



**DERECH B'YAM
HATALMUD**



**HOW MANY SONS DID
HAMAN HAVE?
(AND WHAT BECAME OF THEM?)**

**A guided approach to learning the
Gemara's account of Haman's sons**

**L'ilui Nishmas Luba Baila bas Yisrael
and Naftali ben Yaacov**

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Based on 70 Questions & Answers on Megillas Esther by the author

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SECTION ONE



Haman Brags About His Many Sons

OVERVIEW

The Gemara on Megillah 15b quotes the statement of Haman from the Megillah in which he boasts about his wealth and his many sons. The Gemara derives from his statement the total number of sons he had, and describes what befell them at the end of the Megillah.

מראה מקומות

- גמרא מגילה דף טו: מ- "ויספר להם המן" עד "חסר וי"ו כתיב"
- מהרש"א (ד"ה וכמה רוב בניו)

Summary of the Gemara

The Gemara towards the bottom of Gemara Megillah Daf 15b describes the events when Haman arrived at his house after being invited by Esther HaMalkah to her first party. The Megillah (Esther 5:10) says that Haman invited **אוהביו** – his beloved ones (referring to his friends and advisors), and his wife Zeresh. The Gemara explains the meaning of some of his words as he boasted to them.

ויספר להם המן את כבוד עשרו ורוב בניו – The Megillah says that Haman told them about the glory of his wealth, and about **Rov Banav** – his many sons (5:11).

וכמה רוב בניו – The Gemara asks: how many sons are indicated by the term “his many sons”? It brings three answers.

ל' עשרה מתו ועשרה נתלו ועשרה מחזרין – It quotes **Rav** who says: **ל' עשרה מתו ועשרה נתלו ועשרה מחזרין** – He had **thirty sons**. Ten of them died, ten were hanged, and ten became impoverished and were forced to beg door-to-door.

ורבנן אמרי – The **Rabbanim** hold differently, that he had **90 sons**.

They explain the source of their calculation: אותן שמחזרין על הפתחים: שבעים – Those who went out begging were 70, דכתיב "שבעים" – בלחם נשכרו – as it says, "those who are satiated are hired out for bread" (Shmuel I 2:5). אל תקרי שבעים אלא שבעים. – Do not read the word as "satiated" but as "seventy."

-This verse is one of several in the song of Chana, in which she prophetically describes many future events.

-**Rashi** in (ד"ה שבעים בלחם נשכרו) cites Yonasan ben Uziel's elucidation of the verse, which says that Chana was directly eluding to Haman's sons here.

כולן מאתים ושמונה הוו שנאמר, ורמי בר אבא אמר – Rami bar Abba says, כולן מאתים ושמונה הוו שנאמר, ורמי בר אבא אמר – In total, he had 208 sons. (He learns this because the word "ורוב" has the Gematria [numerical value] of 208.)

ורוב בגימטריא מאתן וארביסר הוו – The Gemara asks that "ורוב" has the value of 214.

אמר רב נחמן בר יצחק: "ורב" חסר וי"ו כתיב – It quotes Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak who says that the word "ורב" is spelled חסר – lacking, without the letter Vav in the middle. Therefore, its gematria is 208.

In addition to these opinions, the commentators and additional sources bring other suggestions for the number of sons that Haman had.

QUESTION: How do each of the opinions brought in the Gemara derive their understandings of the number of sons Haman had?

The **Maharsha** in (ד"ה וכמה רוב בניו) explains each of the three approaches.

He says that the Megillah itself does not explicitly state the total number of sons which Haman had, but rather it describes the number using a **סתם** – undefined – expression. (Therefore, it is necessary to try to derive this number).

However, the Megillah gives us two hints of the number. It says explicitly that ten of Haman's sons were hanged. It says separately that he had רוב בניו – many sons. The ten who were killed must be a minority of this total amount.

The Maharsha says that based on these two details, the first opinion brought in the Gemara learns that since the Megillah lists one portion of the sons as being ten, and this was a minority portion, it must be that the other two groups also included ten sons each. Therefore, he learns that Haman had a total of 30 sons.

The second opinion learns similarly that ten sons were killed and ten were hanged. The remaining count of 70 sons is learned from the verse in Shmuel.

The Maharsha says that the verse cannot be understood according to its simple meaning, that those who are satiated are hired out for bread, for why would they need to hire themselves out if they are already satiated? Therefore, it must be hinting to a deeper meaning, as brought by this opinion, that it refers to 70 sons who begged for bread.

The third approach says that Haman had 208 sons in total. The Maharsha says: it would be an error to say that this opinion holds that he had 218 sons, meaning that the ten who are mentioned explicitly in the Megillah as having been hanged are not included in the count mentioned here. Rather, the ten are included in the group of 208.

The Maharsha says that the verse lists the death of the ten separately, not to teach that there were a distinct group, but to say that they were killed in a distinct way, being hanged on the very gallows that their father built.

See the **Ben Yehoyada** in (ד"ה שם עשרה) who suggests that many of Haman's sons were born to him from other women. He says that this could explain the discrepancy among the opinions. Even though each opinion heard a specific number from his teacher, they were in doubt of how many sons were born to Haman from the other women, and so the opinions differ on this point.

SECTION TWO



The Death of Haman's Sons

OVERVIEW

The three opinions in the Gemara disagree regarding the precise number of sons which Haman had, but they all agree that there were three groups of sons. Some died, some were hanged and some had to beg for food. Are there more specific details about the outcomes of each group?

מראה מקומות

- גמרא מס' מגילה דף טז: מ- "ואת פרשנדתא וגו' עשרת בני המן" עד "זקיפא אזדקיפו"

Summary of the Gemara

The Gemara on טז: דף describes the events of the hanging of Haman's ten sons:

It quotes the verses, "ואת פרשנדתא וגו' עשרת בני המן" – "and Parshandasa and ... the ten sons of Haman" (9:7,10).

אמר רב אדא דמן יפו עשרת בני המן ועשרת צריך לממרינהו בנשימה אחת – It quotes Rav Ada D'min Yafu who says that the words "עשרת בני המן" and "עשרה" must be recited in one breath. מאי טעמא כולהו בהדי הדדי – What is the reason? Because all of their souls left them simultaneously.

ויו דויזתא צריך למימתחה בזקיפא – אמר רבי יוחנן – Rebbi Yochanan says – the letter "Vav" in the name Vaizasa must be written elongated, like the pole used to push boats on the river Libros. מאי טעמא כולהו בחד זקיפא אזדקיפו – What is the reason for this? Because all ten sons were hanged together on one pole.

QUESTION: The verses here list ten specific sons who were hanged together. Why were they singled out to be killed together, out of the many sons that Haman had?

The Megillah records that in the report which Achashveirosh gave to Esther regarding the war in Shushan, he told her, “In Shushan the capital, the Jews have slain and annihilated 500 men, as well as the ten sons of Haman” (9:12).

Why were these sons killed together? The Gemara (Megillah 10b) says that they were all Sarim – important ministers in the government. The **Rokeach** (brought in the **Mishneh Berurah** in [תרצ"ז (נה)]) says that each of these ten sons commanded a group of 50 soldiers, for a total of 500. These are the soldiers who were killed together, on the same day as Haman’s ten sons.

As an example of the importance of these sons in the kingdom and why they deserved to be killed, the first son listed, Parshandasa was the governor of the area of Kardonya surrounding Mount Ararat in modern day Turkey. The remains of Noah’s Teiva were still preserved there at the time, and Parshandasa removed a 50-amah long beam from it and sent it to his father. Haman used this beam for the gallows (**Midrash Abba Gorion, Yalkut Shimoni** [1056]).

According to most commentators, Haman was hanged on the 16th of Nisan, and his ten sons were hanged one year later on the 14th of Adar. Haman’s body was still hanging on the gallows, and his sons were hanged with him.

Haman’s son Shimshai was a royal scribe, and tried repeatedly to malign the Jews to Achashveirosh. However, he is not listed among the ten most prominent sons who were hanged together.

The **Targum** (9:14) says that Shimshai and nine of his brothers were killed by the sword on the 14th of Adar. Their bodies were hanged together on a different set of gallows than the one on which their father’s body was hanging.

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 killed (9:15). The Targum says this group included 108 of Haman’s sons. Some of his sons may have committed suicide as well.

The **Midrash Tehillim** says that the sons who were forced to beg for food were killed later.

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

SECTION THREE



Did Some of Haman's Descendants Convert to Judaism?

OVERVIEW

The Gemara says that descendants of Haman became Jewish and learned Torah. Who were they, and from which of Haman's children were they born?

מראה מקומות

- גמרא מס' סנהדרין דף צו: מ- "תנו רבנן נעמן" עד "בבני ברק"
- עין יעקב – סנהדרין (מ- "תנו רבנן נעמן" עד "בבני ברק")
- בינהו (ד"ה שם מבני בנין של המן)

Summary of the Gemara

The Gemara in Sanhedrin 96b and Gittin 57b brings Baraisos which list several enemies of the Jews who converted to Judaism, or whose descendants did so. They say, מבני בניו של המן למדו תורה בבני ברק – among the descendants of Haman were those who learned Torah in Bnai Brak.

QUESTION: Which descendant(s) of Haman learned Torah, and why did Haman deserve this?

The **Chasam Sofer** (in **Drashos Chasam Sofer**) suggests that not all of Haman's sons were killed, and some of the survivors converted to Judaism.

He refers to this as **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.

The **Ein Yaacov** on Sanhedrin and others teach that when the Gemara refers to a descendant of Haman converting to Judaism, it is referring to Rav Shmuel bar Shilas.

What is the significance that Rav Shmuel bar Shilas descended from Haman?

The Gemara in Bava Basra 8b (see Rashi) identifies Rav Shmuel bar Shilas as a teacher of children. It brings him as the example of the dedication that a Rebbi should have towards his students, as he demonstrated a complete devotion to them and never allowed his mind to be removed from thinking about them and their needs.

The Gemara in Taanis 29a teaches: "משנכנס אדר מרבה בשמחה" – “when the month of Adar begins, we increase joy.” It says that these words were originally stated by Rav, but they are quoted here by Rav Yehudah, *the son of Rav Shmuel bar Shilas*.

Why was Haman deserving of having such a distinguished Jewish descendant?

The **Ben Ish Chai** explains in **Benahu** in (ד"ה שם מבני בנין של המן) that Haman's threats to annihilate the Jews caused them to return to Hashem and to fully reaccept the Torah, on a higher level than they originally had.

The words in the Megillah, "**L'Yehudim Haisa Orah**" – “to the Jews was light” refers to this monumental reacceptance, as the word Orah here means Torah (based on Megillah 16b and Shabbos 88a).

Since Haman was the cause of the Jew's return and renewed connection to the Torah, and since Hashem does not withhold reward (Pesachim 11a), Haman deserved to have his descendants convert and learn Torah in Bnai Brak.

This was the ultimate turnaround and greatest revenge on Haman. He tried to annihilate the Jews and extinguish the light of the Torah, but because of him, we received the holiday of Purim, which is a time to rejoice in Hashem's salvation. We also received the Torah anew, as exemplified by Haman's descendant Rav Shmuel bar Shilas who showed the level of dedication needed to transmit the sweetness of Torah to the next generation.

For more on Purim, see:

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