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On the Origins of Purim and Its Assyrian Name

In the book of Esther, the name for the holiday Purim derives from Haman’s *pūr* (פּוּר, “lot”) to determine what day to attack the Jews. The name Purim predates the story of Haman’s lot, and may originate in a forgotten Assyrian calendrical celebration, when the new year was named with a *pūru.*

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*מגילת אסתר / Esther Scroll Genève, Bibliothèque de Genève, Ms. heb. 4.* By  famous engraver Shalom Italia, Amsterdam, c 1641.

Why is the holiday called Purim? According to the *Megillah*, the holiday gets its name because the villain of the story, Haman, chose the date to attack the Jews based on a lot (3:7, 9:24), called a *pur*, which gives the holiday its name (9:26).

This explanation is strange, since the *pur* or lot seems to be a tangential element in the story. The main point is that Haman appointed a day during which the Jews should be killed; which day and how it was chosen would not seem to matter much. Why would the holiday be named based on this story element?[1]

The War in Chapter 9

The book of Esther is set in the early Persian Period, and was likely written during the late Persian Period. Although its author seems to be quite familiar with the Achaemenid court and its customs, the book of Esther is almost certainly not a historical account of the early years of Xerxes’ rule. It includes many fantastic twists and turns, and other literary markers[2]that typify historical fiction than historiography.[3]

The ninth chapter of the Megillah is a little different. It is not a fast paced, character-driven narrative, but a lengthy and repetitive description of a war between Jews and their enemies. This might suggest that the chapter did not originate as an organic part of the Esther and Mordechai story but may be a hyperbolic telling of a historical pogrom against diaspora Jews in Achaemenid Persia, which the Jews won.[4] If this is correct, this incident would be the only evidence for hostility directed against diaspora Jews in the pre-Hellenistic world, and thus, might explain why such an incident stood out and merited a holiday.[5]

As the battle is said to have occurred on the 13th of Adar, which extended into the 14th in the city of Shushan (Susa), the 14th and 15th of Adar are to be celebrated as a festival called Purim. But this theory is problematic, or at least incomplete, as it leaves the name of the holiday unexplained.

Haman’s Lot as Supplemental

Haman’s lot is mentioned three times in the book of Esther, each time interrupting the flow of the story. The first mention is when Haman becomes angry with Mordechai and wishes to convince the king to kill all the Jews:

אסתר ג:ו וַיִּבֶז בְּעֵינָיו לִשְׁלֹח יָד בְּמָרְדֳּכַי לְבַדּוֹ כִּי הִגִּידוּ לוֹ אֶת עַם מָרְדֳּכָי וַיְבַקֵּשׁ הָמָן לְהַשְׁמִיד אֶת כָּל הַיְּהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל מַלְכוּת אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ עַם מָרְדֳּכָי.

Esth 3:6 But he disdained to lay hands on Mordechai alone; having been told who Mordechai’s people were, Haman plotted to do away with all the Jews, Mordechai’s people, throughout the kingdom of Ahasuerus.

ג:ו בַּחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן הוּא חֹדֶשׁ נִיסָן בִּשְׁנַת שְׁתֵּים עֶשְׂרֵה לַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ הִפִּיל פּוּר הוּא הַגּוֹרָל לִפְנֵי הָמָן מִיּוֹם לְיוֹם וּמֵחֹדֶשׁ לְחֹדֶשׁ שְׁנֵים עָשָׂר הוּא חֹדֶשׁ אֲדָר.

3:7 In the first month, that is, the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, *pur*– which means “the lot” – was cast before Haman concerning every day and every month, [until it fell on] the twelfth month, that is, the month of Adar.

ג:ח וַיֹּאמֶר הָמָן לַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ יֶשְׁנוֹ עַם אֶחָד מְפֻזָּר וּמְפֹרָד בֵּין הָעַמִּים בְּכֹל מְדִינוֹת מַלְכוּתֶךָ…

3:8 Haman then said to King Ahasuerus, “There is a certain people, scattered and dispersed among the other peoples in all the provinces of your realm…”

The text reads smoothly without v. 7: Haman plots to destroy all the Jews (v. 6) and goes to Ahasuerus to start the process rolling (v. 8). Moreover, the placement of v. 7 here is strange: Why would Haman cast the lot *before* he even spoke to the king? The verse was likely been added later by an editor looking to connect the name of the holiday to the story in an integral way.

Haman’s Lot and the Two Days of Purim

The other two references to the lot, which come at the end of the story, also show signs of being redactional. In this section, Mordechai writes a letter to all the Jews of Persia, telling them to keep the 14th and 15th of Adar as a holiday celebrating their victory over their enemies, and the Jews accept Mordechai’s request.

The basic structure of the passage is built around the claim “the Jews accepted” which appears in v. 23 and is repeated in v. 27 in a resumptive repetition (*Wiederaufnahme*).[6] See especially the bolded words in both verses:

אסתר ט:כג וְקִבֵּל הַיְּהוּדִים אֵת אֲשֶׁר הֵחֵלּוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר כָּתַב מָרְדֳּכַי אֲלֵיהֶם…

Esth 9:23 Accordingly, the Jews assumed as an obligation that which they had begun to practice and which Mordechai prescribed for them…

ט:כז קִיְּמוּ (וקבל) [וְקִבְּלוּ] הַיְּהוּדִים עֲלֵיהֶם וְעַל זַרְעָם וְעַל כָּל הַנִּלְוִים עֲלֵיהֶם וְלֹא יַעֲבוֹר לִהְיוֹת עֹשִׂים אֵת שְׁנֵי הַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה כִּכְתָבָם וְכִזְמַנָּם בְּכָל שָׁנָה וְשָׁנָה.

9:27 the Jews undertook and obligated themselves and their descendants, and all who might join them, irrevocably, to observe these two days in the manner prescribed and at the proper time each year.

The intervening verses (vv. 24-26) briefly describe the story of the holiday, with the explanations for the name (indented) seemingly grafted on:

ט:כד כִּי הָמָן בֶּן הַמְּדָתָא הָאֲגָגִי צֹרֵר כָּל הַיְּהוּדִים חָשַׁב עַל הַיְּהוּדִים לְאַבְּדָם

9:24 For Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the foe of all the Jews, had plotted about the Jews, to exterminate them,

וְהִפִּיל פּוּר הוּא הַגּוֹרָל לְהֻמָּם וּלְאַבְּדָם.

and had cast *pur* — that is, the lot —with intent to crush and to exterminate them.

ט:כה וּבְבֹאָהּ לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אָמַר עִם הַסֵּפֶר יָשׁוּב מַחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ הָרָעָה אֲשֶׁר חָשַׁב עַל הַיְּהוּדִים עַל רֹאשׁוֹ וְתָלוּ אֹתוֹ וְאֶת בָּנָיו עַל הָעֵץ.

9:25 But when [Esther] came before the king, he commanded: “With the promulgation of this decree, let the evil plot, which he devised against the Jews, recoil on his own head!” So they impaled him and his sons on the stake.

ט:כו עַל כֵּן קָרְאוּ לַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה פוּרִים עַל שֵׁם הַפּוּר

9:26 Therefore, these days were named Purim, after *pur*.

עַל כֵּן עַל כָּל דִּבְרֵי הָאִגֶּרֶת הַזֹּאת וּמָה רָאוּ עַל כָּכָה וּמָה הִגִּיעַ אֲלֵיהֶם. ט:כזקִיְּמוּ (וקבל) [וְקִבְּלוּ] הַיְּהוּדִים עֲלֵיהֶם…

Therefore, in view of all the instructions in the said letter and of what they had experienced in that matter and what had befallen them, 9:27 the Jews undertook and obligated themselves…

Both references to the *pur* seem to have been added artificially to tie the name Purim into the story. The underlined words repeat phrases from the text they are supplementing, and thus help camouflage the additions and make them feel seamless.

I am suggesting that the name Purim for this holiday *predates* the explanation that Haman picked the day for the attack by lot, a secondary explanation that developed once the Jews no longer knew why the day was called Purim. Such post-facto, folk explanations for names are common in the Bible. But if Purim is not really named after Haman’s lots, what does the name reflect?

An Akkadian (not Persian!) Term

The *Megillah* recognizes that the word *pūr* (פור) is foreign, and translates it into Hebrew, as “lot” (גורל, Esth 3:7, 9:24). Traditional commentators have assumed that *pūr* was the Persian word for lot.[7] We now know that this is incorrect, and derive the word from the Akkadian *pūru*, itself borrowed from the Sumerian BUR, meaning “plate” or “bowl.” In the Assyrian dialect of Akkadian it means also “lot, portion,” probably reflecting the use of such a utensil in lot making.[8]

But why would a Persian Jewish holiday have an Assyrian name?

Mesopotamian Calendars

The calendar, including the reckoning of years, is a pivotal concern for any civilization. In our modern calendars, we are used to giving years consecutive numbers starting from some fixed point, whether it be the “creation of the world” (Jewish), “the birth of Christ” (Gregorian), or “Mohamed’s hijra to Mecca” (Islamic).

Regnal Years

Ancient Near Eastern societies kept track of years in a number of ways. Most familiar to us, since it was the system used by Israel and Judah and recorded in the Bible, is what is called regnal years, namely, counting consecutive years of a given king’s reign. This straightforward system was also used in ancient Egypt as well as in Babylonia, starting from mid-second millennium B.C.E.

Old Babylonian System – Naming Years for Important Events

Before Babylonia started counting regnal years, they used a dating system in which each year was named. This required having a list to recreate the chronology, and such lists are found from ancient Mesopotamia, whose scribes were fans of list-making.[9]

The Babylonians named their years after an important event, such as a royal contribution to the religious life, or some other royal achievement that occurred during the relevant year. For example:

* “The year (in which Ḫammurabi) seized (the city-states) Uruk and Isin,”
* “The year (in which Ḫammurabi) made a throne for (the goddess) Zarpanitum.”[10]

These specific names were given to Ḫammurabi’s 7th and 12th regnal years, ca. 1785 and 1780 B.C.E. in an accepted absolute chronology.

The propagandistic advantage of this method is apparent, but so is its fault; a name may be given to a certain calendric year only after a sufficiently important event occurred, and during the early parts of the year it would need to be described as “the year after….”[11]

Assyrian Systems – Eponyms from Senior Officials

The Assyrians used to name the years after senior officials of the kingdom, in what is known as an eponym system; “eponym” is Greek for the “one who gives one’s name to something.” The Assyrian monarch and other high officials each gave their personal names to a certain year. Later, in the imperial period, when the Assyrians ruled over vast swaths of territory beyond their homeland, the governors of great cities and provinces did so as well.[12]

For example, Sennacherib ascended the Assyrian throne in the twelfth day of the month Abu of the year “Nasḫur-Bēl, the governor of (the city) Amedi,” that is 705 BCE. Years later, Sennacherib gave his own name to the calendric year, that began at Nisanu (April-May) 687 and ended at Addaru (March-April) 686 BCE.[13]

The Akkadian word for the office of the official who gave his name to the year is *līmu*, a word probably derived from the root *lwy*, *lawûm*, “to surround, encircle,” stressing the cyclical nature of the *līmu*’s role as eponym. The *līmu*system is documented on economic, juridical, and other documents throughout Assyrian history, from the twentieth to the seventh centuries B.C.E., and it was later somehow adopted by Greek cities.

When Was the *Līmu* Announced?

How early can one know the eponymic name of a year? Theoretically, the year names could have been fixed many years in advance, but the Assyrians probably did not want to risk naming a year after someone who would by then have died; this would have been perceived as ominous.[14]

On the other hand, in imperial times, they would not have waited for the year to have begun before declaring the eponym. But sometimes this early naming before Nisanu did not reach the governed provinces before the new year began. For example, an administrative document from Tel Gezer contains the following date formula:

17th of Simānu, the year after the year Aššur-dūr-uṣur, governor of Barḫalzi.[15]

These were the days at the height of the great revolt led by Šamaš-šum-ukīn, king of Babylon, against his brother, Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria and the empire (652-648 B.C.E). This explains the delay of the two-and-a-half months in the distribution of the new-year’s name.[16] But such a situation was not the norm and was to be avoided as much as possible.

Shortly Before the New Year

Thus, the eponym was likely announced as close as possible to the spring month of Nisanu, the beginning of the new year, but early enough to send the announcement out to all the provinces in the empire. Though we do not know on exactly what date the announcement of the eponym was made, the middle of Addaru, the twelfth and last calendric month, seems like an ideal time for this. State administration would then have had two weeks to inform the entire empire of the name chosen, and the new eponym would have had to maintain good health only two weeks.[17]

Choosing a *Līmu* by a *Pūru* (Ritual Lot)

We do not know the method the Assyrians used for choosing the official whose name would be given to the coming year. But the little available evidence strongly suggests that this decision was reached by means of casting lots (*pūru*). In a royal inscription, Shalmaneser III dates a campaign he launched on his thirty-first regnal year, which according to other sources (such as eponym lists) was the second year of his having been the *līmu* (827 BCE) thus:

In my thirty-first regnal year, (when) I threw the die (*pūru*) for a second time before the gods Aššur (and) Adad.[18]

Shalmaneser III describes his position as the one who has given his name to the year in terms of throwing the die (*pūru*).

Additionally, we have a clay cube with a cuneiform inscription in Assyrian-Akkadian on four sides, which states that it is the *pūru*of Yaḫalu, the chief treasurer (*masennu rabbu*) of this same King Shalmaneser III:

O Ashur, great Lord! O Adad, great lord! (This is) the lot (*pūru*) of Yaḫalu, the chief-treasurer of Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, the governor of Kipshuni, Qumeni, Maḫrani, Uqi, the Cedar Mountain, customs officer. May the harvest of the land of Ashur prosper during his eponymy (*līmu*), his lot (*pūru*); may his lot (*pūru*) come up before Ashur and Adad.[19]

This lot or die was used in the formal ceremony in which Yaḫalu’s selection as *līmu* for that year’s eponym was announced. The cube dates to 833 B.C.E., Shalmaneser III’s 26th regnal year.[20]



The clay cube (YBC 7058) that served as Yaḫalu’s *pūru* (“lot”). – Photo credit of Yale Babylonian Collection.

Despite Yaḫalu’s “prayer” that his lot be the one to come up that year, epochs from which we possess full list of year eponymic names suggest that a relatively fixed order developed: the king, the *turtānu* (תרתן; commander-in-chief), the *rab šāqê*(רב שקה; chief cupbearer), and similar high officials, and then governors of major cities and provinces.

This suggests that the lot-casting became ritualized; the order of the eponyms was made in advance based on accepted protocol, but it had to be made official by a lot casting that was symbolic and ceremonial in nature, rather than a real means for decision-making under divine patronage.[21]

Purim – A Remnant of the *Pūru* Celebration?

It is likely that an event as important as marking the name of the coming year’s eponym through a divine lot would have been somehow marked, although in the case of the Assyrian *pūru*, we have no direct documentation for this. Our knowledge of the Assyrian cultic calendar is fragmentary, scattered, and by no means complete.[22]

However, the coincidence in the Jewish calendar of both the name Purim and its schedule in the middle of Addar, suggests that it may be a remnant from the lost ancient Assyrian pre-new year festival of drawing lots for the coming eponym.[23]

If so, then the celebration must have survived for centuries in former provinces of the Assyrian empire like Babylonia, even though lots for choosing the year’s *līmu* would no longer have been cast.[24] In light of other Assyrian features having been adopted in Babylonian milieu, such survival is only a minor surprise.[25]

An Assyrian Festival Becomes Jewish: נהפוך הוא

The Assyrian holiday of Purim (*Pūru*) was eventually adopted by Jews in the former Assyrian provinces and interpreted as being in commemoration of an anti-Jewish incident that the Jews survived, or perhaps it merged with a preexisting celebration in commemoration of such an incident.[26] The festival was then given a literary backstory in the form of the court intrigue of Mordechai and Esther against Haman, set in Elamite-Persian Susa.

This backstory in turn inspired a new explanation for the holiday’s inexplicable Assyrian name, Purim, the original meaning of which had long been lost. The lots were no longer celebrating the choice of eponym but in commemoration of the lots cast by Haman to determine the date of the Jews’ destruction. With that, the forgotten Assyrian festival became an entirely Jewish one. Nevertheless, its name and date preserve aspects of this forgotten Assyrian calendrical festival.

If so, we are left with a strange irony. Despite the thousands of Akkadian tablets we have from the vast empire of Assyria, including references to a *pūru* that was used to determine the eponym, the only text that preserves the date of this ritual and connects it with some sort of celebration is Esther, written by the tiny minority of Jews living in a province of the former empire.[27] That would certainly be a strange twist of fate, but as we love to say about this holiday: “*va-nahafokh hu*” (וְנַהֲפוֹךְ הוּא; Esth 9:1); Purim is a time of reversed expectations.

[View Footnotes](https://www.thetorah.com/article/on-the-origins-of-purim-and-its-assyrian-name)

1. This problem has been noted by many commentators. See for example, Adele Berlin,*Esther* (JPS Bible Commentary; Philadelphia: JPS, 2001), xxxviii; Lewis B. Paton, *The Book of Esther* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1908), 74.
2. Even the names of the main characters, Mordechai and Esther, suggest this. The former resembles the name Marduk, patron deity of Babylonia and the Babylonian state and Empire, and the latter resembles Ishtar, the main Mesopotamian female deity. Cf. Shmuel Aḥituv, “Purim,” *Encyclopedia Biblica*, vol. 6, pp. 448-451 [Hebrew].
3. For more on this, see Lawrence Wills, [“Rejoicing on Purim with a Jewish Novel,”](https://www.thetorah.com/article/rejoicing-on-purim-with-a-jewish-novel) *TheTorah.com* (2015).
4. Chapter 9 and the remainder of the book were then edited to fit more smoothly together. The clearest example of this is how the Megillah is framed as the battle of the Benjaminite Mordechai against Haman the Agagite, with the war in chapter 9 replaying the war of King Saul against King Agag of Amalek. For a discussion of this, see Marc Zvi Brettler, [“Megillat Esther: Reversing the Legacy of King Saul,”](http://thetorah.com/megillat-esther-reversing-the-legacy-of-king-saul/) *TheTorah.com* (2017).
5. The book of Ezra (4:6) contains a reference to an accusation against Judea and Jerusalem during the reign of Ahasuerus (=Xerxes). However, this is not about diaspora Jews “spread throughout the empire,” to quote Haman, but rather about citizens of a specific Persian province. A possible exception would be the destruction of the Jewish temple at Elephantine (Yeb) during the reign of Darius II (409 B.C.E.), but this was a particularly local, Egyptian affair. See discussion in, Jan Assmann and Zev Farber, [“Sacrificing a Lamb in Egypt,”](http://thetorah.com/sacrificing-a-lamb-in-egypt/)*TheTorah.com* (2016), and the section on Darius II in, Zev Farber, [“The 220-Year History of the Achaemenid Persian Empire,”](http://thetorah.com/the-220-year-history-of-the-achaemenid-persian-empire/) *TheTorah.com* (2017).
6. The intervening verses may be an early supplement, considering the *Wiederaufnahme*here and the fact that the material seems superfluous. For more on this method of scribal insertion, see Zev Farber, [“The Resumptive Repetition (Wiederaufnahme),”](http://thetorah.com/the-resumptive-repetition/) *TheTorah.com*(2013).
7. See, e.g., *Lekah Tov* and ibn Ezra, *ad loc*.
8. Cf. *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* (*CAD*), P pp. 526-9 s.v. *pūru* A and *pūru*B. The connection between Purim and *pūru* is an old suggestion, although scholars have attempted to find alternatives. That the name is specifically Assyrian Akkadian (and not Babylonian Akkadian), and thus must connect somehow to the Assyrian practice of throwing the *pūru,* was already already noted by William Hallo, though he does not suggest how the Jewish holiday of Purim, whose origin is in the Persian-ruled Jewish diaspora, got such a name. See William W. Hallo, “The First Purim,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 46.1 (1983): 19-27 [21-22].
9. Arthur Ungnad, ‘Datenlisten,’ *Reallexikon Assyriologie* *und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie*, Vol. 2 (1938), pp. 131-194.
10. *Ibid*., pp. 178-179, lines 109, 114.
11. See further: A. Kirk Grayson, A.K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (Locust Valley, NY: Augustin, 1975; reprint Eisenbrauns, 2000), p. 193; Malcolm J.A. Horsnell, *The Year-Names of the First Dynasty of Babylon* (Hamilton, Ontario, Canada: McMaster University Press, 1999).
12. Unlike the Babylonians, the Assyrians did not switch to a regnal year system. This is likely because their method did not suffer from the same problem as the Babylonian system.
13. Allan R. Millard, *The Eponyms of the Assyrian Empire 910-612 BC* (State Archives of Assyria – Studies 1; Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1994), pp. 48, 51.
14. Even so, this did happen at least on occasion, as the eponym chosen for 786 B.C.E. seems to have been dead before assuming office, as suggested by the note *balāṭu,*“life,” attached to this year in one of the manuscripts of the canonical eponym list. Millard, *Eponyms*, p. 47. Cf. Forrer, ‘Zur Chronologie der neuassyrischen Zeit,’ *Mitteilungen* *der Vorderasiatischen Gesellschaft*20 (1915), p. 3.
15. That is the year after 652, i.e., 651 B.C.E. Gezer 3, reverse 5′-6′; Wayne Horowitz and Takayoshi Oshima, *Cuneiform in Canaan: Cuneiform Sources from the Land of Israel in Ancient Time* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2006), pp. 55-8.
16. Millard, *Eponyms*, p. 68
17. Millard, *Eponyms*, pp. 7-9
18. A.0.102.14 ll. 174-5; A. Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC*, Part II: *858-745 BC* (Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia – Assyrian Periods 3; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), p. 70. Note that it was probably his thirty-second regnal year. See: Sh. Yamada, *The Construction of the Assyrian Empire: A Historical Study of the Inscriptions of Shalmanesar III (859-824 B.C.) Relating to his Campaigns to the West*(Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 3; Leiden 2000), p. 66.
19. A.0.102.2003; Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers*, p. 179; Mordechai Cogan, *The Raging Torrent: Historical Inscriptions from Assyria and Babylonia Relating to Ancient Israel* (2nd ed. Jerusalem: Carta, 2015), p. 198.
20. Yaḫalu was *līmu* twice more (824 and 821 B.C.E.), when he was *turtānu* (commander-in-chief) of the Assyrian army.
21. Cf. Millard, *Eponyms*, p. 8.
22. See further: Mark E. Cohen, *The Cultic Calendars of the Ancient Near East* (Bethesda, Mariland: CDL Press, 1993), pp. 340-342. A reference to a celebration called *qarratim*on the 17th and 18th of Addaru is found in a list of wine that the magnates gave to the Ashur temple. Laura Kataja and Robert M. Whiting, Grants, Decrees and Gifts of the Neo-Assyrian Period (State Archives of Assyria 12; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1995), #80 reverse line 9.
23. Hayim Tadmor, “Pur,” *Encyclopedia Biblica*, vol. 6 (1972), pp. 446-8 [Hebrew]; Cf. Sindey Smith, *Early History of Assyria* *to 1000 B.C.*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1928, p. 116.
24. Another example of an Assyrian cultural vestige surviving among the Jews in a former province is the worship of the Assyrian Queen of Heaven which they take with them to Egypt when escaping from the Babylonians (see Jer 44).
25. Stephanie Dalley, “The Transition from Neo-Assyrains to Neo-Babylonians: Break or Continuity?,” *Eretz-Israel* 27 (2003; FS H. and M. Tadmor), pp. 25\*-28\*.

שלום רב

1. Editor’s note: If the latter is correct, this dual origin may shed light on the strange confusion about Purim’s date in the Megillah, and the Megillah’s forced explanation for the two dates, namely that the war took an extra day in Susa. Perhaps the two celebrations were originally unconnected and fell on consecutive days. If so, when they merged the name of the Assyrian holiday took hold for both days. ZIF
2. For beautiful, learned, and highly speculative effort to solve this riddle, see: Stephanie Dalley, *Esther’s Revenge at Susa: From Sennacherib to Ahasuerus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). For other suggestions connecting Purim to some sort of Akkadian new year festival with lots, see, Theodor Gaster, *Purim and Hanukkah in Custom and Tradition: Feast of Lots – Feast of Lights* (New York: Schuman, 1950), 17; Christoph Levin, *The Old Testament: A Brief Introduction* (trans. Margaret Kohl; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 163.