone when someone wore clothes that they weren't supposed to wear, nicer clothes that they weren't supposed to wear. It's like Mordecai's not going to make that mistake again.

He's not going to put on nicer clothes. He's not supposed to wear clothes that would be deceptive, that would say something other than the truth. The truth is he's in mourning. That's the truth and the priority is to use clothes to convey the truth now, rather than to use the clothes to convey deception.

Therefore, there was a time when Jakov put on clothes that were nicer than he should have in order to make it all the way into the inner sanctum of his father and to try to be accepted by his father, but did so deceptively, but this would not be the time for that. Mordecai was not going to make that mistake again.

In replaying the story, he was going to put on worse clothes that he could possibly imagine. The worst possible clothes because those clothes express the truth and it didn't make a difference if you couldn't get all the way in to the one from who you were seeking the blessing. In this case that's Esther. Even if you have to stand outside, so then I'll stand outside, but this is the truth and you are going to have to guess the truth. You're going to have to see me as I really am and try to understand who I really am. Esther, can you understand the truth about me?

It's a whole different story. It's the beginning of the redemption of that story. Mordecai is acting in a different way.

Let's look at the next thing that happens. "Vayiz'ak ze'akah gedolah u'marah," and "b'chol medinah u'medinah m'kom asher d'var hamelech v'dato magi'a eivel gadol layehudim," everyone feels mourning. Which mourning? As we talked about before. After "vayitz'ak tze'akah gedolah u'marah" with Esau, Isav talked about soon my father is going to die and he's going to feel mourning and then I'm going to kill Jakov. Well, the moment is now happening and now, when it happens everyone feels mourning, but Mordecai expresses that mourning and feels it along with everyone else.

"Tzom u'b'chi u'mispeid," and he's crying. Isav had cried too and now Jakov is crying or rather the descendent of Jakov, Mordecai, is crying. He's expressing those tears and "vatavonah na'arot Esther v'sarisehah vayagidu lah." Now, there came a time when a woman, a mother, someone in the family came to understand what was in Esau's heart. Isav was crying and "vayugad l'Rivkah." Look at that language. "Vayagidu lah" over here with Esther, finds its parallel in the story with Rebecca.

Right over here and we saw this last week in this chain of verbs "vayugad l'Rivkah et divrei Eisav b'nah hagadol vatishlach vatikra l'Yaakov b'nah hakatan vatomer eilav," and so Rebecca is told about Esau's tears and about Esau's feelings and his anger and Rebecca is so worried for Jakov so she sets about and tells him that he has to run away. "Kum b'rach l'cha," I'm commanding you to run away.

You know, if you put yourself in Rebecca's, so one the one hand she's being compassionate to Jakov. She hears about this murderous intent of Esau. On the other hand, she's sort of manipulating Esau. She hears about Esau's cry and Isav feels terrible and she's ministering to one child in the family, but not another. So now, we're going to get that same series of verbs, right. It's fascinating.

"Vayagidu lah." So what happens now? So what happens, in this payback story, is Esther begins to hear about the cries and the mourning that Mordecai feels and she understands. "Vatishlach begadim l'halbish et Mordechai vatikra," and she goes and she calls him, "vatomer Esther l'Hatach vatitzaveigu al Mordechai," and she commands Mordecai.

So you have the same sort of language except that something happens here. Something happens which is very redemptive that Esther does. Esther sends clothes "l'halbish et Mordechai." Well, Mordecai's got to decide what to do with those clothes. What does it remind you of a mother figure or a woman figure sending a man clothes, beautiful clothes?

Well, should Mordecai put on the nice clothes? If he wears those clothes, wearing those clothes is an act of deception. What's he really saying by wearing those clothes? As I talked about it in the course which we released a couple of weeks ago, on Mishlo'ach Manot and Matanot L'evyonim, my theory is that these clothes are Matanot L'evyonim. Which is to say Esther doesn't know why Mordecai's in rags. She's guessing and she guesses that he's poor, but she's wrong. So when she sends clothes to dress up Mordecai, right, if Mordecai accepts those clothes, he's saying a lie. Yes, I'm a poor man. There was never any problem.

What happens? A long time ago, a child received clothes from his mother and the clothes were a lie and he went into his father with those clothes and now, one more time there's this dangerous moment where

Jakov's getting these clothes from Esther, but he can't accept them and therefore, "lo kibel," he does not accept the clothes. Once he doesn't accept the clothes, it's like we're back at the beginning of the story, Groundhog Day. You get another chance to go and to replay the story one more time, so now we're back earlier in the story where there's this moment where the woman gives the man clothes and this time Mordecai's not accepting those clothes. A great redemptive act.

So what happens next? What happens next is Esther comes in and realizing that Mordecai hasn't accepted the clothes, rather than becoming infuriated, ah, Mordecai threw those clothes in the dumpster –