1993

SHOW-STOPPING SPIEL OPENING SONG
(tune: "Hooray for Hollywood")

Well folks, we're here again
King Achasveros (not King Lear) again
We bring you Mordechai and al-so Esther
Haman won't best her
He's not enough of a man.
Our cast of characters
Includes two barristers (ELLEN AND BOB BOW)
Harem girls (YO AND HOW BOW), queens (DAVID K. AND JENNA BOW),
and the King of Iran. (DAVID BOWS)

Hooray for Purimspiel
Loaded as usual with sex appeal
So please forgive each thoughtless breech of taste
Don't be as strait-laced
As Lehrer and McNeil.
We may not hit a gusher
'cause the Roskies went to Russia
Leaving us poor shlemiels.

So now on with the show
We hope it leaves you with an afterglow.
You'll soon discover like the Book of Ruth
We tell nothing but the truth
With lots of nuts (POINT AT ONE ANOTHER) but no vanilla.
~~Now~~ we're all rarin' to go
We'll slander friend and foe
Here comes the gontsa magilla.

Shushan,
Twenty Years Later

PROGRAM

OPENING SEQUENCE

A STAGE HAND appears with a placard that reads:

"SHUSHAN, TWENTY YEARS LATER"

AHASVEROS is slumped in an armchair, a beer on his belly, a plate of hamentaschen beside him. His crown has slid to one side. The royal locks are touched with silver. Between his slippered feet, he gazes dully at the television screen.

ESTHER enters. The years have been kinder to her. Her figure remains appealing and bespeaks maternal accomplishment. Her dress is tasteful, her bearing dignified. She is a far more formidable presence than the young wife who hesitated about approaching her husband with the problems of her people. At the moment, she's perusing LEGAL DOCUMENTS, a cordless telephone to her ear. We catch snatches of conversation. "No, sell the preferred, but don't exercise the warrants...No...No...Of course not...Who cares what they think!...Exactly...And fax me the copies...On Tuesday." She is plainly about some business, but stops to give her husband a bit of attention.

ESTHER: (brightly, as to someone whose moods we know all too well) Oh, here you are. What are you up to, Hashi? Television as usual. What's on?

AHASVEROS: Just this. Same as every year.

ESTHER: It's Purim again already? Where does the time go? (sits beside him) Are these new shows or the old ones?

As they talk, she continues red-lining the papers, reading, making marginal notes, glancing up from time to time.

AHASVEROS: It's a combination. Some documentary footage. Some dramatic recreations. Panel discussions.

ESTHER: (little time for such trivialities) Oh, yes, yes, I remember. It's nice that they do this every year.

AHASVEROS: They have to. All about Purim. Every show. Every channel. It's the law. You made it the law. Remember?

ESTHER: (busy with her papers) Did I? Well, that was clever of me. This way we'll never forget, will we?

AHASVEROS: (after a beat) No.

His tone makes her glance up at him, then at the screen.

ESTHER (pointing excitedly): Oh, look, there, it's you. (proud of him) Look how handsome you were!

She touches his arm; he likes that, covers her hand with his own.

AHASVEROS: Heh-heh, not bad, I admit. (looking closer) I was thin, wasn't I?

ESTHER: Thinner, yes.

AHASVEROS: (astonished, almost resentful) Look at you! You're just the same. You're <u>exactly</u> the same.

ESTHER: (appraising herself critically) Well, almost.

AHASVEROS: You haven't gained an ephah/shekel. (..?)

ESTHER: (trying not to sound reproachful) I work at it, dear.

AHASVEROS: (fumbling around) Dear, where's that new remote I just got from the Minyan Ma'at Catalogue. If somebody stole it, I'll have his head.

ESTHER: His or <u>her</u> head, dear.

AHASVEROS: Oh, that's right.

ALLEN NADLER: (from audience) Sorry, your Majesty. I borrowed it. Here it is. (Gives it to Ahasveros.)

AHASVEROS: (majestically) Thank you, loyal subject. (Whirls gragger changing channels repeatedly until...)

ESTHER: This is giving me a headache. Just pick one. It doesn't matter which. It's all Purim, you know.

16 February 1993
Draft

Scene three
McNeil/Levy NewsHour

Saxaphone (Bob) plays the McNeil/Lehrer opening theme.

Two strange looking panelists (one male, one female) and the moderator, with a table between them. On the table there is a tape recorder and three cream pies.

Jim Levy:
Welcome to the McNeil/Levy NewsHour in Shushan. ~~I know you~~ can't tell us apart but for the record I'm Jim Levy.

Our first segment will be on the deteriorating situation in the Palace here in Shushan.

To discuss the situation in the Palace we've rounded up the usual learned fanatics. (Waves his hand in the direction of the panelists)

The situation, as I understand it, is that the King has ordered Queen Vashti

Male panelist (interrupting): (DAVID GOWER)
Women like Vashti should go back to the kitchen! Women like Vashti...

Levy picks up a cream pie, leans over and pushes it into the panalist's face.

Female panelist: (ELLEN REGNICK)
Vashti was a victim. She was being sexully harrassed! Vashti was a ....

Levy picks up the second cream pie and pushes it into her face.

Female panelist picks up the third cream pie and pushes it into Levy's face.

Stooge in audience (yelling):
This is a farce!

Male panelist:
~~Yes~~, A Farsee farce.

Stooge in audience: (PAUL?)
You are being blasphemous! This is a sacred text! etc. as the following action is played out:

LEVY-MCNEIL (continued)

LEVY (to panelists): Who is that? This isn't part of the script! I thought we screened the audience. How did this pedant get in? I refuse to perform for pedants. Grab him! Throw him out!

FEMALE PANELIST: Kick him downstairs! Throw him out the window!

MALE PANELIST: Hang him high as Haman!

Panelists (with cream pie still on their faces) rush into audience and grab stooge, who struggles ineffectually and is dragged from the room yelling.

STOOGE: You can't do this to me. I'll report you to J.T.S. (etc)

Panelists return to stage.

LEVY: (to audience, in calm professional voice): Next, before our panelists discuss the situation, we bring you our distinguished correspondent, Carli Bat-Achat, in a background interview with Queen Vashti. The queen, it seems, has not only refused to obey the king's commands, but has gone off to Israel in a huff.

MALE PANELIST: I didn't know you could get to Israel in a huff.

FEMALE PANELIST: All of Israel is in a huff.

LEVY (to panelists): There are more cream pies baking in the kitchen.

LEVY (to audience): As I said before, our correspondent Carli Bat-Achat, is on assignment in Jerusalem. Let me see if I can contact her. (FIDDLE WITH BOOMBOX)

CARLI: Carli Bat-Achat here, coming to you live from Bnai Brak, Israel.

LEVY: (HIT PAUSE BUTTON) How's it going Carli?

CARLI: Well, it could be better. I'm having a bit of a communication problem with the people here. I can't get into any press conferences. When I get to the door they ask me what my name is. When I tell them, "Carli Bat-Achat," they just look embarrassed, hand me warm underwear, and send me on my way.

LEVY: (HIT PAUSE BUTTON) But have you found Vashti?

LEVY-MCNEIL (continued)

LEVY (to panelists): Who is that? This isn't part of the script! I thought we screened the audience. How did this pedant get in? I refuse to perform for pedants. Grab him! Throw him out!

FEMALE PANELIST: Kick him downstairs! Throw him out the window!

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Panelists return to stage.

LEVY: (to audience, in calm professional voice): Before our panelists discuss the situation, we bring you our distinguished correspondent, Karli Bat Ahad, in a background interview with Queen Vashti. The queen, it seems, has not only refused to obey the king's commands, but has gone off to Israel in a huff.

MALE PANELIST: I didn't know you could get to Israel in a huff.

FEMALE PANELIST: All of Israel is in a huff.

LEVY (to panelists): There are more cream pies baking in the kitchen.

LEVY (to audience): As I said before, our correspondent Karli Bat-Ahad, has interviewed Queen Vashti in Jerusalem...where she married a hassid and moved to Bnai Brak. Let me see if I can contact her.

LEVY (fiddling with tape recorder): Can you hear me, Karli?

ALIZA (Karli sings. Halfway thru, panelists and Levy may, if action seems needed, start a hora around the tape recorder. If not, not.)

After tape finishes, Levy turns to panelists and resumes his professional voice.

LEVY: Do either of you idiots have anything useful to say in response to that? (brief pause...they shake heads) No?...Then our next segment is on the critical shortage of prunes for hamantashen.

KING: (does gragger channel change) Who cares? (nibbles) I've got mine.

CARLI: Well, I haven't exactly found Vashti yet. Last we heard she married a hasid and moved to Bnai Brak, which is why I'm here. It's been more difficult to track her down than was originally expected. I was given a very good description of her new husband, so I thought it would be easy to locate her. However at this point I have met 137 hasidic men who match the description: black hat, scraggly beard, spectacles, and coat pockets full of stones. Also, I'm having a language problem with the residents of Bnai Brak. They seem to think I'm anti-semantic.

LEVY: (DO NOT HIT PAUSE BUTTON) Anti-semantic? How so?

CARLY: What? I'm sorry. I'm having trouble hearing you.

LEVY: (DO NOT HIT PAUSE BUTTON) I said, what kind of problem?

CARLY: Excuse me?

LEVY: (DO NOT HIT PAUSE BUTTON) The problem?

CARLY: I'm sorry. We're experiencing technical difficulties. Let me just give you a report on my language problem.

SONG (Halfway thru, panelists and Levy may, if action seems needed, start a hora around the tape machine. If not, not.)

CARLY: This is Carly Bat-Achat (alias Aliza Cotton) wishing you all a happy Purim from Bnai Brak, Israel. Now back to you in the studio.

(After tape finishes, Levy turns to panelists and resumes his professional voice.)

LEVY: Do either of you idiots have anything useful to say in response to that? (brief pause...they shake heads) No?...Then our next segment is on the critical shortage of prunes for hamantashen.

KING: (does gragger channel change) Who cares? (nibbles) I've got mine.

COMMERCIAL NO. 1:

DAVID KRAMER:

Ladies, get your credit cards ready for an unprecedented offer...a product of Old Time Religion, Inc., manufactured in Minyan Ma'at's own factory in Mea Shearim...the Beverly Schneider-negger Pumping Iron kit...a complete set of graduated weights...in the shape of Torahs...for women who wish to secretly build their muscles so that, like Beverly Schneider they, too, can successfully perform hagbah. (CRISPLY: Batteries not included...Add $10 for demonstration video secretly filmed on location at a Minyan Ma'at Shabbat service.)

KING: I hate when they do that. Women should stick to galilah.

(SWITCHES CHANNELS)

THIS OLD PALACE (David Kronfeld as Queen Esther)

QUEEN: Good everning, everybody, and welcome to "This Old Palace," the showthat makes you think you can tackle any home improvement project, until, after you've bought all the stuff, you realize you can't.

Today we're going to focus on a complete overhaul of the royal palace at Shushan. I ask you, as a new queen, can I be expected to live in the same old quarters all those other first ladies lived in? Not on your life! Ugh! What horrible taste they had. (Especially Queen Nancy and Queen Barbara.) No way! Damn the expense and full speed ahead!

Anyway, this will be a total overhaul, so today's show starts at the top -- fiddling around on the roof!

SONG: "Tradition"

Renovation! Renovation! Additions!
Destruction! Construction! Subtractions!
da dad da da Da da da da da da da da dadadada

The palace is a wreck
The roof is full of holes
The windows let in wind
There are no toilet bowls

CHORUS: Construction! Construction! Additions! (etc)

The throne room is too small
The dungeon looks passe
Let's paint the bedroom red
And make the sun room gray.

CHORUS: Renovation! Renovation! Additions! (etc)

Who can it be who has sufficient money
Is adequately crazy
And likes to live in chaos?
Who can it be who'll put up with all that
To renovate the royal home?

CHORUS: Renovation! Renovation! Construction! (etc)

I hate to breathe the dust
Of plaster and old paint
But without a built-in dishwasher
I really think I'll faint!

Renovation! Renovation! Additions!
Construction! Construction! Additions! (Bump, bum)

Additions

CHORUS:
Division! Multiplication! ~~Additions!~~
~~Division! Multiplication!~~ Additions! (Bump, bum)

Construction - Deconstruction - Collision

AFTER "THIS OLD PALACE"...

KING: (points finger menacingly at wife) Esther, <u>don't even think about it</u>. We're trying to cut the budget deficit. Redecorating the palace is <u>out of the question</u>. (WAVES REMOTE GRAGGER ANGRILY...KRONFELD SLIPS OFF AND GERALDO AND HAREM GIRLS STEP STAGE CENTER, WHERE THEY FREEZE IN INTERVIEW POSITION.)

KING: Oh, Esther...here's the show I read about in the Shushan cable guide: "Geraldo Trachtenberg slips into Ahasveros's harem to interview discontented concubines." Hmm, how did that sleazeball penetrate my Iran Curtain?

GERALDO (UNFREEZING SCENE): (twirling handlebar mustache) Welcome to Shushan Cable and our special inside report: "Malice at the Palace." We have with us this morning two of the king's most voluptuous harem girls: Sheherezade and Fatima. (OGLES THEM)

HAREM GIRL NO. 1: (PROUDLY) Not Fat-ima. Thinima. I just lost 50 pounds on the Slimfast Liquid Babaganoush Diet.

GERALDO: Sheket! I'll do the commercials around here. (TURNS TO SECOND GIRL) You're Sheherezade?

SHEREZADE: (matter-of-factly) Right, Geraldo. Sheherezade Goldberg.

GERALDA: <u>Gold</u>berg?

HAREM GIRL: Nee Shererezade Hussein, but I ~~we~~ BEEN going to conversion classes with Yochanan Muffs. If you want to get ahead in King Ahasveros's harem, it doesn't hurt to be Jewish.

GERALDO: Enough already. Look, ladies. Just give me the inside story of life in a harem. In a word, what's it like?

FATIMA: One word? (Geraldo nods) Boring.

GERALDO: Boring? In the incredibly luxurious love nest every red-blooded Shushan girl dreams of being recruited for? Say it ain't so.

HAREM GIRL: It ain't even so-so. Do you have any idea how much time you have on her hands when your husband has 10,000 wives? We take tickets...just like in a bakery. Wait, I'll show you. (reaches in her bra and pulls out huge ticket with number 9999 on it)

FATIMA: (briefly postures, then bursts into song)

FATIMA:
Oh pity, yes pity
Us poor harem goils
Though we may be dripping
With diamonds and poils
Our life it is boring
Our life it is rough
And when it comes to lovin'
There's never enough.

SHEHEREZADE:
Harem life is as dull
As ten pounds of felafel
Getting near the king's harder
Than winning the raffle.

CHORUS STEPS STAGE CENTER: (mournfully)
It's hard not to complain-
It is tough not to grouse
When you're the nine thousand nine hundred
And ninety-ninth spouse.

HAREM GIRLS (TOGETHER TO ADON OLAM)
We line up for lunch
And we line up for tea
For cleaning our teeth
For the...W.C.

It's wait, wait, wait...wait
The whole thing's un-fayer
We wait for a change
Of clean under-wayer

FATIMA:
There are long lines for that
And long lines for this
But the longest of all
Is for getting a (purses lips) kiss.

CHORUS STEPS FORWARD AGAIN: (mournfully)
It's hard not to complain
It's tough not to grouse
When you're the nine thousand nine hundred
And ninety-ninth spouse.

SHEHEREZADE: There's so much petty jealousy

FATIMA: And malice just incredible

SHEHEREZADE; The king said I'm fantastic

FATIMA: He told me that you're unbeddable.

SHEHEREZADE: (haughtily) He said I'm a perfect ten
His perfect Queen of Hearts

FATIMA: He told me that you're a failure
At all performing arts.

SCHEHEREZADE:
So pity, yes pity
The poor harem lass
It takes so long to get
To the head of the class.

FATIMA:
We wait years for the honor
Of losing our purity
By the time I get called
I'll need Social Security.

SHEHEREZADE:
He's got 10,000 wives
Why does he need so many?
Shushan's other men
Are left without any.

FATIMA:
He eats dozens of oysters
Chews rhinoceros horn
Drinks oceans of potions
But we're still lovelorn.

FATIMA:
The poor guy's so weary
We all pray that he mends
His poor little candle (pause)
Is burned at both ends.

CHORUS: (mournfully)
It's hard not to complain
It is tough not to grouse
When you're the nine thousand nine hundred
And ninety-ninth spouse.

FAT AND SHEHER TOGETHER:
Oy...we kvetch and complain
Til he can hardly bear us
So perhaps we should pity...
Poor King Achasveros.

KING: (to Esther) Oh, thanks Gott for the memories. But you know, Esther, they're right. It's svair se zein a harem girl. (pause)

QUEEN; Yeah. Especially when the king is your age.

KING: Hmmph! (GRAGGER CHANNEL SWITCH)

COMMERCIAL NO. 2:

DAVID KRAMER:

And now...from Old Time Religion, Inc. another inspired product: The Miracle Rod.

Are your shabat services dull and boring? Do people drift in during ~~the~~ shachrit ~~[illegible]~~ and drift out before musaf? Replace your traditional Torah Yad with our Miracle Rod. When, during shlishi or revii, the natives in your congregation grow restless and whispered conversations ensue...

FIRST VOICE (STANLEY): I'll give you odds the rabbi does a book report instead of a sermon today.

SECOND VOICE (PHIL): I wonder what's for kiddish.

...simply throw our Miracle Layning Rod to the floor. (HE DOES, THEY FLEE IN DISMAY) It will instantly change into a serpent and swallow the chief offenders. (crisply) For the balance of the service, rapt...and reverent silence...is guaranteed.

KING: Esther, write that P.O. Box down. ~~I'd like to get me~~ EVERY KING SHOULD HAVE one of those... (CHANGES CHANNEL)

MORDECAI, PRIVATE EYE

~~NEWSCASTER'S VOICE: In a related incident.~~

~~Impatient with this, AHASVEROS changes channels. THE LIGHTS GO OFF and when they GO ON again we see:~~

MORDECAI in galoshes, trenchcoat, fedora pulled low over his eyes, smoke drifting out from beneath the brim. If possible, detective show music...

ESTHER: What is this?

AHASVEROS: "Mordecai, P.I." [begin possible cut: Annie Friedberg writes for it.

ESTHER: Who's Annie Friedberg?

AHASVEROS: Vashti's niece.

ESTHER: (trying to place the name) Vashti...Vashti...

AHASVEROS: My ex-wife?

ESTHER: Oh, right! (peering at screen) Is this clown supposed to be portraying my revered Uncle?

MORDECAI (offended, to Esther): And by what suspension of disbelief are you supposed to be my beautiful and virtuous niece?

ESTHER: Look, I wouldn't even be in this stupid show except the financing fell through on my movie and this was the only gig my agent--

AHASVEROS: Quiet. I want to see my program.

Mordecai and Esther glare at each other then laboriously reassume their stage roles. [--end possible cut] Mordecai sings:

MORDECAI'S SONG

I'm Mordecahi
The Private Eye
There's nothing I like better
Than sneaking nigh
And playing spy
A Sherlock Holmes go-getter.

To catch a thief's
Such a relief
It makes me feel fantastic
Bring thugs to grief
Save our Caliph
(Though he is somewhat spastic.)

(aside, to audience as he approaches TWO EUNUCHS: "Two Eunuchs by the Palace Gate. I'd better listen in.")

Teresh! Bigtan!
Hatching a plan
Could they be plotting to ensnare us?
Their dirty deal
I shall reveal
And rescue Aschasveros.

The Eunuchs don't seem to notice him.

EUNUCH #1: So, all the wives, the fourth and fifth rankers especially, are completely freaked about this New Queen. How's it gonna impact their pensions, seniority, entertainment allowances...

EUNUCH #2: He shouldn't have so many wives. Even a king.

EUNUCH #1: Of course, he shouldn't. No one should. Five, ten at the most is all that's appropriate.

ESTHER (to Ahasveros): Are you going to let them talk that way about you?

AHASVEROS: It's just a show...

EUNUCH #1: (pointedly, to Ahasveros and especially Esther) Of course he is the most brilliant of all Kings, loyal, brave and true...(rolls eyes to Eunuch #2)...Anyway, I'm there 'til 4 AM reassuring the troops, so naturally I put in for overtime. And Haman...(Eunuchs wearily swing graggers)...Haman goes, "No way. Read your contract, you're on a straight salary." And I'm like, "Contract?? Look at the job description. It says, 'Good hours.' Four AM is not good hours." And he goes, "The King says they're good for him. Hahaha. You don't like it, see who else is hiring Eunuchs around here..." GRAGGERS AGAIN

EUNUCH #2: (quiet outrage) He said that? "The King says..."

EUNUCH #1: Those were his words.

EUNUCH #2: Just like what they did to me during the wife contest.

During the following, MORDECAI whips out a large MAGNIFYING GLASS and holds it up to the face of each Eunuch like an idiotic Sherlock Holmes. He produces a portable TAPERECORDER and records their conversation, holding a MIKE first to one's mouth then the other's. He takes NOTES, takes POLAROIDS, etc. It's blatant, yet he walks on tiptoes, puts a finger to his lips etc. as if it were secret, and, indeed, the Eunuchs appear unaware of him.

EUNUCH #1: It's just like that. And what did we say then?

EUNUCH #2: We said, if the King pulls this again...

EUNUCH #1: We said, if he pulls it again... (Draws finger across his throat.)

EUNUCH #2: (fearful) So are we going to...?

EUNUCH #1: Tonight he's got a special lined up with the triplets. I arranged it. It's the perfect occasion.

EUNUCH #2: (easily distracted) You know, the triplets aren't really girls.

EUNUCH #1: Of course, I know. So what?

ESTHER: I didn't know. Did you?

AHASVEROS: (blase) I never noticed.

EUNUCH #1: So we'll do it tonight.

MORDECAI: Why don't you say, "So we'll kill him tonight."

ESTHER: They should call you "king." They shouldn't just say "him."

MOREDCAI (to the Eunuch): I'm sorry, could you make it, "We'll kill the King tonight." (Holds up microphone.)

EUNUCH 1: So we'll kill the King tonight. (to Mordecai) How's that?

MORDECAI: Perfect. Thanks. (Packs up his stuff.)

EUNUCH #1: (to Eunuch #2) But don't tell anybody.

EUNUCH #2: TELL ANYBODY? You think I'm stupid?

MORDECAI: (to Audience) HA. HA! But I will.

Detective MUSIC. The Eunuchs and Mordecai go off.

AHASVEROS: Hey, where's the car chase? Don't these things always have a car chase?

DAVID CURZON: [O.S. "The king wants a car chase...The kind wants a car chase. Get the car chase out here.]

A FIGURE IN BLACK enters carrying a brightly colored TOY CAR followed by a SECOND with another CAR. Making ENGINE SOUNDS and SQUEALING TIRES, they proceed across the room, then back and off.

~~KING: (SWITCHES CHANNEL)~~

KING: NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL A CAR CHASE! (SWITCHES (HANGING)

COMMERCIAL NO. 3:

DAVID:
And now, new from Minyan Ma'at...the Squash Drash. Do your congregation's dvar torahs last too long? When the Rav is talking Leviticus are you thinking lunch? If you prefer a long nosh to a long drosh, rush to the nearest phone and order our incredible Squash Drash, adjustable to fit in front of any size bimah. At the end of 10 minutes, ready or not, a Sabbath clock clicks, the high-tech Squash Drash trapdoor opens, and...presto...the drash comes to a timely end...as does the drasher.

KING: BAH! HUMBUG! (switches channel)

THE FLIEGEL GOURMET (David Kronfeld as Queen E.)

Good evening, everybody. I am your host, Esther the Orphan Child, the Fliegel Gourmet hserlf, welcoming you to another exciting episode of "Menu Mania from Mesopotamia." Tonight I'm going to show you all how I, in my own very real life, am preparing a joint kiddish -- a royal feast with the guest of honor, our own Haman the Gagite. I mean, the Agagite.

Last week, if you remember, we discussed the finer points of that old standard Persian favorite, raw dog and pig, with dill, bathed in a lemon-mustard sauce,. I also showedyou how to prepared that local finger food snacking delight pickings and droppings. And then we concluded with thatnew dish, which is allthe rage across the gulf in Bagdad: Kurds, No Whey.

Yes folks, this will be something very special, a real historic event which Haman, I'm sure, will never forget.

SONG: Tune: (I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas")

I'm fixing up a feast for Haman
Just like a feasthe never knew
I'll take little fishes
And stick 'em in knishes
And then, cover them with glue.

I'm dreaming up someRice Krispies
Inside a chocolate garlic sauce
First I spred it on crackers
And just to impress those snackers
Tie'em up in old dental floss.

I'm mixing up an egg salad
With dabs of mayo and shellac
Add some sprigs ofparsley
Then sprinkle sparsely
With just a pinch of ipecac.

Yes folks this is going to be the party of parties -- a regular blowout.

I'm fixing up a feast for Haman
So that with each and every chew
He will learn a lesson
In delicat-essen
And then, rush off to the loo. (Toodle-loo!)

I'm dreaming up a feast for Haman
So that he gets it thru his bean
That you don't mess with Esther the Queen
And he better learn to like my mean cuisine.

— Big "Queen"

KING: (pats tummy contentedly) Yes, you were a real gourmet cook in those days, Esther.

QUEEN: ~~Especially for~~ YEAH... REMEMBER those mega-issue banquets we used to have?

KING: Banquet? Banquet hall? Arsenio Hall. Hmm, I wonder who's guesting on Arsenio tonight. (clicks channel)

ARSENIO HALL SEGMENT

AHASVEROS (BOB T.) IN DARK GLASSES, SIDE TO AUDIENCE, PLAYING SAX FOR 30 SECONDS OR SO.

KING: Gosh, that was me the first time I ran for king. (wistfully) It'll be a thousand years before another head of state comes along who plays "Heartbreak Hotel" with that kind of feeling...

QUEEN: Maybe. But you'd have played better if you'd ONLY learned to inhale.

SAX PLAYER: (BOB T. INHALES DEEPLY. HE PLAYS A TOTALLY SOUR CHORD.)

KING: Hmmph! (SWITCHES CHANNELS)

COMMERCIAL NO. 4:

DAVID:
Now, at long last the invention you've all been waiting for. From the inventor of the Shabbat elevator, comes the Shabbat siddurvator...a wheeled carrier that wends its way down the aisles from seat to seat allowing congregants to gently deposit their siddurim and chamashim to be returned to the shelves. It's glat-kosher. It's solar-powered. It's voice-activated....with a starter that kicks in when the final note of Adon Olam is sung. But the best thing about this new device is that it allows congregations to dispense with Howard Eisenberg's final announcement.

KING: Also with Howard Eisenberg. (CHANGES CHANNEL)

HOWARD (in fright wig): THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK!

I'm Darlene Wisenberg
Sweet Darlene Wisenberg
A passion for babies I've got
But then why shouldn't it be?
They've been so good to me.
(POINTS TO RIVER)
Look. Moored out there? That's my yacht.

Childbirth is such a pain
You won't hear <u>me</u> complain
I'm not the one being torn
Girl child or boy, you see
I get my royalty (BIG SMILE)
Each time a baby is born.

KING: "Ugh! Another rerun! (clicks to another channel)
LET'S WATCH SOME SPORTS!

GET THE GOYIM - A SPORTS SHOW

~~AHASVEROS: (about the current show) This is boring. Let's watch some sports. (He switches channels in mid-sentence.)~~

LIGHTS OFF. The actors depart. LIGHTS ON...AN ANNOUNCER appears. Someone hits a BELL several times.

(HENEY) ANNOUNCER: The fighters are now approaching the ring for... the Main Event!!

AHASVEROS: Ooo, wrestling. Good.

Esther looks up from her work long enough to smile brightly. Ahasveros opens his final beer. BUTTS TWO WRESTLERS appear.

ANNOUNCER: In this corner, in white with the blue star, weighing--at the time--a mere eight hundred years, from Shushan, by way of Egypt, Crown Heights, Shaker Heights and, lately, the Golan Heights...THE...BELEAGURED...JEW!!!

The crowd roars.

RING ANNOUNCER: And in <u>that</u> corner, in black with the cross, the crescent and star and three-pointed hat, weighing All Eternity, from Everywhere, Anywhere and especially Now....AMALEK THE UNSPEAKABLE!!!

Crowd hisses. Graggers, etc.

As the opponents begin to circle each other, the Announcer's voice drops to a confidential whisper...

ANNOUNCER: Amalek, caling himself "Haman" this time around, got Ahasveros to sign a law authorizing the slaughter of all the Jews...

ESTHER (watching): How <u>did</u> he talk you into that.

AHASVEROS: I wasn't thinking. Just let me watch.

ANNOUNCER: But then Esther invoked the fairness doctrine and the King had to let the Jews fight back. This is the showdown.

Almost at once, the JEW puts a headlock on AMALEK. AMALEK (mugging for the audience) groans horribly and stamps his foot in pain.

ESTHER grabs the remote and hits the mute button. The wrestling continues in silence. Amalek's face contorts in shrieks of unheard agony.

AHASVEROS: Why'd you turn off the sound?

ESTHER: You've seen it before. It's the same every year. We kill 500 in Shushan including Haman's ten sons...

AHASVEROS: He had ten?? Funny, I never think of him like that.

ESTHER: How do you think of him?

AHASVEROS: (shrugs, fingering a hamantash) I don't know, prune, poppy...cake dough, cookie dough... (Takes a bite.)

ESTHER: And 75,000 in the rest of the Empire...

AHASVEROS: Seventy-five <u>thousand</u>. Gee, that's a lot.

ESTHER: Then on the second day, 300 more in Shushan and we impale Haman's sons on spikes.

AHASVEROS: On spikes? Ecch! That's horrible.

ESTHER: Horrible?? It was wonderful! They were going to kill us so we killed them. Better them than us, right?

AHASVEROS: (a naif) Why?

ESTHER: "Why???" Because we're us, and they're them. At least I am.

AHASVEROS: But so many.

ESTHER: (dismissive) They brought it on themselves.

Ahasveros grabs the remote, turns the SOUND ON and again we hear Amalek's screams and suffering. They are piteous.

ESTHER: (uneasy) Boy, we're really hurting them.

AHASVEROS: That's good, huh?

ESTHER: No, that's bad. If we hurt too many, we lose the moral high ground. (A politician.) We must be strong and fearless and punish our enemies--who will stop at nothing...But people have to understand that we are weak and helpless and that we completely annihilate them INTO DUST, INTO LESS THAN DUST...only becasue we have no power whatsoever. Like with the Romans, the Inquisition, the Nazis...

AHASVEROS: But this is only Purim. None of that's happened yet.

ESTHER: Of course it has. It's all happening right now. On different channels. Look...

She grabs the remote, swings it. Now in the wrestling match AMALEK gets a headlock on the JEW who wails as Amalek gives him skull-nuggies.

ESTHER: There's Babylonian exile.

AHASVEROS: That's terrible.

ESTHER: No, that's good. It led to the Talmud and rabbinic Judaism....(ANOTHER SWITCH: Now the Jew is on top.)...The slaughter of Hamor and Shekhem and all their people. Hundreds at least. Maybe thousands...

AHASVEROS: That's....?

ESTHER: Good. Why not good?

The WRESTLERS continue to switch positions.

ESTHER: ...There's the Inquisition...the Intifada...the Pogroms ...Saul killing the Amalekites...

AHASVEROS: Aggh. This is horrible. (Buries his face in the pillows.) I can't watch.

ESTHER: Watch! Watch! It's all that's on. It's all that's ever on!

AHASVEROS: But I'm so confused. I can't tell us from them or good from bad. Or...

ESTHER: Or Haman from Mordecai...?

AHASVEROS: (holding up a hamantash) Which one wore the funny hat?

ESTHER: (clicks off the tv; the wrestlers go off stage) Perfect! You've fulfilled the rabbi's instructions, to drink--or watch tv--until you can't tell "Cursed be Haman" from "Blessed be Mordecai." (Satisfied.) Done! Let's go to bed.

AHASVEROS: But what about the 75,000?

ESTHER: (turns, gives him a long, hard look) Who are you, sweetie? Are you Martin Buber? Are you Spinoza? The Prophet Isaiah? No! You're Ahashveros. A nice old king. And it's Purim. These people don't want to talk about massacres. They want to talk about...happy endings. They want to laugh. Have a good time. (Trying to jolly him like a child.) You're happy, aren't you, little Kingy...? (tickling him under the chin) Come on, Kingela, come on....

AHASVEROS (can't help giggling. He squirms and giggles with increasing delight and hysteria) No, don't, don't. You know I can't stand that...(Writes about in his chair squealing.)

ESTHER: That's right! That's right! So let's finish with a little song:

"Hooray for Yiddishkeit,
It don't matter if we're wrong or right,
We finally won a fight...
Showed our might..."

AHASVEROS: Stop! Stop! They already used that tune. One more line and we have to make another royalty payment. Just when I'm supposed to be cutting the deficit.

ESTHER: We have to sing. Isn't there some tune in the public domain we can use?

FINALE

FINALE

(Tune: My Country 'Tis of Thee)

That was our Purim spiel
So it was no big deal
At least it's done.
It was a little long
We could have cut a song
Perhaps the language was too strong
For the little ones.

But we brought you the truth
Sharp as a serpent's tooth
For you to see
The way it really was
In the days of Achashvuz
And you could see it all because
God made TV.

1993

PROPS NEEDED:

Scene 2: King and Queen dialog
*riser (platform) at side for King and Queen
*Sixpack of beer...
*platter of hamantaschen
EL *two crowns
*cordless phone
*attache case for Esther
EL *sign: "Shushan: 20 years later.
AL *Giant gragger used as remote channel changer (Allan Nadler?)
*Strobe or flashlight for channel-changed effects

Scene 3: Levy-McNeil
* 3 or 4 small cream pies (and a roll of Bounty)
HOE *ghetto blaster to play Aliza's song on tape
*blowup of Aliza
*large map of Israel.

Scene 5: "This Old Palace"
*tools (hammer, saw, whatever)

Scene 7: "Harem Girls"
EL * oversized 9,999 ticket to be taken from harem girl's bra
COMMERCIAL: CANNING Red
Scene 9: "Mordechai P.I.
EL *microphone (or tape recorder)
*magnifying glass
*camera
*deerstalker cap for Mordechai
*toy cars (2) SVRAH ?

Scene 11: Arsenio Hall
BUB *saxaphone

Scene 13:
✓✓ *Suma wrestler costumes or bathrobes (Phil in white/Stan in black)
EL *Bell

Good evening everybody. I am your new Queen Esther and welcome to ~~the show that makes you~~ "This Old Palace,"

the show that makes you think you can tackle any home improvement project, until after you've bought all the stuff you realize you can't.

As your new queen, can you expect me to live in the same quarters that all the other queens lived in. Ugh. What horrible taste they had. That last one - Queen Barbara. - she had little ducks on everything. Ducks on the bedspreads, ducks on the dishtowels, ducks on the ~~coffee mugs~~ broccoli plates! My Goodness! So today's show will focus on a complete overhaul of the palace. And we'll start at the top - with Fiddling around on the roof