

West End Synagogue

Purim Shpiel 2009

Ken Klein & David Prager

Announcer: Ladies and Gentleman and children of all ages, welcome to our Purim shpiel. Tonight we're going to peel back the centuries and examine one of history's most reviled but enigmatic figures. Haman – a man whose very name is synonymous with jeers and cat-calls; Haman – destructive megalomaniac, pathological degenerate, sadistic racist – and that was just his good side – Haman, the evil schemer who millennia later still seems larger than life. But is the story that's come down to us the real story? Or might there really much more to the Purim tale than meets the eye? Judge for yourselves as we bring you: "Stick-it: the story of Haman, the man nobody knows."

And to help us with our investigations, we'd like to bring out noted man about town, Haman scholar, and chairman of the Middle Eastern Studies department at Zabars, Professor Maven Goldthrob. Professor, come join us.

(Applause)

Professor: Thanks, it's great to be here. Frankly at my age, it's great to be anywhere!

Announcer: Now professor, let's first get to your credentials as an expert. You didn't originally start as a mid-east maven, did you? I fact, weren't you originally a marriage counselor?

Professor: Why, yes. It all started at last year's show when I said: "There's way too much explicit sex on television and in the movies – and not nearly enough at my house!" Of course, this led to my best selling love and marriage manual, "Sex: the Goldthrob Variations."

Announcer: I know we've all read that one. Well, have things gotten any better between you and your wife?

Professor: I'm glad you asked, but no. The other night I came home from work and found my wife in bed with my best friend. I asked him, "Who told you that you could sleep with my wife?" and he said, "Everybody." And, hey, now my wife has cut me down to once a month. But I shouldn't complain – some guys I know she's cut out entirely!

Announcer: Enough already! Professor, are you obsessed with sex?

Professor: Hey, it's Klein and Prager that write this garbage. I just add star power!

Announcer: OK. Can we go from here to how you got interested in Haman?

Professor: OK. Well I started out studying the Jews of Persia and of course from there went on to the Purim story. And the more I studied the more I suspected that the whole tale was a hoax to disguise what really happened. But to understand where I'm heading, you have to start with the full picture, the environment from which Haman emerged. Shushan, the capital. Sin city -- where everything had its price if you knew who to ask. Imagine Babylon. Imagine Nineveh. Imagine Elliot Spitzer. Here, let me get someone to tell you about it.

Singer enters

Shushan song – sung to 42nd Street

Come and greet those Persian feet
It's the capital I'll be takin' to
Shushan – dig the beat

Strident strumpets blasting trumpets
Strutting through the street
Blushing eunuchs, 'neath their tunics

Sure are indiscreet

When I hear that horn, I get reborn
It's the capital I'll be takin' you to
It's a Shushan, Shushan morn

Baubles, notions, magic potions
Aphrodisiacs
Fill my coffer, make an offer
What's not up front is in de back

So, if you're wanting sleaze
Put yourself at ease
It's the capital I'll be takin' you to
Shushan – we aim to please

One day – despair, goin' nowhere
You dance in the bazaar
Next day, Alice – you're called to the palace
Hello Shushan – you're a star

Everlastin' fame
If you play the game
It's the capital I'll be takin' you to
Shushan is its name!

Luscious ladies, straight from Hades
Showing off their stuff
Illicit pleasure at you leisure
In Shushan enough is never enough!

Oh! Hear the din, the sounds of sin

It's the capital I'll be takin' you to
Shushan city, Shushan city, Shushan – let me in!

Announcer: Wow! Old Shushan sure sounds like a rough place!

Professor: Kind of reminds of the Bronx where I grew up. In our school you were searched for guns and knives on the way in and if you didn't have any, they gave you some. But enough about me! Let me tell you about Haman as a young boy. In psychological parlance, he was what's known as a "weird kid." Let me tell you about some ancient documents I discovered which talk about this period of Haman's life.

Haman's music teacher: I was Haman's cello teacher. It was a great source of pride to young Haman that he was the only cellist in the Shushan middle school marching band. And yet he could never quite keep up with rest of the band – and I mean that literally! He was an enthusiastic player, but one who was limited by his lack of technical ability. He had no conception of tone production on the instrument. He used to blow into it.

Haman's 6th grade social studies teacher: I taught young Haman social studies. I remember he was super passionate about his views -- but he didn't know anything. I remember him saying: (pompously) "These are my principles ... (with a shrug) "and if you don't like them, well, I have others." So, I could tell even then he had a future in politics. And of course there was the time Haman single-handedly led a revolt, overthrew the student government and ended up enslaving the fifth grade. My God, what leadership qualities that kid had.

Haman's Bar Mitzvah tutor: I was Haman's Bar Mitzvah tutor. What can I tell ya? The kid wasn't even Jewish – he was just into it for the presents and that little plaque with the puhsook from the Torah that begins and ends with your initials. And ya know how his maftir portion is about God being hostile to Amalek forever. So, in Haman's Bar Mitzvah speech, he says it was all a big

misunderstanding, and that we should replace chanting this part of the Torah with a song from the Village People. And that wasn't even the worst part. You know how most Bar Mitzvah boys are afraid their voices are too high? So, it turns out that Haman is making big bucks on the side selling steroids to the other Bar Mitzvah kids. I finally figured it out when I had an eleven-year old who sounded like Darth Vader!

Professor: Maybe it would help if Haman told us a little in his own voice so we could tell what he actually sounded like.

Young Haman enters.

Haman: How ya doin? Good crowd, good crowd. Ya know, last week this hot seventh grader invited me to her house 'n said nobody's home. Well, I went over there and it was true -- nobody was home. (Tugs uncomfortably on his own collar) I tell you, as a kid, you don't get no respect. The other day I asked my parents if I was adopted and they said, "Not yet, but we placed an ad!" And, at home we live with my grandmother. What a tough piece 'a work she was. She buried three husbands – and two of them were only napping! But maybe I can explain better in a song.

Song for Haman as a boy, sung to Maybe from "Annie"

I may be just a boy
But I'm more than I seem
Someday the people of Persia
All will play parts in my dream
Give counsel to the king,
Widespread will be my fame,
They'll all be shouting out, "Haman"
History'll honor my name!

Someday I'll be rich

Upstanding and proud,
Not just another
Unknown in the crowd.
Given a chance,
I'll be honest and fair --
But if that's too hard,
Well – I really don't care!

So, I might have to steal,
And I might have to lie
Won't be just another grey man,
Not Haman!

Mothers' all taught us
"Be good girls and boys,
Play nicely with others,
And share all our toys."
How can you blame me
If I can't think small?
'Cause sharing's for wimps
And I want it all!

So, maybe not today
But surely someday soon,
Won't settle for being a grey man,
Not Haman!

Announcer: OK. Let's jump forward a few years to when Haman was a little older. So, Haman being a guy with political ambitions, can I assume that he picked a girlfriend from a prestigious family with an impeccable reputation?

Professor: Au contraire, my slow-witted friend. He picked a girl who couldn't have come from further across the tracks. I'm telling you, she was the most notorious young woman in Persia. Her parents reported that her very first sentence as a toddler was, "Hi sailor! Wanna dance?" But you know, it's really the old double standard. A man can sleep around, no questions asked; but a woman makes a couple 'a hundred mistakes and suddenly she's a tramp." Here, why don't I have her tell you about it?

Girlfriend: Hi, I was Haman's first serious girlfriend, and I guess he was my first serious relationship too. (Wistfully) In some ways, it feels like it was just yesterday. Sure, I dated guys before him -- but Haman was different and I fell pretty hard. Maybe it was my wild reputation that attracted him. Who knows? But for the record, I never even met the Budapest String Quartet – (pause) let alone the Hungarian National Orchestra.

You know I started dating when I hit puberty. I was just looking for a little affection, but my dating life left everything to be desired. I remember after two years, I said to my first boyfriend, "Either tell me your name or it's over!"

And then I meet Haman – and for a while my whole life seemed perfect. (Long sigh) Still, as passionate as I felt, I gotta say that as a lover and boyfriend he was sort of a dud. To put it gently, all he knew about technique he learned from Klein's Ph.D. thesis: "Sex: Wake me when it's over!" I mean, his idea of foreplay was a half an hour of begging. And the only thing he knew was men on top, women on bottom – my God, for our whole relationship we slept in bunk beds.

And yet, and yet ... I still remember him fondly, those days of long ago.

Teenage Girlfriend Song sung to *Mamma Mia*

Had a crush on the boy
Since I don't know when
All these years, I may never
Feel it again!
Moth to the flame, I was drawn to him
I am to blame, but I found that I just went bats
For guys in three-cornered hats!
Just one touch was sufficient to push
My defenses from Hodu to Cush!

Oh! Oh! Oh!

Friggin' Haman -- that Amalakite
Oh why? Did I go for such a creep?
Friggin' Haman -- kiss like dynamite
Did I -- have to let it get so deep?
My heart kept racing faster
Not ready for disaster
Good-bye! – Never really loved you!
Friggin' Haman – what am I to do?
Oh my! Did I ever love you!!!

Shoulda' known from the start
I was playing with fire
Shoulda' seen all the signs
That the boy was a liar!
Only a game! That's all I was to him
Oh, what a shame! Under the spell of a Persian night
No way could I see the light!
Always knew that he would go far
His ambition would make him a star!

Oh! Oh! Oh!

Friggin' Haman – that Amalakite
Oh why'd – I ever let him kiss me?
Friggin' Haman – kisses of delight
Sigh, sigh – Does he ever miss me?
If it weren't for his malice
I'd be sleepin' in the palace
Good-bye! – never really loved you!
Friggin' Haman – what am I to do?
Oh my! Did I ever love you!
Oh my! Heaven, how I loved you!

Oh my! I Really, really loved you!

Announcer: OK, let's move forward as Haman grows up. So much of the Purim story is built around Haman's irrational hatred of Mordechai, a hatred that eventually leads to his plot to annihilate the Jews. Professor, does your research shed any light on why they so detested each other?

Professor: It certainly does, but the whole premise of your question is all wrong -- because Haman and Mordechai weren't enemies at all. That's just another falsehood that repeated by history books. Sure, at times their relationship was a little -- edgy? But from the time they were young men, the truth is Haman and Mordechai were the best of pals.

Announcer: So, Haman being from Amalek and Mordechai being a Jew didn't ...

Professor: (interrupts) No, no, not at all. It just added a little spice -- wait, let me have them tell you about it.

Song for Haman and Mordechai, sung to *Friendship*

Haman: You know Mordy, we shoulda teamed up years ago!

Mordechai: We're a duo, two of a kind

Haman: Partners

Mordechai: Co-conspirators

Haman: Thick as thieves

Mordechai: Peas in a pod

Haman: Pigs in a poke

Mordechai: Oil and vinegar

Haman: Two birds and one stone

Mordechai: Banks and bailouts

(Song begins)

Mordechai: If ever you're in a pickle, I'm your nickel

Haman: If you're ever in a convent, I'll your rent

Mordechai: If you ever get your teeth kicked in by a camel, I'll buy enamel

Both: It's friendship, friendship,
Just a perfect blendship
When other friendships are all ts'drait
Ours will still be great!

Mordechai: Looking for a palace spy, why I'm your guy

Haman: If you need a new premier, well, I'm here

Mordechai: If you ever have a fatwa on your head, I'll go to bed!

Both: It's friendship, friendship,
Just a perfect blendship
When other friendships are holy war
Ours will just be sore!

Haman: If you need a palace plot, I'll know what's what!

Mordechai: If the king ever needs advice, well don't think twice

Haman: And if the queen's not what she seems, we're switchin' teams

Both: It's friendship, friendship,
We're a perfect blendship
When other friendships are "dreck mit dreck"
We'll say "What the heck!"

Mordechai: If they tell the king on you, I'll be blue

Haman: If they're planning genocide, I'll be snide

Mordechai: If the king's after your neck, well, what the heck!

Both: It's friendship, friendship,
Just the perfect blendship
When other friendships go "Oy Vais Mir!"
Ours will still be here!

Announcer: This certainly is a surprising turn. So the big break in this friendship, the hatred that Mordechai and Haman eventually feel, that comes much later as a result of Haman's genocidal plan to kill the Jews?

Professor: Whoo! Will you stop jumping to conclusions! I'm getting a migraine already. Just wait – I'll get to that when the time comes – we're not even half way through the show yet.

Announcer: Sorry

Professor: (Pompously) Well, you should be.

Announcer: (Regains composure) So Haman and Mordechai were pals? Did history get everything wrong? What about the other major political figure, Achashvayrosh? In the Purim story he comes down to us as petulant and

indecisive, a man led astray and manipulated by evil advisors. Professor, what does your research tell us about Achashvayrosh?

Professor: Well, what you said is true, but if you think that was Achashvayrosh's biggest problem, you're missing the point. His real problem was – how can I put this delicately -- when it came to “romance” the guy was just one insatiable appetite – and being an absolute monarch just made things worse. He never met a woman he didn't like – hell, he hardly met anyone or anything he didn't like. The common wisdom around the capital was that when Achashvayrosh would tour the countryside, folks would lock up their camels. I'm telling you, people were afraid to give the guy a donut! (Looks at audience) Ooh! Pretend you didn't get it.

But you know there's another side to Achashvayrosh and in some ways, in his attitudes about love, he was far ahead of his time. Now, here to tell us this portion of Achashvayrosh's story is – (long pause) Mordechai, who insisted on singing this after his own song got cut.

Mordechai enters.

Love is a Multi-gendered Thing (sung to *Love is a Many-splendored Thing*)

Mordechai: Love is a multi-gendered thing!

It's for hetero's
Who won't shed their clothes
'Til she wears a ring.
It's for clergy and for laymen,
For straight guys and for gay men
To kings and queens
And in-betweens I sing!

Prudes! When, oh when will they see the light?
There's a way to bliss
Through each orifice

If you do it right!
So, you shouldn't care
What's in their underwear
As long as joy they bring, 'cause
True love's a multi-gendered thing!

Love is a multi-gendered thing!
It's the primal urge,
The sudden surge,
The illicit fling.
You see him in a speedo
Enflaming your libido
And soon your heart
Is darting on a string!

War! Disease, famine and pestilence!
In this crazy life
Filled with storm and strife
Not a lot makes sense!
You could do worse
Than be polymorphically perverse
Step-up to the plate and swing, 'cause
True love's a multi-gendered thing!

Mordechai walks off

Announcer: Well, that was a side of Achashvayrosh we never knew about – but let's get back to Haman, now a young man about Shushan. What was he like?

Professor: Well, the results were kind of mixed. On the one hand, Haman was a rising star, someone clearly going places. He was a bon vivant, showing up at all the right parties, always with a clever remark on his lips. On the other hand,

though people admired him, they didn't exactly trust him. But that three-cornered hat of his – it became Haman's trademark – and to all of Shushan it came to symbolize the raucous, raunchy devil-may-care spirit of those days. It helped make him famous. OK, Haman, tell us about it.

Haman enters.

This Funny Hat-of-Mine (sung to *My Funny Valentine*)

Haman: This funny hat-of-mine
Three-cornered hat-of-mine
You're a fedora for a shark!
You shape is nothing nice
More like a pizza slice
But you're my personal trade mark!
Is your brim a little weak?
Does the point deserve a tweak?
Is it like Wisconsin Cheese-heads at the park?
But, don't change your shape for me,
'Cause someday you're gonna be
Famous, I promise and soon:
You'll be a pastry – with prune

This funny hat-of-mine
Pizza-slice hat-of-mine
You are the headdress I'll regret!
You'll come back into style
-- 1770's – for a while
'Cause you're a look we can't forget
Ev'ry haberdasher knows
That I'll never change chapeaux
To a bowler or a skull cap plus barrette
Most caps you cannot bake
Into a tasty cake
But my hamantash changes that!
And then you'll see me eat my hat!

Announcer: That Haman sounds like quite a character -- but I'd like to hear more about the socio-economic and cultural conditions in the Persian Empire during this epoch.

Professor: Gevalt! What do you think this is? PBS? Enough with the culture already! It's time we got to the story. We don't want the alcohol to run out before we do!

Announcer: Agreed! The last thing we need is a sobered up audience! So the megillah opens with the story of King Achashvayrosh's big party. The king commands Queen Vashti to do a lewd dance in front of all his drunken friends. Vashti refuses, there's a tumult of epic proportions and the queen winds up banished. That's the traditional version -- now are you going to tell me that's all wrong too?

Professor: No, that's pretty much it. Ya know, I couldn't have said it better if I were the one reading the script. Vashti, sing us a song.
Vashti comes out and sings to *If I Were a Boy* by Beyoncé

Vashti: If I sat on the throne
Could women do such a thing?
I'd treat my subjects with respect
And I swear I'd be a better king
I wouldn't allow
Girls to be treated as toys
'Cause our hearts contain a treasure
But all they seek is pleasure
I'm so tired 'a hearing "Boys 'll boys!"

Why can't Persia's queen
Contribute all that she can
Offer wisdom and compassion

Help the king to be a better man
But now isn't the time
And this isn't the place
So for now my dreams have vanished
Farewell Shushan! I've been banished!
Is my fate to end my days in disgrace? Vashti walks off

Professor: Poor Vashti! But meanwhile, the king is getting it from all sides because, by law, Persia has to have a queen. He should've acted sooner, he shouldn't have acted at all, the New York Post says he's a socialist – I mean there's no end. And the harem, they're talking about unionizing – although the rumors are, with Achashvayrosh, overtime isn't a problem. (Look knowingly at audience.) So the king, now he's wondering if this whole polygamy thing is worth all the hassle. King, it's your turn.

Achashvayrosh:

SONG – KING Let a Harem in Your Tent
(to the tune of "Let a Woman in Your Life")

(slow, matter of fact)

I'm just an ordinary King,
A monarch seeking nothing more than absolute obedience
Like having every whim obeyed without the slightest hesitance
A bland sultan am I, of simple sovereignty
Who takes bows to on bended knee -- treated like a deity
And off the heads of all who disagree...
Well – just an ordinary King.

(fast, angry)

But let a harem in your tent!
And you wish you'd abdicate
The oasis will run dry
While you're busy finding why
Ev'ry newborn looks exactly like the Eunuch you just hired at the gate

Just let a harem in your tent
And you'll live to rue the day
Plan an orgy for your pals
And you'll find that all the gals
Have a headache, and a headache,
and a headache, for the whole damn month of May.

You'd like to slip behind a sand dune
But end up playing hide and seek
Then when you're busy racing camels
They're off belly dancing with a sheik!

Oh let a harem in your tent
And you'll wish you could repent!

(slow down)

Let the other royal males
Buy their bangles, beads and veils
After for all their lewd gyrating
I just wind up master – (music pauses) wait, forget that
So I dare 'em, let a harem in their tents!

Announcer: OK. The next big event is the beauty pageant to select Vashti's successor. Esther, Mordechai's niece, wins and is crowned the new queen of Persia. What was the story there? Was she eager to compete? Why did her overprotective uncle let her enter in the first place?

Professor: Good questions. First, the whole idea of making Esther queen came from Mordechai. You see, after the queen was banished, Mordechai had a premonition things were going to get very dangerous for the Jews. And, when the Vashti affair created a vacancy at the very top, Mordechai saw this as, literally, a once in a generation opportunity to help his people.

But now we come to a previously unknown but tragic part of the story. We only know about it because of the recent discovery of Esther's diary in a genizeh, a hidden cache of books, buried beneath a deli in Hoboken, New Jersey. The diary makes clear that Esther was hopelessly in love with a young shepherd from their little village. They were already betrothed when Mordechai approached Esther with this whole contest business. And Esther, heroine that she was, sacrificed all her own personal happiness for the good of the Jews. She never saw the shepherd again. (Tearfully) Sentimental old fluff that I am, it brings me to tears just thinking about it. Here let Esther tell you.

Esther:

ESTHER'S Song to *I Dreamed a Dream* (Fantine's Song) FROM LES MIZ

There was a time, there was a day
When my life's path seemed so much clearer
The wider world seemed far away
But all I wanted was much nearer
At night I'd lie on open ground
And search the sky with wide-eyed wonder
I'd feel God's presence all around
A dome of peace we could live under

(Instrumental break)

(repeat melody)

A lonely girl, a gentle man,
The heart I gave that I can't take back
We'd laugh and spin our secret plan
In fields of daffodil and lilac

(bridge)

But now my Uncle Mordechai,
Assures me I must do my duty,
And the girl who shared that plan
I'm afraid that she is gone – gone – gone – gone – gone!

(Back to original melody)

Yes! There's a price that must be paid

For one's romantic girlish notions

In some horrific masquerade

I'll play the part, go through the motions

(repeat bridge)

Someday this tale will be retold

My name will resonate with glory

But now I'll never hear his song

The dream I dreamed 's forever gone – gone – gone – gone – gone!

(one bar instrumental)

(coda)

There was a time, there was a day

When all our paths seemed so much clearer

But now a single path remains

And I must do this thing we need. Esther walks off

Announcer: (Also in tears) Well, I guess we all know the next part of the story. Esther enters the beauty contest and her superior beauty and winsome smile captivate the judges. She is swept to victory.

Professor: Mercy! You're so thick you could run a car company! That's just wrong, wrong wrong! It's here where we begin to see the genius of Mordechai. Using Haman's connections, he gets himself appointed chief organizer of the beauty contest. Then he gets the brilliant idea that maybe he can get the contestants to think that Shushan is the pits and living in the harem isn't all it's

cracked up to be. So, he arranges a tour where the contestants get to visit the harem and get the lowdown from some of the king's current wives.

Song #1 for Harem to *Everything's Up to Date in Kansas City* from "Oklahoma"

Harem:

Came to Shushan City, joined the Harem
All set to show my belly dancing tricks!
The costumes that they brought for us to wear 'em
To dance the seven veils had only six!

Everything's reprobate in Shushan City
They've sunken so much lower than the floor
They went and built a nightclub for ev'ryone to romp –
They named the nightclub Sodom and G'more

Everything's reprobate in Shushan City
They've sunk about as low as they can go
They took a great oasis and they turned it to a swamp
They've got the kind of mammals here with ev'ry kind of hump –
And I'm not talkin' camels when I talk about this dump!
They've sunk about as low as they can go
-- yes, sheik –
They're sunk about as low as they can go!

Professor: And after the other wives trashed living in Shushan, they painted a pretty dismal picture of life in the harem.

Song #2 for Harem to *Life Upon the Wicked Stage* from Showboat

Harem:

An oriental harem may sound darin' but it isn't what I'd call romantic!
Sure, I've got a title, but I'm stuck wearing a sheytl, Hey! I'm getting frantic!
Thought I'd lead a glamorous life
But now I'm just 600th wife

An oriental harem may sound darin', but it's no place for a girl!

An oriental harem may sound darin' but you won't get much of Persian delight!
It's true from what you hear that it is less than once a year that you have your
quote "big night"

Eunuchs cover you with oils

But five minutes later, hey, --it's back with the goyls!

An oriental harem may sound darin', but it's no place for a girl!

An oriental harem may sound darin' but it really isn't super-duper

Boy I made a blunder, oy, it isn't any wonder I'm in such a stupor

Who needs all the royal splurgin'

I'm goin' back to being a virgin!

An oriental harem may sound darin', but it's no place for a girl!

An oriental harem may sound darin' but it isn't when you're stuck with
Achashvayrosh!

He's forever lusting, but his hygiene is disgusting, the affair is très gauche!

Women aren't his favorite mammals

I think he prefers the camels!

An oriental harem may sound darin', but it's no place for a girl!

Announcer: So, is that what happened? Mordechai got the other contestants to
drop out?

Professor: No, it still isn't that simple. Here listen.

The contestants are standing out front, smiling.

Pageant Announcer: So, now we're down to our final contestants. Remember,
if for any reason the winner can't carry out her responsibilities, than the first
runner-up gets crowned in her place, and so on. And now, it's our moment of
decision. Judges, the envelope, please.

(Judge brings him the envelope) And the second runner-up is: (pause) Esther!

Applause. Esther looks relieved.

And now the name of the first runner-up. The first runner-up is ...Miss Hodu! ... So, the winner and new queen is Miss Cush! (More applause. She walks triumphantly around the stage, waving to audience.)

Miss Cush: (Breathlessly) Thank you, thank you! I can't believe I won! I'd like to thank all the little people – the elves, the dwarves ...

Pageant Announcer interrupts her.

Pageant Announcer: Wait a minute, Miss Cush! Since the rules have changed somewhat, our pageant director Mordechai will explain to you your new responsibilities as queen.

Mordechai: Thank you and congratulations Miss Cush. Now as you know, the queen has to set an example for all of Persia. So, the first thing you'll need to do is attend synagogue services every week, both Friday night and Saturday morning. (She collapses into a chair, sitting up.) And then, you have to be a member of five synagogue committees ... (She falls further in the chair so that she is now half lying on the chair, have lying on the floor. She's gasping for breath.) including the Ritual Committee! (With a loud "Oy, mama!" she collapses onto the floor and swoons away into a dramatic dead feint.) Guards! Miss Cush is experiencing some distress. Remove her please! (Assistants drag her off.)

And so I'm pleased to announce that the new queen of Persia is Miss Hodu – let's here it for her! (More applause. She steps forward, but rubs her chin like she's not too sure she still wants to be queen. Mordechai continues.) Say, did I ever tell you anything about the mikveh?

Miss Hodu: That's it. I'm outta here! (Strides off the stage)

Mordechai: (Aside) Well, that was easy. (Back to full voice) And so citizens of Persia, I'm proud to give you your new queen, Queen Esther! (Tepid applause)

All walk off or sit down

Announcer: (Dubious) And that's the way it really happened?

Professor: (Mock outrage) I'm shocked – would I lie? And you gotta admit that mikveh line was pretty good!

Announcer: (Somewhat exasperated) Professor, let's get to the climactic scene, the centerpiece of our story. (Read at breakneck pace with loads of new gesticulating each sentence. While he's reading, the characters act this out in pantomime.) Haman puts into place a plan to annihilate the Jews on Purim day. But Esther, at great personal risk, invites King Achashvayrosh and Haman to a dinner party where she tells the king that she's a Jew, accuses Haman of trying to kill her people off, and even maneuvers the king into thinking that Haman is trying to seduce her. Then Achashvayrosh, in a jealous rage, banishes Haman and supports the Jews defending themselves against their enemies. The Jews triumph, Esther and Mordechai become heroes and we end up with the Purim holiday. That's pretty much what happens, right?

Professor: You poor gullible fool! That's the story all right, but it's wrong in almost every significant way. Yeah, the king and Haman had a major falling out, and Esther and Mordechai did become heroes; but my documents prove that it wasn't all about sex, it was about money! Ya see, even after the big Shushan party, the king kept spending money like there was no tomorrow. And then – well, let me show you what happened.

Achashvayrosh on his throne, Esther sitting nearby, advisor behind king.

Achashvayrosh: (humming) Things look swell!

Things look great!

Gonna have the whole world on a plate!

I tell you Esther! I'm feeling mah-vel-ous. I'm feeling so good, I think I may order our army to attack and devastate a place I never heard of! (Thinking...) I know! What about Iran? (Advisor whispers in his ear that Persia is Iran.) It is? Oh! OK, drop that. Still, a surge, a purge, a splurge – I'm just feeling lucky!

Esther: (Looking somewhat gloomy disapproving) Your majesty, I don't think we can afford ... I think that maybe...

Achashvayrosh: Nonsense! We're rollin' in dough. And I'm feeling kind of randy. Guard, come over here – I want to commit an unnatural act. (Pause) On second thought, bring the camel!

Esther (looking at him disgustingly): That's the most ...

Achashvayrosh: I was joshing. I was joshing. Can't I josh? (Winks at audience) OK, back to the plot. Let's ask in Haman and the assistant finance minister, plus that new guy, Mordechai, to give us the latest rosy economic reports.

Haman plus other minister plus Mordechai walk in. Haman and the minister look panicky.

Achashvayrosh: Well, guys, give it to me straight. How're we doing? As we say in Persian, gimme the gonsa emmes, let's talk tachlis!

Haman: King, I hate to break it to you suddenly like this, but we're in serious trouble. The leading indicators are predicting a return of the 10 plagues! It looks like we're up the Euphrates without a paddle! In a word, the whole economy is fuhshtoonk!

Achashvayrosh: I don't understand. How bad is it?

Minister: King, the economy's bad. The other day the groundhog came up, looked at his 401(k) and shot himself. I tell you, things are so bad, yesterday Ben ate Jerry. Why, it's so bad, even people not in Obama's cabinet have stopped paying taxes!

Achashvayrosh: But how did this happen? I thought you guys were making safe, diversified investments.

Minister: Well, so did we. But then we saw an opportunity that looked too good to pass up. And we figured, if Elie Wiesel is putting his money there, it's got to be kosher, right?

Achashvayrosh: Oh, no! Don't tell me you ...

Haman: Just let us explain.

Haman and the minister sing a song to "*He Did It!*" from "My Fair Lady"

Haman and Minister:

We invested it with Madoff
A journey
With Bernie
We didn't think he'd screw us
But indeed he did!

We thought that we were shtarkers!
They've called in our markers
The outlook's looking darker
Than it ever did!

The Treasury is bankrupt, gone to zero overnight!

Yes, it's true,

Oy! Who knew?

The chance of recovery is oh so very slight

We're broke,

No joke!

Of course we're all in shock

We shoulda' kept the money in a sock!

Oy! We invested it with Madoff
A journey with Bernie
We thought that we were shrewd
Now we're totally unglued
We didn't think he'd screw us
But he did!

Achashvayrosh: That sounds terrible. But are things really that bad?

Haman: King, I tell you the economy's bad, the economy's bad. The economy's so bad that now at AA meetings they've got a \$10 cover and a two drink minimum. That's how bad. Obama's new slogan: "Spare change you can believe in."

Haman and minister sing some more.

Haman and Minister:

We're gonna need a bailout
'Cause banking
Is tanking
The market took a spanking
Now it needs a hearse

On us they'll place the onus
Forget 'bout our bonus
Just hope that they don't stone us
Or do even worse

Though about retiring and resettling with my wife!
Go somewhere,
South of here
Looks like I'll be working the remainder of my life
No bucks!
It sucks!

We're such a pair of boobs!
Economy – it's gone straight down the tubes
'Cause, we invested it with Madoff
Our journey
With Bernie
Thought that nothing could deter us
Now we've got a pile of tzurris
We didn't think he'd screw us
But he did!

Achashvayrosh: Enough already! Get these clowns outta here. If I weren't banishing you for ruining the economy, I'd throw you out for using all the jokes Klein stole from the Tonight Show. Anyway, what do we do now?
(Bombastically) It looks like Persia is doomed!

Esther: Wait a minute your majesty! My uncle Mordechai has some ideas that might help us get out of this mess in better shape than ever.

Achashvayrosh: Oy! Now everybody thinks they're a financial expert! What is it this time?

Mordechai: King, please! (Warming up) I'm talking about a product that'll be bigger than hula hoops, bigger than disco, bigger than Reconstructionism (whispers to audience "irony") – so big that we can sell it all over the empire and beyond. I'm telling you this could be gold mine.

Achashvayrosh: You've got me intrigued – keep going.

Mordechai: Think about it. What do people most like to do? (Pause) No, besides that. I'm talking about eating. Esther, give the king a sample.

Esther produces a large hamentaschen.

Achashvayrosh: Say, this is pretty damn good and I like the shape. What's this on the inside?

Esther: It's prunes.

Haman and the King both shake their heads sagely, and mumble: Prunes!

Mordechai: (Sounding like a pitchman) OK. And people are gonna wanna buy these hamantaschen because we're gonna make Haman the most famous man in Persia. Of course, with the country in such a mess, there's no way to make him popular. So, we'll have to make him the most hated person in the empire

Achashvayrosh: This is getting to sound interesting! (Haman makes a face)

Mordechai: Now a pastry craze has to start somewhere, right? And among all Persia's 127 provinces, what people most like to eat?

Haman and the King throw up their hands. They have no idea.

Mordechai: The Jews!

Achashvayrosh: Really?

Haman: (talking at the same time) I didn't know that!

Mordechai: Of course, why do you think they call it the oral Torah? (Pause)
For instance, our first forefather, Abraham, whose tent was open all sides so that any visitor was welcome. Did you know that he was also the originator of the early bird buffet? And Moses! Our great lawgiver, when he personally went up to meet G-d on Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments, the Mishneh says he brought a coffee cake!

Achashvayrosh and Haman: Keinah hurrah! It makes sense! He's right! We should start with the Jews!

Esther: (Excitedly) So, we spread the rumor that Haman has a plan to annihilate the Jews. We even pick a day. The Jews now all passionately hate Haman. Then, we call it off at the last minute, and Achashvayrosh, you banish Haman forever. The Jews start celebrating, and, as usual, narrowly averting disaster makes them ravenously hungry! That's when we flood Shushan's Upper West Side with hamentaschen, and we're home free.

Achashvayrosh: I... I... I think it just might work.

Haman: Uh, wait a minute! Haven't we forgotten someone? Not only does this plan have me banished, but I go down in history as an anti-Semitic crackpot? Whatever happened to rachmanoos?

Achashvayrosh: (With phony affection) Haman, I'm sorry but, as the saying goes, "Sometimes you just have to take one for the team," "Bite the bullet!" Whatever! Haman, after the total shambles you've made of everything, I'm afraid we have no other options. Guards! Take him away!

Everybody freezes

Professor: So, you see, Haman wasn't really the fiend he was made out to be. Sure, he was more than a little maladjusted, but he wasn't the arch-villain we've all learned to hate.

Haman breaks in, interrupting.

Haman: Wait a minute! We can't just end the story here – with me consigned to oblivion while this Jewish smarty pants and Miss "Barbie on the Euphrates" take

all the credit. (Looks at audience, pleading; waves his arms eliciting audience support.)

Mordechai: No, no! Haman don't you get it? What have you always wanted more than anything? (Expansively) To have the name "Haman" go down in history. (Shrugs) Now, granted, maybe this isn't how you expected to be remembered. But it's fame, real fame, nonetheless.

Haman: (Thinking) You're right! Maybe it wouldn't be so bad. Everyone will see me as a villain, but, damn, I'll be famous! Hmm. I think I can see it now ...

Haman picks up hat and cane.

Razzle Dazzle (Haman's Song)

Give me the old razzle-berry
Boo and hiss at me
Show I'm so mean and filled with villainy
And your reaction will be thrillin' me

Give me the old razz and cat-call,
Taunt and twitter me
Make noises to obliterate my name
Each of your claps, clangs and clatters
Show I'm the only one that matters
Razz and frazzle me
Just enhances my fame!

Give me the old razzle-berry,
Jest and jeer at me
Back since the days of Boris Badinov
Crowds never get to boo the cad enough!

Give me the old rail and ruckus
Roast and ridicule
Hisses 'n boos all sound like cheers because
My name goes down in hist-or-ic-i-ty
There's no such thing as "bad publicity"
Hiss and boo at me
Might as well be applause!

Give me the old razzle-berry,
Josh and jive at me
Who can remember Dudley Doo-Right
When Snidely Whiplash gives you such a fright

Give me the old scorn and snicker
Slam and scoff at me
Pour on the taunts, add feathers to the tar!
All of that noise just spells top billin'
'Cause ev'ry star wants to play the villain!
Razz and frazzle me
It'll make me a star!

Everybody! (Jump to chorus – hats and canes)
(Slow) Give me the old razzle-berry **Chorus:** Razzle-berry

Posterity'll say ev'ry year on Purim night
(Gesturing) Haman found a cure for whatever ails ya:
Just "Blame the Jews" – it never fails ya!
(Though I'm innocent)
I'm Mister anti-Semite! (Shower of confetti)

Announcer: Well, I guess that's the end of the story and the end of the show.

Professor: My God, you're an idiot. Don't you know anything about show business? The shpiel can't end without a big closing number where the entire cast comes out! Dumkopf, what are you thinking?

Announcer: Enough with the abuse. But what can we do next?

Professor: (Thinking) I got it – I mean, here’s what happened next. After Achashvayrosh blamed the whole economic mess on Haman, and Mordechai and Esther became heroes and Purim became a big Jewish holiday, Haman and his minister secretly escaped to the border of the Empire. And they was met there by Mordechai, Esther and the King who wished to say their last goodbyes. So here’s our touching final scene.

Haman: Mordy, Esty, Kingy – what are you doing here?

Achashvayrosh: We couldn’t let you leave without a finale – and we wanted to wish you the best.

Esther: So, where are you headed?

Haman: Well, I’ve heard legends about these ten lost tribes. I’m gonna do my best to find them. And when I do, I reckon they could use a good CPA.

Mordechai: I never thought our story would turn out this way. No hard feelings?

Haman: Nah! Even if we’re separated by distance, we’re still a good team!

Song for Haman and Mordechai and entire cast, sung to *Friendship*

Mordechai: We’re a pair, two sides of a coin

Haman: Comrades-in-arms

Mordechai: A band of brothers

Haman: Oreos and milk!

Mordechai: Down and out!

Haman: A-Rod and steroids!

Mordechai: Viagra and Goldfarb!

Professor: Whoa! Wait a minute! ...

Haman: (Puzzled and almost simultaneously) Is that a law firm?

Achashvayrosh: Hey, me too guys!

(Song begins)

Haman: If I descend from Amalek, a piece a cake!

Mordechai (pointing at king): If you become a potentate, I can relate

Achashvayrosh: (pointing to Haman) If your ever find your neck's caught in a noose, I'll call a truce, 'cause

All three: It's friendship, friendship,
 Just the perfect blendship
 When other friendships are just a shonder
 We'll be growing fonder!

They embrace. Vashti and the old girlfriend walk in with a suitcase.

Achashvayrosh: (first incredulous) Vashti? Vashti, wait, I can explain...

Vashti: King, tell it to wife 600. But it's the end of the show, so no hard feelings from me either.

Mordechai: So, where are you two headed?

Vashti: We're off to Egypt -- to the ancient city of Memphis. I've landed a job teaching yoga and Jewish meditation.

Girlfriend: And I'm becoming an Elvis impersonator. Get it? Elvis? Memphis?
(Implores audience) Anybody? (Stares at Ken with an "I told you" look. Ken gives a "whattaya gonna do?" shrug)

Esther: So I guess we women can end up as friends too. Pianist, hit it.

Vashti: If you need a queen dancing nude, well, you're screwed!

Girlfriend: If you ever get the blues, use my blue suede shoes!

Esther: And if you find the queen's a Jew, so, what's new?

All three: It's friendship, friendship,
Just the perfect blendship
When other friendships hit the kibosh
We'll be hamentash!

Everyone: It's friendship, friendship,
Just the perfect blendship
When other friendships have an awful stench
(point at each other) You'll still be a mentsch!

It's friendship, friendship,
Just the perfect blendship
Audience, if you get up and cheer
We'll be back next year!

Announcer & Professor: And that's our shpiel. If you can no longer tell Haman from Mordechai, we've done our job. Happy Purim Everybody!