SHUSHAN 4G
Purim 2011
Congregation Beth Israel, Chico, California

By Shira Danan

Chapter 1

Narrator
And it came to pass in the land of Shushan that King Ahashuerus bought himself a sweet new smart phone and wanted to show it off. So he held a party, inviting guests from all of the 127 kingdoms he ruled, and planned for the party to go on for as long as it took him to say to each and every guest “I have an app for that.”

Guest
King, I am impressed by the sumptuousness of your electronics,

King
Thank you, my friend. Here, have an iPod shuffle.

Guest
Oh wow, it’s so small and sleek. Which reminds me, where is your wife, Vashti?

King
Hang on let me text her. (Typing) Vashti, please come down and greet the guests. (Laughs) Haha, autocorrect changed “greet” to “shake royal booty.” Nice. Send!

Narrator
Meanwhile, Vashti was entertaining her own guests...

Vashti
Okay now turn it. (Turns iPad)

Vashti’s Guests
Oooh.

Vashti
(receives text, checks phone) What? Shake royal booty?? I haven’t done that since we were teenagers and got those really excellent poppy hamentaschen from Srulik the Taschen-Pusher.

Narrator
Vashti stalked off angrily, taking with her one of the new Kindles, her iPad, and an old Nokia phone that she thought would someday be considered an antique
King
(Looking at phone) “I’m leaving you for Evan?” Who’s Evan?

Guest
Maybe she meant to type “for-ever.”

Narrator
She didn’t. Evan was the pool boy.

King
Either way, I’m banishing her! (He raises his scepter into the air, then tucks it under one arm so he can type her a text message.)

Chapter 2

Narrator
Meanwhile, in the far reaches of Shushan, Esther the beautiful maiden and her Uncle Mordechai were living in poverty, their clunky Asis computer barely able to operate Flight Simulator. Nonetheless, they were religious people, and Mordechai prayed to God daily for an XBox 360.

Mordechai
(To the heavens) Not for myself, but for my poor niece.

(Esther rolls her eyes.)

Esther
(Pointing at their computer) Look Uncle, a message!

Mordechai
An email?! You mean the internet is working for once?

Esther
No look, the postman left a letter on top of the computer. (Opens it) All the eligible women of the kingdom are requested to submit a YouTube video explaining why you would make a great new queen. Log on to shushanvideo.com to submit your video. No zoftigs or vegans.

Mordechai
That sure sounds like state-mandated fun! Let’s steal the neighbor’s wireless signal and do this thing.
Narrator
Mordechai and Esther did their best to create a spectacular YouTube video. They used all the special effects they could think of, included some shots of cute animals sleeping, and filmed Esther fighting with a lion. They titled the video, “Future queen fights Lion Oh My Hashem you have to see this exclamation point exclamation point exclamation point.” The king was impressed.

Ahashuerus
(On his smart phone) Oh man, this is totally sweet!

Narrator
Ahashuerus chose Esther to be his bride, not only because she was beautiful and had mad video editing skills, but because he wanted to be able to introduce her to all his friends as that chick who fought a lion on YouTube.

Ahashuerus
I think I’m in love.

Esther
I can’t believe I get to marry the king...

Mordechai
(To Esther) Just don’t tell him you’re Jewish.

Esther
Why not?

Mordechai
Everyone already thinks the Jews control the media. If they find out that we actually do make all their beloved animal-related YouTube videos, they’ll be understandably upset.

Narrator
Meanwhile, back at the Kingdom, two of Ahashuerus’s so-called Facebook friends, Bigthan and Teresh, were plotting to reveal shirtless photos he had once sent Vashti in a hamentaschen-fueled haze. And to kill him!

Bigthan
(typing) Honestly, I think it’s his own fault for taking the photos in the first place. That’s just idiotic in this day and age. Let’s sell the photos for as much money as possible...and then kill him!

Teresh
(typing) Yeah, let’s leak those photos to the Shushan Enquirer...And then kill him!
Little did they know that Bigthan had left a computer logged into his Gmail account at the Shushan Internet Cafe, which Mordechai frequented because of his poor service at home. Mordechai accidentally read the entire months-long email exchange between the two. He was horrified.

Mordechai
I could care less about the shirtless photos. It’s the media frenzy that would follow that would be really annoying.

Narrator
Mordechai dashed off an email to tips@ahashuerusstayingalive.com. The webmaster eventually got to his email a couple of weeks later and was astonished! He immediately sent a message to the King, who quickly had his hard drive erased and then left himself a voice memo to thank that guy who saved his dignity...and his life!...sometime.

Chapter 3

It came to pass that Ahashuerus, who was very foolish indeed, lost a game of Guitar Hero to his buddy Haman. He was forced to promote his friend to the highest position possible for non-royalty.

Haman
And I want everyone to RSS my new blog, JustSomeThoughtsFromHaman.blogspot.com.

Narrator
All of the people of Shushan dutifully added JustSomeThoughtsFromHaman.blogspot.com to their RSS feeds, even though his blog was mostly “artsy” black and white photographs of himself and inane musings on the show *The Wire*. But Mordechai refused.

Mordechai
I don’t want that *shmutz* clogging up my RSS feed. I will not bow to Haman’s request.

Haman
But you have to! Bow to my request!

Mordechai
Never, I only bow to the Lord G-d Hashem!

Haman
At least link to my blog from your blog.
Narrator
But Mordechai refused. Haman was infuriated. He googled “Lord G-d Hashem” and discovered that this was the G-d of the Jews.

Haman
So Mordechai is a Jew, is he? I’ll wipe out these Jews if it’s the last thing I do!

Lackey
When, sire?

Haman
Let’s see…CastLots.com says…the 13th of Adar. Put a notice in the Weekly Royal E-Newsletter that on the 13th of Adar, all of the Jews of all of the Provinces of Persia will be put to death.

Lackey
Sire, is it wise to publicize the massacre of the Jews in the Weekly Royal E-Newsletter?

Haman
Sure, why not? Everybody just deletes it anyway.

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Chapter Four

Narrator
But Haman was wrong. There was one person that studiously read the Weekly Royal E-Newsletter every Monday. That person was Mordechai. And he was furious.

Mordechai
I am furious.

Narrator
Mordechai put on sackcloth and covered himself with ashes.

Mordechai
Amazon will send you a big box of ashes in 2 to 3 business days, with no extra charge for shipping!

Narrator
He forwarded the message to his friends, who forwarded it to their friends, who forwarded it to their friends. As one, he and all the other Jews who had heard the news opened their Weekly Royal E-Newsletters, hit “reply,” and typed that single, fateful word: Un-subscribe.
Mordechai
(on phone)
Esther, you have to do something. You have to speak to the king directly!

Esther
Okay, sure. I’ll ask him about it when we Skype later tonight.

Mordechai
No, Esther. This is the kind of conversation that needs to take place... IN PERSON.

Esther
(gasps)
But the king will surely kill me if I speak to him IN PERSON without being summoned. He’s said it a thousand times: if you want to reach him about something important, email is best.

Mordechai
I’m afraid IN PERSON is the only way.

Narrator
Esther was terrified, but she knew that Mordechai was right. She had Mordechai send out a message to all the Jews of Persia to go without food or drink or logging on to Facebook for three days and three nights.

Esther
After that I will approach the king IN PERSON, even though he really hates when people do that, and if I perish, I perish.

Chapter Five

Narrator
On the third day of fasting, Esther tried hard to remember what it was like to interact with someone IN PERSON.

Esther
(holding out handshake)
Hel-LO. No, that’s not right. HEL-lo.

Narrator
She took off her bathrobe and flip-flops and put on real clothes. At the last minute, in a move that ensured the future of the Jewish people, she remembered to shower. Finally, she was ready to see the king... IN PERSON.
Ahashuerus
(looking at computer)
Now let’s build a factory there. But knock down that community center. That seems lame.
(see Esther)
Oh, hey, Esther!

Narrator
The king extended his computer mouse to Esther. She breathed a deep sigh of relief.

Esther
HEL-lo, my king.

Ahashuerus
Check out this awesome game I’m playing.

Esther
Is that the Sims?

Ahashuerus
No, I think it’s called “Annual Shushan Building Plans.” So, what’s up?

Esther
I just wanted to…um…I wanted to invite you and Haman to lunch tomorrow. At my place.

Ahashuerus
Oh cool, well send me the Facebook invite.

Esther
No, there’s no Facebook invite. It’s um…just the two of you.

Ahashuerus
Oh. Well. Okay, who else is going?

Esther
Haman.

Ahashuerus
Okay…so has he Not Yet Replied, said he’s Maybe Attending or is he Attending for sure. What’s the Location? What Time is the event? What type of event is it? A birthday? A political rally? Can you sum it up with a one-sentence description?

Esther
Um…
Lunch seemed to go well. Esther got on her favorite food blogs and put together a tasty pumpkin ravioli dish with rosemary butter sauce.

Ahashuerus
Hey, remember when you fought that lion?

Esther
Yeah.

Ahashuerus
That was sweet.

Esther
Thanks.

Ahashuerus
So, Esther, lemme ask you something. What’s this feast all about? Do you, like, want something? Cause I mean if you do, it’s yours, up to half my kingdom and all that.

Esther
Thanks you, my king. I guess what I really want is...for you guys to come over for lunch again tomorrow.

Ahashuerus and Haman agreed to return the next day. Haman was feeling very pleased with himself and went home and blogged about the whole thing. Then he checked his blog’s stats, and remembered that Mordechai still hadn’t added him to his RSS feed.

Haman
That jerk! Honey, do we have any extra gallows around?

Zeresh
Oh sure, they’re in the garage. We’ll set ‘em up tonight and then tomorrow you can tell Ahashuerus to hang Mordechai on them.

Haman
(breathes sigh of relief)
Thanks, babe. I feel a lot better.
Chapter Six

Narrator
That night, the king couldn’t sleep. He kept looking at the Facebook pages of his friends from high school and wasting time on People.com.

Ahashuerus
Is Nicole Kidman’s forehead enormous or is it just me?

Narrator
Finally, feeling bored, he switched on his Blackberry and listened to his latest voice memos.

Ahashuerus
Oh yeah…I remember when that Mordechai dude saved my dignity…and my life! I should do something nice for him.
(dials phone)

Haman
Yo.

Ahashuerus
Hey Haman, what’s up? Can I ask you a favor? What would be like the awesomest thing I could possibly do for someone really, really cool?

Narrator
Haman thought the king meant him.

Haman
Gosh, I guess you could get him a book deal for his blog. Maybe a $100 iTunes giftcard. And perhaps a parade through town in his honor in the choicest garments available? I’m just spitballing.

Ahashuerus
That sounds perfect. Can you arrange all of that for Mordechai?

Haman
Mordechai?!

Narrator
Haman was furious.

Haman
I am furious.
Narrator

But he had no choice but to follow the king’s orders. And so it was that Mordechai’s blog, *Musings From Mordechai*, became a bestselling book and was later optioned for a film starring Dustin Hoffman. Mordechai dressed in beautiful robes and Haman grumpily lead him through town in a parade. And later that night, when the city of Shushan was fast asleep, Mordechai blew $100 on Klezmer music on iTunes. All was right with the world.

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Chapter Seven

Narrator

The next day, Esther got on her food blogs and decided to make a feast of savoury crepes with a thyme-lemon sauce and organic clementine clafoutis.

Ahashuerus

This food is truly scrumptious, my queen.

Esther

Thank you, my king.

Ahashuerus

And now, please. Tell us why you have asked us to lunch once again. If there’s anything you want, you can have it, up to half my kingdom as long as the shipping costs aren’t astronomical.

Esther

Thank you, my king. I am afraid that what I want isn’t something that can be shipped in a box.

Ahashuerus

Are you sure? Because I hear they’re coming out with a new Mac product this week.

Esther

What I want is more valuable even than a trendy electronic device. It is nothing less than for you to save the lives of my people!

Ahashuerus

(gasps)

More valuable than MacBook Air? And what’s this about saving your people?
Esther
Don’t you see? I am a Jew. It’s why I understand the jokes on *Curb Your Enthusiasm* and you don’t. And the one who threatens us Jews is your horrid advisor—Haman!

Haman
No, wait!

Ahashuerus
Haman? You? But why would you want to hurt my darling Esther?

Haman
Because...because of my blog!

Ahashuerus
That’s it! Guards, take him away!

*Guards come and grab Haman.*

Guard 1
Hang him on the gallows he built to hang Mordechai.

Guard 2
Let him blog about the irony!

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*Chapter Eight*

Narrator
All of the Jews of Shushan celebrated Haman’s demise. Then they briefly wondered what the three remaining chapters could possibly contain. Oh right, the Jews were still scheduled to be massacred.

Esther
Can’t we do anything to stop the massacre, oh king?

Ahashuerus
I’ve tried before and I’m afraid it is not possible. An official edict, once sent, cannot be unsent. But here, you and your Uncle Mordechai—take my email password. You can send out whatever messages you want from the King’s email account.

Mordechai
Then I will send the Jews a message telling them that they can defend themselves!
Ahashuerus
Sure, and you can attach this adorable photo of a puppy!

All three
(looking at photo)
Awwww.

Chapter Nine

Narrator
On that fateful day in Adar, the Jews of Persia rose up to defend themselves. They fought bravely and fiercely, and many of their attackers fell in battle.

Ahashuerus
I have heard that many have died in Shushan today. When will the killing end? It’s hard to hear *Say Yes to the Dress* over the noise of battle.

Esther
Just one more thing, King. Let the Jews hang the ten sons of Haman. We’re pretty sure that will get our point across.

Narrator
So Ahashuerus wrote the law and crossed his fingers that Kelly would pick the floor-length mermaid cut with all the beading. The next day the 10 sons of Haman were hung from the gallows: Parshandata, Dalfon, Aspata, Porata, Adalya, Aridata, Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vaizata.

Mordechai
Which explains why those are such unpopular names these days.

Narrator
Meanwhile, in the other provinces, the Jews killed 75,000 of their attackers, despite attempts by the bad guys to shut down the internet and prevent them from using Twitter to plan their counter-attack. With the help of social media, the Jews survived.

Esther
We will call this day Purim, because Haman drew “purim,” or lots.

Mordechai
We have turned our sadness into joy, and so we have much to celebrate on this day.
Chapter Ten

Narrator
For many years, Mordechai helped rule the kingdom wisely and fairly. He did away with the Weekly Royal E-Newsletter and created a user-friendly website that people could check if and when they wanted to. He moderated the kingdom’s message boards with a just and even-handed touch. Throughout all of Shushan there was much rejoicing that Mordechai was their leader.

Esther and Ahashuerus found out that they both really liked Wii tennis and the Jersey Shore.

And somewhere on the exotic and beautiful Comoros Islands, Vashti and Evan lived happily ever after.