

**PURIM: A SERIES OF CHARACTER-
POEMS IN FOUR PARTS AND
TABLEAUX, CONTAINING THE
COMPLETE HISTORY FROM THE
BOOK OF ESTER**

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Purim: A Series of Character-poems in Four Parts and Tableaux, Containing the Complete History from the book of Ester by Rabbi H. M. Bien

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RABBI H. M. BIEN

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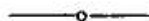
“PURIM:”

A SERIES OF CHARACTER-POEMS

IN

FOUR PARTS AND TABLEUX,

*CONTAINING THE COMPLETE HISTORY FROM THE BOOK OF
ESTHER.*



SECOND REVISED EDITION.

FOR RECITATIONS BY YOUNG PEOPLE,
ESPECIALLY SUNDAY-SCHOOLS AND Y. M. L. A.

BY

RABBI H. M. BIEN.



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CHARACTERS REPRESENTED:

MALES:

AHASUERUS King of Media and Persia.
HAMAN His First Minister.
MORDECAI A Jew, Gate-Keeper of the Palace.
CARBONI The Royal Herald.
HATACH—VASHTI, DISGUISED, IN MALE ATTIRE
..... The Royal Scribe.
Two Halberdiers, Haman's Sons, Soldiers, People.

FEMALES:

PROLOGUE By a little girl.
VASHTI The Queen.
ESTHER Mordecai's Ward.
ZERESH Haman's Wife.
First Maid of Honor, Second Maid of Honor, Court Ladies, Maids
of Honor.

DIVISIONS:

PART FIRST.—THE CORONATION OF ESTHER.
PART SECOND.—THE DOOM OF THE JEWS.
PART THIRD.—PRIDE COMES TO GRIEF.
PART FOURTH.—THE INSTITUTING OF PURIM.

SCENE.

A pillared, wide-open palace-court of Shusan, in back part of which are thrones for king and queen, magnificently draped.

COSTUMES.

Ancient Persian and Hebrew styles, brilliant and varied as much as possible in color and material. †Specially required: king's and queen's royal purple mantles; sackcloth—garment for Mordecai in Part II.

PROPERTIES.

Shepherd's crook for Mordecai. † King's and queen's golden crowns. Megillah—a parchment scroll. Golden sceptre for king. Trumpet, with flag-vail, used afterward as sacred cover for Megillah. Sack, apparently filled with ashes. Royal signet-ring.

PROLOGUE.

Little girl, comes out, before the curtain rises.

Ladies, Gentlemen and Fellow-Members:

I'll tell you a secret—but do not betray—
What I now to you shall in confidence say:
My comrades will try to amuse you awhile—
They'll make you believe—I know you will smile—
That they are great actors—just watch well their faces;
Their strutting the stage—their talk and grimaces;
Their hands and their feet—their he-hes and ha-has—
Their jerking of heads and their working of jaws;
And sure you will think, the girls and the boys—
Resemble quite natural some fine wooden toys.
But do not believe, friends, that I hither came
To mock my dear mates and make of them game;
To have your opinion forestalled and forejudged,
Because I have some of their weaknesses nudged.
Now let me no less, while they still at me pout—
To you their strong claims and their merits point out:
First then and foremost your favorites they are,
And therefore each should to you seem like a star.
The love which to angels your darlings exalts,
Will now too forgive them their amateur faults.
'Tis a pity, my dears, that out of the whole,
Not each could have played the principal role.
One had to be first and one had to be last;
In spite of all envy such must be the cast.
If all will endeavor to fill out their part
The smaller the compass, the greater the art!
'Tis the story of "Esther," we will now recite;

The "M'gillah,"* of old ; on Purim† at night,
To be read in Hebrew, as has been in vogue,
In orthodox fashioned Synagogue.
We think it a more intelligent way,
That you understand what we have to say.
Therefore you must not think it wrong
That we shall speak in our mother-tongue.
Each one a character of the event
Will faithful endeavor to represent.
Be patient with us—indulgent and kind—
And bear this my humble petition in mind :
Judge our good intentions and not what we do ;
I bid you thus welcome ! Adieu, friends, adieu !

(Kisses her hands at audience and exits r. h., after which the curtain rises.)

*The book of Esther written on a parchment scroll. †The Feast of Esther on the 14th day of the 12th month Adar.



PART FIRST.

THE CORONATION OF ESTHER.

Ahasuerus (*Enters majestically from r. h. Bugle calls as he comes.*)—

Behold! I'm King Ahasuerus! the mighty potentate!
From "Judah" unto "Cush" extends my power, reign and state.
To Shusan—my great capital, have come from far and near
My vassals to a royal feast—they are all gathered here.
From hundred and seventy provinces of North, South, West and
East,

I show them my unbounded wealth, in revelry they feast.
And now to make my happiness complete for all my life:
I'll prove to them this mighty king has, too, the fairest wife.
Therefore I'll bid Vashti, the queen, forthwith shall show her
face—

Nobility and people may behold her beauteous grace.

[*Exit r. h.*]

Haman (*Enters pompously l. h. and advances to front.*)—

Haman is my name—the last "Amalekite!"*
Adviser to the king! In influence and might,
But one degree to him at present, an inferior,
To all his subjects (*aside*) nay in time, too, his superior. (*aloud*)
A confidential message I bear unto his queen,
Who to appear in public she has commanded been.
If I but know her right—this woman, with a will
Of her own, dare resent the outrage, bold and ill,
Against all Eastern customs of female modesty.
There will be serious trouble, I warrant it—you'll see.

[*Exit haughtily l. h.*]

*The Talmud traces back the genealogy of Haman to Amalek and

Vashti (*Enters weeping, r. h.*)—

And this to me? the queen! unprecedented shame!
I will resent the outrage!—or Vashti's not my name!
I, who brought up retired—strict Oriental fashion,
Now be made sacrifice to his unbounded passion,
For hollow pride and power. I? show myself? indeed!

(stamps her feet)

I will not go—no never—nor his vile bidding heed!

(Muscs, walking to and fro—more composed)

These men will always play our masters, and be they low or be
they high,

Will rule and lord it over woman, at least they will imperious try.
Weak-minded, pliant and obedient, our sex most always does
submit;

Aye! it were different had they only a little more of pride and wit.
For we by nature fair and lovely, the nobler part of human kind,
To men superlatively better, in soul and body, heart and mind;
We bear the burden of existence, serve from the cradle to the
grave.

Yet could be free if we would never permit ourselves to be the
slave.

I'd willingly become a beggar or instantly would rather die,
To be example to my sisters, while I my lord's command defy.
True! he has given me these baubles, a royal diadem and crown.
Like pretty puppets men adorn us, with gaudy gems and costly
gown;

And then degrade us as their creatures. Now let one learn what
woman can

if once aroused; that she is stronger than most despotic, selfish
man.

I know the time is near approaching when females will their
rights assert.

The more advanced will be determined to act harmonious in concert.

They will no longer then permit it, that man shall rule the world
alone;

And will no longer be the servants of kitchen, feasting-hall or
throne.



We too can traffic, plead and labor, can sculpture, sing and play
and paint;

Strong-minded women will hereafter take Vashti for their patron
saint.

Ahasuerus, he will rage and bluster, that I his bidding disobey!
I scorn his wrath—defy his anger; the consequence be what it
may. [Exit l. h.]

Haman (*r. h. exultingly.*)—

I knew it all beforehand—the king will foam and rage!
Defiance makes him sore, and like a lion in his cage,
He'll spring upon whatever may come within his reach—
The flame I'll feed however to widen still the breach.
“A fine time” I will say—“we men will have hereafter
“If even monarchs may become the stock for laughter,
“In being thus defied by woman—she his wife;
“And having bold denied—the rights of sovereign life.
“No woman shall thus boast—Queen Vashti thou art lost!”
(Vashti has been seen listening and gesticulating. Haman exits l. h.)

Carboni, (*the Herald, comes with trumpet and flag. Enters r. h.,
gives three bugle calls while entering.*)—

Carboni, I, the Herald, come by the king's behest;
Proclaiming to the nation, to make it manifest:
Queen Vashti's disobedience is punished just but sore (*bugle call*)
That it be known: A husband is master evermore,
In his own family; the wives they must and shall obey—
Whatever are men's wishes or what demand they may! (*bugle call.*)
(Takes flag from bugle.)

This is the vail—death-dooming vail—by Haman's stern com-
mand

To be placed on her guilty head, for treason—by my hand.
It is the sign that she who has the king's mandate opposed,
From crown and throne, from royalty, from reign, aye! is deposed.
(bugle call.)

And then all maidens of the land, how rich or poor connected,
Are bid, present themselves at court; from them shall be selected