



## Finding the Clues in *Megillat Esther* - Worksheet

One of the four *mitzvot* of Purim is to read *Megillat Esther*, so we remember the story of how we were saved from Haman's decree to annihilate the Jews. Esther and Mordechai wrote the megillah in such a way that it would get by the royal censors; they had to make sure that the king did not look like a villain. But they did more than that; they **filled the megillah with clues**. These clues are words, phrases, and themes that a trained ear would hear and understand, or at least guess at, the allusions and references The Sages of the Talmud (*Hazal*) and the commentaries point them out to us if we miss them on our own. These clues connect the story to other parts of the Tanakh and remind us that, even though God's name isn't mentioned once in the *megillah*, this is a very important and very Biblical story. Below are some examples of these clues, but there are many more.

Please Note: The translations are from The Koren Jerusalem Bible on Sefaria.

See the [attached chart](#) for further expansion of the *Megillat Esther* and Yosef narrative parallels.

### Clue #1 - [Esther 1:1](#)

- a. How many provinces did Ahasveirosh rule?

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- b. Where have we seen that number before? (Hint: [Bereshit 23:1](#))

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- c. Now look at what Rabbi Akiva says in the Midrash ([Esther Rabbah 1:8](#))

Why might the megillah open with that clue?

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### Clue #2 - [Esther 1:11](#)

- a. What words are used to describe Vashti the queen?

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b. Who else has been described with these words (or something similar?)

Hint: Check out these sources.

- [Bereshit 29:17](#)
- [Bereshit 39:6](#)

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c. And one more! Check out [Esther 2:7](#)

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d. Why do you think that the megillah compares Esther to these two?

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e. What is the subtle difference between the description of Vashti and the other three people?

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f. What could be the meaning behind that difference?

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g. Why do you think the megillah draws this parallel and contrast?

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h. But wait! There's more! Check out [Esther 1:12](#). What do you think the *megillah* is trying to hint at by using the same language as in [Bereishit 39:8](#)?

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**Clue #3 - [Esther 2:5](#)**

- a. Mordechai is introduced to us in this *pasuk*. Who is his great-grandfather (ancestor)?

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- b. Then who might Mordechai be related to? (Hint: [Shmuel Alef 9:1-2](#))

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- c. What other common language is there between *Esther 2:5* and *Shmuel Alef 9:1*?

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- d. Why do you think the *megillah* seems to go out of its way to make this connection?

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**Clue #4 - [Esther 2:6](#)**

- a. What was Esther's Hebrew name? What language is the name "Esther?"

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- b. What does each of the two names mean?

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- c. Check out the Gemara ([Megillah 13a](#)) The various Sages give us some options for why the megillah gives us two names. Pick a couple that resonate with you!

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- d. The Gemara in [Hulin 139b](#) gives a possible Torah source for Esther's name. What is that quote and where is it from?

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- e. What might be the connection between the quote in [Devarim](#) and the story of Esther?

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**Clue #5**

- a. Who else had their names changed when they entered royal palaces? (Hint: Check out these sources!)

- (1) [Daniel 1:6-7](#)  
(2) [Bereshit 41:45](#)

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- b. What can we learn from the parallels between Esther and the above two people?

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- c. What other parallels can you think of between the Esther narrative and the Yosef narrative?

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**Clue #6 - [Esther 3:1](#)**

Just like Mordechai (and Esther)'s lineage is a clue, so too is Haman's.

- a. Mordechai is described as a "Yehudi" and an "Ish Yemini." What is Haman described as?

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- b. What is Haman's lineage? (Hint: Check out [Shmuel Alef. 15](#), especially *pesukim* 7-8 and 32-33)

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- c. How do Haman's lineage and Mordechai's lineage interconnect?

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d. Why is this important?

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### Clue #7

Just like Esther and Mordechai have their “source” in the Torah so does Haman.

a. Go back to the source in Talmud *Mesechet Hulin*. What is the source of Haman in the Torah?

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b. What do you think is the message of this *drash*?

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c. There is another connection to the Torah that fills in Haman’s backstory via Agag. Check out [Shemot 17: 8-16](#) and [Devarim 25: 17-19](#).

What do these *pesukim* add to the story in the megillah?

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### Clue #8

Here are a couple more *Amalek*-related clues from the megillah...

- [Esther 4:7](#)
- [Esther 6:13](#)

a. How do each of these connect the megillah to the *Amalek* narratives?

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b. What do you think that these connections are meant to teach us?

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**Clue #9**

There are lots of thematic references between *Megillat Esther* and the Yosef narrative. Here is a textual clue that compares Mordechai and Yosef: compare [Esther 8:15](#) to [Bereshit 41:41-42](#).

- a. How is the language in these sources similar?

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- b. Why do you think that the megillah goes to pains to compare BOTH Esther and Mordechai to Yosef?

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**Thought Questions:**

1. List 2-3 themes that the narrative of *Megillat Esther* draws from the narrative of Yosef.
2. Why do you think that the authors of *Megillat Esther* are trying to highlight the parallels?
3. In what ways are the narratives and characters of Esther/Mordechai different from Yosef?
4. What can we learn from the contrasts?