

## The Feasts of Israel

### Lesson Thirteen – The Feast Of Purim - The Feast of Lots

**Esther 3:13-15 - And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey. [14] The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, that they should be ready against that day. [15] The posts went out, being hastened by the king's commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace. And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed.**

It's been about a year now since I took my first ever visit to the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. It was a life-changing experience but one that just accentuated a broken heart the Lord had given me since the summer of 1999 over the plight of the Jews and the Church. As I listened to the presentations and watched the videos I couldn't help but think back to a story taken right out of the Bible of Israel's first real brush with total extinction and annihilation. Hitler was not the first with murder in his heart toward the Jews. Haman was probably not either but he was the first one recorded in scripture who literally tried to have every single Jewish boy, girl, man and woman exterminated from the kingdom over which he had authority. Pharaoh and Herod had been terrible despots who persecuted the Jews and killed untold tens of thousands (hundreds of thousands possibly under Pharaoh) but Haman was the first real true-blue demonically inspired ruler to try and kill an entire race. He and Hitler were but dress rehearsals for the coming Antichrist who will try and do the same again and succeed for a season before being stopped and destroyed by the brightness of our coming Redeemer - Jesus Christ.

Glory to the Lamb. Pardon me for a minute while I type these words to stop and praise God. The Jews have seen some dark days and their future is not too great in the near term but JERUSALEM will once again be the center and capital of the WORLD and ALL NATIONS will come and worship the KING there one day. Her king is Jesus Christ, a JEW. Hallelujah. Born of the stock of Jesse and David, a descendant of Abraham, the MESSIAH of whom Israel looks so hard today for but is blinded to Him because of her unbelief.

Anti-Semitism is hardly a modern occurrence. Israel's embittered enemies have, with craft and cruel hatred, plotted the destruction of God's chosen - the sons of Jacob. Yet, the wayside of human history is strewn with the debris of Israel's detractors. Through all their plotting and debauchery - they have only brought about their own demise. Their only lasting achievement has been an occasion for a Jewish holiday. Such was the case with Pharaoh when the Lord instituted Passover. Such was the case with the defeat of Antiochus Epiphanies

and the resulting feast of Hanukkah. Such was also the case with the defeat of Hitler, which paved the way for the emergence of the modern state of Israel, and its annual Independence Day celebration. It was and is also true of the Jewish feast of Purim and its institution in ancient Persia.

The Feast of Purim contains a beautiful story of God's redemption and His protection of His people Israel through the people of Esther and Mordecai. Purim celebrates Esther and Mordecai's efforts to save the Jews from national extermination at the hands of the King who was convinced by Haman they were a threat to his kingdom. We want to take a look at the historical and prophetic aspects of this great feast that will be celebrated shortly in early latter part of February this year (2002).

### The Historical Background

Purim is the Hebrew word for "lots" in remembrance of the pur (lot) cast by wicked Haman to determine the month and day on which the Jewish people were to be killed throughout the mighty Persian Empire. Ironically, the lots that were thrown for Israel's destruction actually set the date for a new national celebration.

Known as the "Feast of Esther," and in antiquity as "Mordecai's Day," Purim commemorates the deliverance of God's people at the hands of Esther and Mordecai.

### **The Time of Purim**

Purim is a late winter feast (late February or early March), the last feast of the biblical year. It occurs on the 14th day of Adar, the 12th Hebrew month (or, in a leap year, on the 14th day of Adar Sheni, the 13th month), exactly ONE MONTH before Passover. In Jerusalem today, Purim is celebrated on Adar 15, one day later than in the rest of the world. This is in commemoration of the Jews in the ancient Persian capital of Shushan who did not rest from fighting their enemies until the following day that is now known as Shushan Purim.

**Esther 9:18 - But the Jews that were at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth day thereof; and on the fourteenth thereof; and on the fifteenth day of the same they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness.**

### **The Record of Purim**

Purim is an additional feast, one that was instituted centuries after the time of Moses. As such, Purim is nowhere to be found in the divinely given feasts of Leviticus 23. But despite this fact, Purim is a biblical feast and the best-known Jewish holiday added since the time of Moses. The record of its historical

background and observance is presented in the Bible in the book of Esther. The authorship of the book of Esther is not certain, but Mordecai has been traditionally viewed as its author. This seems most likely since it was Mordecai who communicated the institution of Purim to the Jewish people throughout the Persian Empire by way of official letter. Mordecai was also intimately acquainted with Persian laws and culture woven throughout the book of Esther.

**Esther 9:20 - And Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews that were in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, both nigh and far,**

**Esther 9:29 - Then Esther the queen, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote with all authority, to confirm this second letter of Purim.**

#### The Heroes of Purim

In 538 B.C. the majority of Persian Jewry chose to remain in Persia rather than return to their homeland under the leadership of Zerubbabel. For more than 50 years they continued to flourish in the comfort of dispersion rather than suffer the hardships involved in returning to Israel. From all outward appearances, they were well integrated, even semi-assimilated, into Persian society; that is, until the days of Esther.

From this Jewish dispersion came Esther and Mordecai - two towering heroes of Purim. To avoid Persian anti-Semitism, they masked their Jewishness from the public eye. Esther's given Persian name was derived from the pagan goddess, Ishtar, and Mordecai's from the Babylonian god, Marduk, very similar to the name changes of Daniel and his three Hebrew companions living in the Babylonian court (Dan. 1:7). However, beneath their Persian social veneer, Esther and Mordecai were both strongly nationalistic and fiercely devoted to the God of Israel.

Esther's Hebrew name, Hadassah, meaning "myrtle," was fitting name indeed in light of her tremendous beauty (Esther 2:7). Her parents died when she was young, and her cousin, Mordecai, adopted and raised her as his daughter. Mordecai held a high office in the Mede-Persian court (the world power of his day), giving his access to the palace (Esther 2:5,11) and necessitating his presence in the king's gate.

**Esther 2:5 - Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite;**

**Esther 2:11 - And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her.**

**Esther 2:7 - And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter.**

**Esther 2:20 - Esther had not yet shewed her kindred nor her people; as Mordecai had charged her: for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him.**

**Esther 2:21 - In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus.**

This created an interesting backdrop for this incredible story. Mordecai's enemy Haman was a Agagite (Est. 3:1), a descendant of Agag, the king of the Amalekites during Saul's reign (1 Sam. 15:8). The Amalekites were descendants of Amalek, the grandson of Esau (Gen. 36:12). As bitter enemies of Israel, they carried on the ancient strife between Jacob and Esau. In the days of Moses and Joshua, the Amalekites treacherously attacked the unarmed Israelites as they passed through the Sinai. The Lord never forgot their blind, inbred hatred, and pronounced a curse to "blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven."

**Deut. 25:19 - Therefore it shall be, when the Lord thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the Lord thy God gives thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shall blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; you shall not forget it.**

**Exodus 17:14 - And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. 16 For he said, Because the Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.**

**Numbers 24:20 - And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable, and said, Amalek was the first of the nations; but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever.**

King Saul had been commanded by the Lord to utterly destroy all the Amalekites. Had he only been obedient, the threat of annihilation at the hand of Haman would not have been possible. However, the descendants of Saul and Agag met again almost six centuries later and were once again engaged in mortal conflict with God's chosen people.

The Origin Of Purim

The setting of the Book of Esther was the king's palace in Shushan, the Persian capital, located just north of the Persian Gulf in what today is modern Iran. The events took place during the reign of Ahasuerus (identified by historians as Xerxes I, 486-465 B.C.) The mighty Persian Empire was at the zenith of its power and glory with its 127 provinces stretching from "India to Ethiopia."

**Esther 1:1 - Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, (this is Ahasuerus which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces:)**

We see God's great power working in the lives of His people even when He is not mentioned by name in this book. Most of you reading this know the story. Vashti the Queen to Ahasuerus was deposed of because of displaying her beauty before the princes and men of renown in attendance at a great feast at the palace. Because of strict Persian law, which forbade women to be seen unveiled by strangers (much like Islamic law today), she refused this command in order to preserve her reputation. However, in doing so, Vashti created a national crisis. Her example, threatened the Persian honor of the king and the social dominance of the men of Persia. Ahasuerus was incensed with her insubordination and conferred with his princes. The result was the demotion and removal of her as queen:

**Esther 1:6-9 - Where were white, green, and blue, hangings, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble: the beds were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black, marble. [7] And they gave them drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being diverse one from another,) and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king. [8] And the drinking was according to the law; none did compel: for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should do according to every man's pleasure. [9] Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women in the royal house that belonged to king Ahasuerus.**

**Esther 1:19 - If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, That Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she.**

While the removing of the queen solved the pressing crisis, it created the need for a new queen. So the princes appointed officers to find a replacement and many "fair maidens" were brought into the "house of the women," as potential candidates. Among them was ESTHER. She immediately found favor with the keeper of the women and was given preferential treatment with the best accommodations in the house. **The King was captivated by her almost immediately too. He fell in love with her at first sight. As a result, Esther became the new queen of Persia.**

**Esther 2:17 - And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti.**

Shortly after this, Mordecai overheard two rebellious chamberlains plotting the assassination of the King. Their planned bloody coup was quickly reported to Esther, and the King launched an immediate investigation. The matter was verified, and the conspirators were hanged. As a result, Mordecai's heroic deed and faithfulness to the king were recorded in the royal chronicles of Persia.

After this a prince named HAMAN was promoted to the position of prime minister over all the other princes, answering only to the king. At the king's command, all were to bow and do obeisance (as homage to a god) in Haman's presence. For the devout Mordecai, idolatry was unthinkable. He worshipped only the one true GOD. When questioned by the other royal officers to why he daily disobeyed the king's command, he explained his JEWISHNESS.

When the matter was told to Haman, he determined to kill not only Mordecai but also all Jews everywhere. If one would not bow, it was clear that none of the Jewish people would bow before him. His inflated ego and honor were at stake. Having purposed to annihilate the Jewish people, Haman cast lots to gain direction from the Persian gods for the best date for the planned massacre. The lots fell on Adar 13, giving Haman some eleven months to work out the details of his demonic plan.

Haman petitioned the King to obtain the needed authorization for his edict. He reported that a troublesome people existed within the Persian kingdom. They were dispersed as a foreign and evil element throughout the empire, they help incompatible laws, and they rebelled against the laws of the king. As he presented his case, Haman outlined his "final solution" for this hated people. He proposed an edict calling for their destruction. In return he offered 10,000 talents (more than 10 million ounces) of silver to the royal treasury. It is not clear whether this enormous sum was to compensate for the significant economic loss to the empire or defray the extensive military costs for such a plan. Apparently, Haman counted on recovering his "bribe" by seizing the properties of his Jewish victims (sound familiar?). Because of his great confidence in Haman, the King removed the royal signet ring and gave it to Haman, granting him full authority to carry out his insidious plot. So Haman sent the evil edict, hastened by the command of the king:

**Esther 3:13-15 - And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey. [14] The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, that they should be ready**

against that day. [15] The posts went out, being hastened by the king's commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace. And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed.

### Intercession For Esther - "For Such A Time As This."

When word of the sinister decree came to Mordecai, he tore his clothes in bitter anguish, put on sackcloth, and covered himself with ashes. Mordecai related the dire news to Esther and gave her a copy of the edict. He insistently pled with her to INTERCEDE before the king on behalf of her people. This posed a grave dilemma for Esther. She feared to approach the king. According to Persian law, if anyone came uninvited into the inner court of the king, he would be killed. The only possible exception was for the king to put forth his golden scepter to stay the execution. But the king had not summoned Esther for 30 days. The strong possibility existed that she would forfeit her life for such a brazen breach of Persian law.

**Esther 4:14 - For if thou altogether hold your peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?**

Esther was persuaded and requested only that Mordecai gather the Jewish people of Shushan and fast for three days before she petitioned the king. Courageously she resolved,

**Esther 4:16 - Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.**

On the third day of the fast, Esther donned her royal apparel and stood in the inner court of King Ahasuerus. When the astonished king saw her, he extended his golden scepter to spare her life. Seeing her in great distress and desperate action, the king promised to grant any request within his power to fulfill. Esther delayed her request and instead asked the king and Haman come to a banquet prepared in their honor.

At the banquet the king asks again, "What is your request or petition?" Not wanting to rush the decision, especially since it concerned the king's most trusted government advisor, Esther again invited the king and Haman to a banquet on the following night. Ideal circumstances were needed for her difficult petition. The egotistical Haman was elated that he had once again been invited to a private royal banquet. He viewed it as the pinnacle of his career and rushed home to

boast. As Haman passed through the king's gate, he met Mordecai who again stubbornly refused to bow. Haman's deep-seated anger and hatred flared as he complained:

**Esther 5:13 - Yet all this avails me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.**

His friends counseled him to build 75-foot gallows and hang Mordecai the next morning. This would allow Haman to fully enjoy his banquet in the evening.

That night the king could not sleep. As only God could do, He used the King's vanity to save Mordecai's life. His servants read the chronicles of the king's exploits to him. In the pages, the details of Mordecai's faithfulness in foiling the attempt on his life were recounted. The King was very troubled when he realized that Mordecai had gone unrewarded for such a great deed. The next morning, the king noticed Haman waiting in the outer court to gain a meeting with him. Haman was waiting for permission to hang Mordecai upon the newly constructed gallows. The king asked Haman:

**Esther 6:6 - So Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delights to honor? Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honor more than to myself?**

**Esther 6:8-9 - Let the royal apparel be brought which the king uses to wear, and the horse that the king rides upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head: [9] And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delights to honor, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.**

The king then commanded Haman to quickly perform the honor to Mordecai and to personally lead Mordecai through the streets on horseback. Haman was horror-stricken in his utter humiliation, but things were to sour further in his plot against the Jewish people.

### **The Banquet Reveals All - The Just Shall Live By Faith**

At the banquet, Esther finally made her petition known to the king. She pled for the King to save her and her people from impending destruction. This was a surprising revelation indeed, since the king was not aware that Esther was Jewish. The angered king immediately arose and demanded to know the identity of the enemy. Pointing to Haman, Esther answered:

**Esther 7:6 - And Esther said, The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman. Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen.**

In a heated rage, the king stormed from the banquet hall to contemplate his actions. As he did so, the blood drained from Haman's face, for he knew that HIS LIFE, not the life of the Jews, was now in certain danger. In the thrashings of his terror, he threw himself on the queen's couch and begged for mercy. But at that moment the king returned and mistook Haman's actions for violence against HIS QUEEN. The time for talk was past. King Ahasuerus ordered the executioners to cover Haman's face and hang on the gallows prepared for Mordecai.

In the wake of Haman's demise, Mordecai was promoted to Haman's position and given the royal signet ring. But the Persian law still stood which called for the destruction of Esther's people. So she again risked her life by going before the king to beg for the deliverance of her people. However, a difficulty existed - laws within the Medo-Persian government could NEVER be repealed. Therefore the king commanded Mordecai and Esther to draft a decree to the provinces and seal it with his signet granting the Jewish people the right to self-defense against their aggressors. Normally, as in Islamic countries today, to take a life even accidentally would mean the forfeiture of one's own life or payment of huge sums of compensation to the survivors.

When the fateful Adar 13 arrived, the Jews of Persia fought for their lives. Fearing the exalted Mordecai, the provincial rulers aided the Jewish people under their local authority. But anti-Semitism was especially ingrained in the capital city where particularly fierce fighting carried over until the next day. When it was finished, the enemies of God's people were killed - 75,000 in the provinces, 800 in Shushan, and the ten sons of Haman were hanged on the gallows lest there be blood revenge.

To remember God's mighty deliverance, Mordecai carefully recorded the events and sent letters throughout the land. The feast was called PURIM, for Haman had "cast Pur," (that is, the lot), to consume them and destroy them. And so Purim became a feast for Israel, a day of "feasting and joy," so that the memory of Purim would never cease throughout all generations.

**Esther 9:20-24 - And Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews that were in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, both nigh and far, [21] To establish this among them, that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same, yearly, [22] As the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day: that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor. [23] And the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto them; [24] Because Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy**

**of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that is, the lot, to consume them, and to destroy them;**

### The Modern Observance

Being instituted after the Mosaic Law, Purim is considered a minor holiday, and no restrictions are placed upon working. Even in the Book of Esther, no religious ceremonies were observed other than a time of "feasting and joy, of sending presents to one another and gifts to the poor" With no other details given for its observance, many warm Purim traditions have developed over the past 2,500 years.

### **A Time Of Remembrance, The Fast Of Esther**

Sometime after the institution of Purim, Adar 13 also became connected to the holiday and was celebrated as the "Fast of Esther." The original fast requested by Esther was three days in duration (Esther 4:16) and was kept near Passover, some eleven months earlier than Purim (3:12). Since the fast is not strictly commanded, very few actually keep it today.

### **The Scroll Of Esther**

The principal ceremony of Purim is the reading of the Book of Esther in the synagogue. A handwritten scroll of Esther is read at the beginning of Purim, just after the evening service. It is also read again the next day during the morning synagogue service. Through these readings, the listeners relive the miraculous events of Purim. The Book of Esther is known as the megillah ("scroll") in Hebrew. It is the best known of the five books of the Hebrew Bible that are known as "scrolls." These scrolls are short and are read on different holidays - The Song of Solomon - Passover; Ruth (Feast of Weeks), Lamentations (Tisha B'Av), Ecclesiastes (Tabernacles) and Esther (Purim).

During Purim, the divine command to blot out the name of Amalek is taken literally. When Haman's name is read from the scroll of Esther, a thunderous roar of clapping, stamping feet, booing, and the grinding noise of twirling noisemakers meet it. These hand-held noisemakers, called groggers, were developed especially for drowning out Haman's name. Each grogger consists of a noisemaker that twirls at the end of a handle. Some other interesting methods for "erasing" Haman's name existed in the past. One tradition was to write Haman's name on the soles of the shoes, and as the feet were stamped during the reading of the scroll, Haman's name was literally erased. Another tradition, known as "beating Haman," involved building an effigy (likeness) of Haman that was then hanged and burned. However, this custom was largely abandoned in the Middle Ages when anti-Semitic slanders were leveled that the Jewish people burned a figure of Jesus on the cross during Purim and served as a basis for attacks on them.

## **The Half Shekel**

Before the reading of the scroll, it is customary to pass a plate in the synagogue in remembrance of the ancient injunction for each Israelite male to donate one-half shekel annually toward maintenance of the Temple.

**Exodus 30:13 - This they shall give, every one that passes among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel is twenty gerahs:) an half shekel shall be the offering of the Lord.**

Usually, one to three silver coins (such as a silver dollar or half-dollar) are on the plate that is circulated. Each worshiper places a gift of money on the plate so that the silver coins become his. The coins are picked up and immediately donated back to the plate, thus fulfilling the ancient command. The collection is usually given to charity in fulfillment of Mordecai's command to give "gifts to the poor" during Purim (Esther 9:22)

## **A Time Of Gifts**

Purim is a time of "sending presents to one another and gifts to the poor." (Esther 9:22). The practice known as mishloah manot of sending portions of food delicacies to friends is a widespread Purim tradition. This outward expression of joy usually involves the sending of a plate full of cake, pastries, fruit, and nuts by the hand of a child to friends and relatives. It is also customary to give charity to at least two needy individuals during Purim so that they may be able to enjoy the festival. Even small children participate in giving several coins to charity.

## **A Time Of Foods**

Purim is a time of special holiday foods and "feasting." (Esther 9:17). The most popular food for Purim today is known as Hamantashen, which are triangular pastries filled with poppy seed (or prune) filling. Their name is derived from two German words - mohn (poppy seed) and taschen (Pockets). According to tradition, Hamantashen are reminiscent of Haman's three-cornered hat. Hamantashen are often served for breakfast for Purim. Another festive dish for Purim is known as kreplach. The noodle-like kreplach are made from triangular pieces of dough, stuffed with a chopped meat and minced-onion filling, and served in a thick, steaming soup.

Traditionally, a festive meal, known as the Purim Seudah, is held late in the afternoon and draws friends and family together for the close of the joyous Purim holiday.

## **A Time Of Gladness**

Purim is a time of rejoicing and gladness, the merriest of holiday on the Hebrew calendar. The rabbis of the Talmud taught that one should get so caught up (and some even encouraged drinking) in the joy of Purim that he is no longer able to tell the difference between "cursed be Haman" and "blessed be Mordecai." So, during Purim one may hear the familiar Hebrew phrase "ad de lo yada" (until not able to distinguish)

As part of the Purim joy, the holiday is often celebrated with masquerades, costumes, and carnivals. Traditionally, masquerading was banned under Jewish law because it often involved wearing clothes of the opposite sex, a practice strictly forbidden in scripture (Dt. 22:5). Because of Purim's great joy, masquerading was permitted by rabbis and is a universal Purim custom today. In Israel, the most well known Purim event is the Adloyada parade and carnival that is held in Tel Aviv each year.

The Biblical Connection

### **The Defeat Of God's Enemies**

The underlying principle of Purim is found in the Abrahamic Covenant. God promised Abraham: "I will make you a great nation; I will bless you AND make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you. I will curse those who curse you." In a general sense God deals with all of mankind in the same way they deal with the sons of Abraham. One's attitude toward the sons of Abraham is reflective upon one's attitude toward God! To curse Israel, whom God has blessed, is to set oneself in direct opposition to God. This is not to say that Israel is always righteous, for she is not. However, to hate Israel is to hate the God who created her.

**Zech. 2:8 - For thus saith the Lord of hosts; after the glory hath he sent me unto the nations that spoiled you: for he that touches you touches the apple of his eye.**

In light of this, the Abraham Covenant exhibits something of a "boomerang effect." God blesses men to the exact degree that they bless the sons of Israel and the curses they hurl against Israel He brings back upon the heads of her enemies.

Haman built the gallows for Mordecai, but he himself was hanged on them. Haman sought to solidify his position, but his position was given instead to Mordecai. Haman sought to kill Mordecai's people, but he, his whole family, and all those who hated the Jews were killed instead. Haman sought to wipe out the worship of the true God that prevented men from bowing to him, but instead, as a result of Mordecai, "many became Jews." (Esther 8:17)

The path of Anti-Semitism is a well-worn path that always leads to the destruction of the traveler. WE NEED TO HEED THIS CHURCH! The Hamans of history and this present hour are many. Even as the fate of Pharaoh, Antiochus Epiphanes, Hitler, Nasser and Khomeini (whose name literally means "Haman" in Farsi) so, too, will be the fate of Qadafi, Arafat, Saddam Hussein, and the host of others who dare to curse Israel and thereby the God of Abraham. God has tied His faithfulness to Israel to the very sun, moon and stars giving their light!

**Jeremiah 31:35-36 Thus saith the Lord, which gives the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divides the sea when the waves thereof roar; The Lord of hosts is his name: [36] If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.**

He has emphatically declared,

**Isaiah 54:17 - No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.**

### **The Deliverance Of God's People**

Yet, in the final analysis, Purim is far more than just the defeat of God's enemies, it's the DELIVERANCE of God's people! God, through the prophet Daniel prophesied that there would arise four Gentile powers during Israel's history to exercise dominion over her. Each successive Gentile power would be more hostile and anti-Semitic than the previous one. The Babylonian, Persian, and Greek empires oppressed Israel, but none will compare to the vicious hatred of the coming fourth and final empire, the revived Roman Empire under the leadership of Antichrist. Daniel said of the time:

**Daniel 12:1 - And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.**

Israel clearly still awaits her final deliverance. But how will that deliverance be accomplished? According to scripture, deliverance is found only in a PERSON - the Lord Jesus Christ! It will never be found in a people. Israel has no power to bring about her own deliverance. But it is exactly that humanistic, proud thinking that she can deliver herself that will prompt Israel to take deliverance into her own hands and make a fatal covenant with Antichrist. However, in the end, Israel will confess,

**Isaiah 26:18 - We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.**

God has often delivered Israel in the past, but her FULL DELIVERANCE awaits the coming Deliverer out of Zion. For only when Messiah Jesus (the rightful heir to David's throne) comes will the yoke of Gentile oppression be forever removed from Israel's neck.

**Romans 11:26 - And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:**

This truth is unknowingly proclaimed each Purim season as the Purim chorus is sung: Utzu etzah, vetufar; dabru davar, velo yakum; ki Immanuel. It is actually the Hebrew text of the Lord's future warning to the Antichrist taken straight from Isaiah:

**Isaiah 8:10 - Take counsel together, and it shall come to naught; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us.**

Immanuel is the reason the Antichrist will not succeed! GOD WITH US! Who is this Immanuel? Jesus Christ! The same Immanuel whom Isaiah said would be born of a virgin and reign upon David's throne forever (Isaiah 7:14, 9:6-7). He will destroy Israel's greatest Haman, the Antichrist. He will deliver Israel from destruction. He will bind up the wounds of His people. It is HE and HE ALONE who delivers Israel. All of Israel shall be saved!

### **Purim and The Believer**

Jesus is not only the deliverer of Israel; He is the deliverer of ALL who put their trust in Him. He offers deliverance from death at this very moment. Sin brings death. There is none who have done well. ALL HAVE sinned and the penalty for sin, even one, is DEATH. All men are sinners and are under the curse of death. God's decree is irrevocable even as the law of the Medes and the Persians was irrevocable. Sinful man deserves it, and God's perfect justice demands it. Yet, through the sacrificial death of the Messiah, God has made a way of escape that does not negate His justice. Paul said it best - "How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?" We wont! Celebrate Purim with your family this year. And when you do, remember the story of Esther and Mordecai and then worship Our Heavenly Mordecai who has secured our victory and deliverance from sin, Satan, the grave, hell and death through the blood of His cross. Shalom and Blessings in the name of Jesus, Yeshuah, the Messiah!