

29.

Q. How was Vashti killed?

A. Haman suggested that she should be decapitated and her head brought to the king on a platter.

Haman told Achashveirosh that if he would only “give the word,” then Haman would order the execution to save the king from having to give the command himself (Esther Rabbah 4:9). Haman feared that if Vashti was brought before the king for sentencing, she would plead for mercy and be forgiven (*Yafeh Enaf*).

Achashveirosh took Haman’s suggestion of the method of execution. However he even went one step further and directly ordered the execution himself (ibid 4:11).

According to Rabbi Elisha Gallico (brought in Me’am Lo’ez), Vashti was burned alive at the stake. Another source says she was hanged.

30.

Q. Was Vashti’s death merely a result of her husband’s drunken state and Haman’s cajoling, or did she deserve to be killed?

A. Prior to the events recorded in the Megillah, the Jews were given permission to return to Eretz Yisrael to rebuild the Beis HaMikdash. However shortly after they laid the foundation, numerous parties put pressure on Achashveirosh to revoke the permission, and he consented.

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Among the people who pressured Achashveirosh was his wife Vashti. She complained that since her ancestor Nevuchadnezar had destroyed the Beis HaMikdash, how could her husband now be the one to allow it to be rebuilt? (The sources differ as to whether Nevuchadnezar was her grandfather or her great-grandfather.)

Vashti's death was decreed in heaven because of her role in halting the construction of the Beis HaMikdash, as well as her mistreatment of the utensils of the Beis HaMikdash and the clothing of the Kohen Gadol during the party she hosted for the wives of the government leaders (Esther Rabbah 3:9).

31.

Q. What happened to Haman's family after he was killed? Is it true that some of them became Jewish?

A. The Gemara (Megillah 15b) says that Haman had a tremendous number of sons. It brings three opinions that argue as to whether he had 30, 90 or 208 sons. (Other amounts are also brought in the commentaries.)

Haman was hanged on the 16th of Nisan. One year later on the 14th of Adar, his 10 most prominent sons were hanged on the gallows with his body, which had remained hanging there after he was killed (9:6-10).

These 10 sons were among the people who successfully convinced Achashveirosh to rescind the Jews' permission to build the second Beis HaMikdash. The first son to be hanged, Parshandasa, may also have provided the wood for the gallows. Therefore they were already worthy of being singled out to be hanged (Yalkut Shimoni, Seder Olam Rabbah 29).

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Haman's daughter committed suicide shortly before the second party (Megillah 16a).

After Haman was hanged and his property and home were seized and given to Mordechai, his wife Zeresh and their sons became slaves to Mordechai (Shelom Esther, quoted in Me'am Lo'ez).

Alternatively, Zeresh and seventy of their sons were left so destitute that they were forced to beg door-to-door for bread (Targum to Esther 9:14, Megillah 15b).

Even these sons did not escape punishment for long. They survived this way for a year until they were also captured and executed (Midrash Tehillim).

The Gemara says in addition to the 10 sons who were hanged together, 10 other sons died. The commentaries and Midrashim record that 10 of Haman's sons were executed by the sword. Their bodies were then hanged from a different set of gallows. Another ten sons were fed to dogs.

The Megillah records that the Jews killed a group of 300 Amaleki men and other enemies who attacked them on the 14th of Adar in Shushan, one year after Haman was hanged (9:15). The Targum (9:14) says this group included 108 of Haman's sons. Some of his sons may have committed suicide as well.

The Chasam Sofer (in Drashos Chasam Sofer) suggests that some of the surviving sons converted to Judaism, as the Gemara teaches that descendants of Haman learned Torah in Bnai Brak (Gittin 57b, Sanhedrin 96b).

The Chasam Sofer calls this Nekamah Shel Simcha – revenge of joy. The ultimate and sweetest retribution is when our enemies recognize the greatness of Hashem and regret their actions against us, and then desire to get close to Hashem.

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