



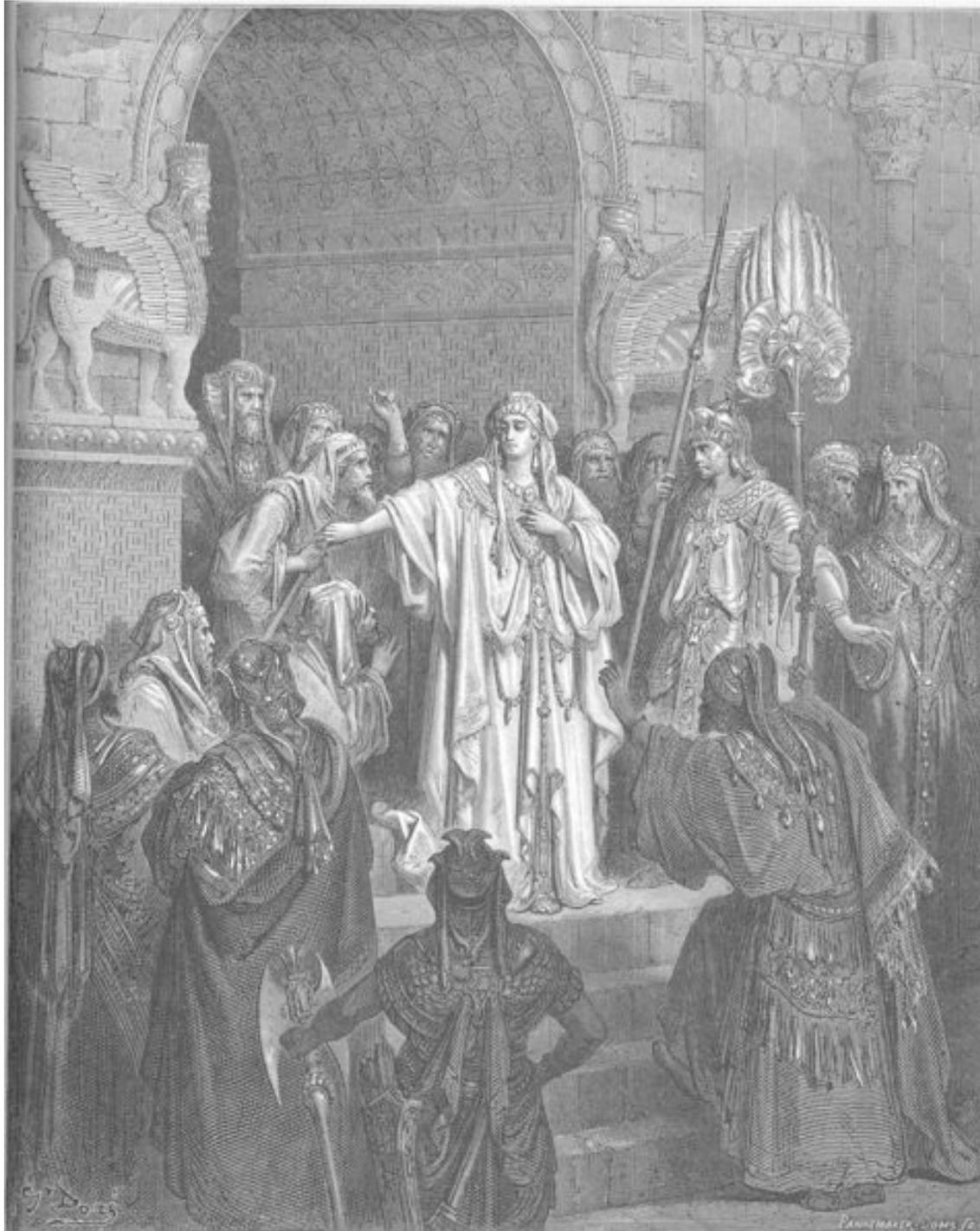
Reading the Resisting Woman as ‘Other’

Dr. Shira Epstein

Dr. Shira Epstein is dean of the William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education and an assistant professor of Jewish education. She joined the JTS faculty in 2004 and during her time here has taught courses to master’s and executive doctoral students and served as coordinator of the Pedagogy and Teaching Concentration. She has received multiple fellowships, grants, and awards in the field, and has published numerous articles and lectured widely about issues in Jewish education and gender equity.

Dr. Epstein’s research explores ways to support educators in reflecting upon their practice through a gender lens. She was founding project director for Addressing Evaded Issues in Jewish Education and she codeveloped *Evaded Issues in Jewish Education: A Resource Guide for Jewish Educators*, and the Educational Jewish Moments methodology. She authored two curricula for Jewish Women International: “Strong Girls, Healthy Relationships: A Conversation on Dating, Friendship, and Self-Esteem” and “Strong Girls! Friendships, Relationships, and Self-Esteem.”

1. Gustave Doré, *Queen Vashti Refuses to Obey Ahasuerus' Command* (1866)



2. Edwin Long, *Vashti* (1879)



3. Esther 1-2:1-2

<p>Esther 1</p> <p>(1) It happened in the days of Ahasuerus—that Ahasuerus who reigned over a hundred and twenty-seven provinces from India to Ethiopia. (2) In those days, when King Ahasuerus occupied the royal throne in the fortress Shushan, (3) in the third year of his reign, he gave a banquet for all the officials and courtiers—the administration of Persia and Media, the nobles and the governors of the provinces in his service.(4) For no fewer than a hundred and eighty days he displayed the vast riches of his kingdom and the splendid glory of his majesty. (5) At the end of this period, the king gave a banquet for seven days in the court of the king’s palace garden for all the people who lived in the fortress Shushan, high and low alike. (6) [There were hangings of] white cotton and blue wool, caught up by cords of fine linen and purple wool to silver rods and alabaster columns; and there were couches of gold and silver on a pavement of marble, alabaster, mother-of-pearl, and mosaics. (7) Royal wine was served in abundance, as befits a king, in golden beakers, beakers of varied design. (8) And the rule for the drinking was, “No restrictions!” For the king had given orders to every palace steward to comply with each man’s wishes. (9) In addition, Queen Vashti gave a banquet for women, in the royal palace of King Ahasuerus. (10) On the seventh day, when the king was merry with wine, he ordered Mehuman, Bizzetha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven eunuchs in attendance on King Ahasuerus,(11) to bring Queen Vashti before the king wearing a royal diadem, to display her beauty to the peoples and the officials; for she was a beautiful woman. (12) But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king’s command conveyed by the eunuchs. The king was greatly incensed, and his fury burned within him. (13) Then the king consulted the sages learned in procedure.(For it was the royal practice [to turn] to all who were versed in law and precedent.(14) His closest advisers were Carshena,</p>	<p>א ויהי בימי אחשורוש : הוא אחשורוש המלך מהדו ועד-כוש-- שבע ועשרים וימאה מדינה. ב בימים, ההם--כשבת המלך אחשורוש, על כסא מלכותו אשר, בשושן הבירה. ג בשנת שלוש למלכו, עשה משתה, לכל-שריו ועבדיו : חיל פרס ומדי, הפרתמים ונשרי המדינות--לפניו. ד בהראתו את-עשר כבוד מלכותו, ואת-יקר תפארת גדולתו ; ימים רבים שמונים ומאת יום. ה ובמלואת הימים האלה, עשה המלך לכל-העם הנמצאים בשושן הבירה למגדול ועד-קטן משתה--שבעת ימים : בחר, גנת ביתן המלך. ו חור כרפס ותכלת, אחוז בחבלי-בוץ וארגמן, על-גלילי כסף ועמודי שש ; מטות זהב וכסף, על רצפת בהט-ושש--וידר וסחרת. ז והשקות בכלי זהב, וכלים מכלים שונים ; ויין מלכות רב, קיד המלך. ח והשתיה כדת, אין אנס : כי-כן יסד המלך, על כל-רב ביתו--לעשות, כרצון איש- איש. { ס } גם ושתה המלכה עשתה משתה נשים--בית, המלכות אשר, למלך אחשורוש. י ביום השביעי, כטוב לב-המלך, בינו--אמר למהימן בדתא חרבוניא בגתא ואבגתא, זתר וכרכס, שבעת הסריסים, המשרתים את-פני המלך אחשורוש. יא להביא את-ושתה המלכה, לפני המלך--בכתר מלכות : להראות העמים והשרים את-יפיה, כי-טובת מראה היא. יב ותמאן המלכה ושתה, לבוא ; בדבר המלך, אשר, ביד הסריסים ויקצף המלך מאד, וחמתו בערה בו. { ס } יג ויאמר המלך, לחכמים לדעי העתים : כי-כן, דבר המלך לפני, כל-ידעי דת ודין. יד והקרב</p>
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Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven ministers of Persia and Media who had access to the royal presence and occupied the first place in the kingdom.) (15)
 “What,” [he asked,] “shall be done, according to law, to Queen Vashti for failing to obey the command of King Ahasuerus conveyed by the eunuchs?” (16)
 Thereupon Memucan declared in the presence of the king and the ministers:
 “Queen Vashti has committed an offense not only against Your Majesty but also against all the officials and against all the peoples in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. (17) For the queen’s behavior will make all wives despise their husbands, as they reflect that King Ahasuerus himself ordered Queen Vashti to be brought before him, but she would not come. (18) This very day the ladies of Persia and Media, who have heard of the queen’s behavior, will cite it to all Your Majesty’s officials, and there will be no end of scorn and provocation! (19) “If it please Your Majesty, let a royal edict be issued by you, and let it be written into the laws of Persia and Media, so that it cannot be abrogated, that Vashti shall never enter the presence of King Ahasuerus. And let Your Majesty bestow her royal state upon another who is more worthy than she. (20) Then will the judgment executed by Your Majesty resound throughout your realm, vast though it is; and all wives will treat their husbands with respect, high and low alike.” (21) The proposal was approved by the king and the ministers, and the king did as Memucan proposed. (22) Dispatches were sent to all the provinces of the king, to every province in its own script and to every nation in its own language, that every man should wield authority in his home and speak the language of his own people.

Esther 2:1-2

(1) Some time afterward, when the anger of King Ahasuerus subsided, he thought of Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her. (2) The king’s servants who attended him said, “Let beautiful young virgins be sought out for Your Majesty.

אֱלוֹ, כַּרְשֵׁנָא שֶׁתָּר אֲדַמְתָּא
 תַּרְשִׁישׁ, מְרִס מְרִסְנָא, מְמוּכָן--
 שִׁבְעַת שָׂרֵי פָּרְס וּמְדֵי, רֹאֲי פְּנֵי
 הַמֶּלֶךְ, הַיֹּשְׁבִים רֵאשֵׁנָה
 בְּמַלְכוּת. טו כָּדַת, מַה-לַּעֲשׂוֹת
 בְּמַלְכָּה, וְשִׁתִּי--עַל אֲשֶׁר לֹא-עָשְׂתָה
 אֶת-מֵאֲמַר הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחְשֻׁרוּשׁ, בְּיַד
 הַסְּרִיסִים. } { טז וַיֹּאמֶר מוּמְכָן
 (מְמוּכָן, וְלִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַשָּׂרִים, לֹא עַל-
 הַמֶּלֶךְ לְבַדּוֹ, עֲוֹתָהּ וְשִׁתִּי הַמֶּלְכָּה : כִּי
 עַל-כָּל-הַשָּׂרִים, וְעַל-כָּל-הָעַמִּים
 אֲשֶׁר, בְּכָל-מְדִינוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ
 אַחְשֻׁרוּשׁ. יז כִּי-יֵצֵא דְבַר-הַמֶּלְכָּה
 עַל-כָּל-הַנְּשִׁים, לְהַבְזוֹת בְּעֲלֵיהֶן
 בְּעֵינֵיהֶן : בְּאֲמָרָם, הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחְשֻׁרוּשׁ
 אָמַר לְהַבִּיא אֶת-וְשִׁתִּי הַמֶּלְכָּה לְפָנָיו
 וְלֹא-בָאָה. יח וְהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה תֵּאמְרָנָה-
 שָׂרוֹת פָּרְס-וּמְדֵי, אֲשֶׁר שָׁמְעוּ אֶת-
 דְּבַר הַמֶּלְכָּה, לְכָל, שָׂרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ; וַיְכַדֵּי
 בְּזִיוּן וְקֶצֶף. יט אִם-עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב
 יֵצֵא דְבַר-מַלְכוּת מִלְּפָנָיו, וַיִּכְתֹּב בְּדַתֵּי
 פָּרְס-וּמְדֵי, וְלֹא יַעֲבוּר : אֲשֶׁר לֹא-
 בּוֹא וְשִׁתִּי, לְפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחְשֻׁרוּשׁ
 וּמַלְכוּתָהּ יִתֵּן הַמֶּלֶךְ, לְרַעוּתָהּ
 הַטּוֹבָה מִמֶּנָּה. כ וְנִשְׁמַע פְּתִגָּם הַמֶּלֶךְ
 אֲשֶׁר-נַעֲשָׂה בְּכָל-מַלְכוּתוֹ, כִּי רַבָּה
 הָיְתָה; וְכָל-הַנְּשִׁים, יִתְּנוּ יָקָר לְבַעֲלֵיהֶן
 לְמַגְדוֹל, וְעַד-קֶטָן. כא וַיִּיטֹב-
 הַדָּבָר, בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ, וְהַשָּׂרִים; וַיַּעַשׂ
 הַמֶּלֶךְ, כַּדְּבַר מְמוּכָן. כב וַיִּשְׁלַח
 סָפְרִים, אֶל-כָּל-מְדִינוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ--אֶל-
 מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה כַּכְתָּבָהּ, וְאֶל-עַם וְעַם
 כְּלָשׁוֹנוֹ : לְהֵיוֹת כָּל-אִישׁ שֹׁרֵר
 בְּבֵיתוֹ, וּמְדַבֵּר כְּלָשׁוֹן עַמּוֹ

א אַחַר, הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, כְּשֶׁךְ, חָמַת
 הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחְשֻׁרוּשׁ--זָכַר אֶת-וְשִׁתִּי
 וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר-עָשְׂתָהּ, וְאֵת
 אֲשֶׁר-נִגְזַר עָלֶיהָ. ב וַיֹּאמְרוּ נְעָרֵי-
 הַמֶּלֶךְ, מְשֻׁרְתָיו : יִבְקְשׁוּ לַמֶּלֶךְ נְעָרוֹת
 בְּתוּלוֹת, טוֹבוֹת מְרָאָה

4. Selections from Megan Boler, *Feeling Power: Emotions and Education* (1999)

“Emotions need to be brought out of the private and into the public sphere; that emotions are a site of oppression...[scholars] tend to overlook this most silenced terrain of social control and resistance” (p. xix)

“Behavioral and expressive conduct is developed according to socially enforced rules of power. How does one learn not to express anger at one’s boss, or that doing so is a very risky business?...*Feeling Power*, on the other hand, directs us to explore how people resist our oppression and subjugation. For example, what gives women the courage to publicly challenge sexual harassment?...understand when and how that resistance and courage arise” (p. 4)

5. Lisbeth Cheever-Gessaman, *Vashti* (2017)

