

# Celebrating *Purim*<sup>1</sup>

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The book of Esther is the only book in the Bible in which God's Name is not mentioned. But *is* He not present and working on our behalf, even if we do not see His Name or hear His voice? The whole book of Esther is revealing the timeless truth that God is always working behind the scenes to turn everything that was meant for evil around for good...for the good of His people and the destruction of the enemy. Just as it was said by Joseph: *It may have been meant for evil against me, but God used it to bring about good* (Genesis 50:20). And in Romans 8:28: *God works all things together for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose*. In the book of Esther, it was the ultimate turning around.

It begins with the unlikely fate of a Jewish girl living in the Persian Empire. King Ahasuerus (i.e., Xerxes) takes Esther, the cousin of the Jewish advisor, Mordecai, to be his new queen after divorcing queen Vashti. On Mordecai's advice, Esther hides her Jewish ancestry—until the wicked advisor, Haman, devises an evil plot to completely wipe out all of the Jews, obliging her to speak out for her people. The most famous lines of the book come when Mordecai persuades Esther to go to the king unannounced, for which she could have been put to death. Mordecai had a messenger tell Esther, *"Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"* (from Esther 4:14). Then Esther was infused with courage and told him, *Go, gather all the Jews and hold a fast on my behalf. I and my young women will also fast. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish* (from verse 16).

Behind the scenes, events were being orchestrated by the invisible Hand of God, which enabled Esther and Mordecai to foil Haman's plot. Haman ended up being executed on the very gallows he had built, upon which he intended to hang Mordecai—*Haman and his 10 sons*. They had "cast lots" to determine the day they would completely destroy the Jewish people – which just happened to fall on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the Jewish month Adar. The word "Purim" means: *casting lots*. It's like *the rolling of the dice*. God's deliverance of the Jewish people from annihilation actually went on for two days, as they fought a war of defense on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, and then rested on the 15<sup>th</sup>, after which they established a celebration that was to be held throughout all generations on Adar 14 and 15. They were declared "days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor," for *their sorrow was turned into joy and their mourning into celebration* (Esther 9:22). The festival was called, "*Purim*."

Even though God's Name is not mentioned in the book of Esther, it is most definitely a display of the Hand of God. Actually, this display of God's Hand *at Purim* has continued throughout all of history and even into modern times. Life is not a series random events and God does not roll dice. History is His Story, and we can see the Hand of the God of Israel at every turn of events. It actually began long before Haman's evil plot.

After the Israelites had come out of Egypt and passed through the wilderness, they were on their way to becoming a nation for the first time in their own land that God had promised them. From the beginning, satan tried to stop it from happening. It was at Rephidim that *Amalek* first came and tried to destroy Israel (Exodus 17:8). But God's Hand prevailed and the enemy was destroyed. God told Moses that He would eventually blot out the remembrance of Amalek from the earth, as He would war against Amalek throughout every generation. It was there that Moses built an altar to the Lord and called it Jehovah Nissi (the Lord our Banner). We do see God warring against Amalek throughout all of history. It was king Agag that Saul sparred after God had told him to utterly destroy the *Amalekites*. King Agag was a descendant of Amalek.

Now back to Haman....."the Agagite" (Esther 3:1). He too was a descendant of Amalek. Haman was hung on the very day he had intended to hang Mordecai. Haman had "cast lots" to determine the day that all the rest of the Jewish people would be destroyed. But God doesn't roll dice and things don't just happen to happen. God's promise to wage war against Amalek in every generation can be seen all through the Bible, as all the forces of hell came against the Jewish people, even after Bible times. There's no way the many dates and happenings are coincidence. They could only be coordinated by the Hand of God.

In 1922, Adolf Hitler said, *As soon as I rise to power, I shall have gallows after gallows after gallows erected. I will hang every last Jew.* He was speaking in the spirit of Haman...with the very same plan. Hitler knew about Purim—and hated it with a passion. He even banned the reading of the book of Esther. Julius Streicher, one of the most infamous Nazi leaders produced violent anti-Semitic propaganda to fan the flames against the Jews. As the holocaust progressed, it would have seemed to be the complete end of the Jewish people...But the invisible Hand of the Almighty was at work. Churchill rose to power...and Roosevelt jumped in with all of the United States military...even China and Russia were a part of the big four Allied Forces that finally crushed the Nazis. Hitler killed himself, but his top leaders were captured. As the Hand of God would have it, after the trials and some were removed by suicide, murder, and prison, there were 10 Nazi criminals who were put to death...by hanging...just like the 10 sons of Haman. Hitler said He would use the gallows to destroy the Jews. God decided He would use the gallows to destroy the 3<sup>rd</sup> Reich. Julius Streicher had to be pushed across the floor screaming. As he faced the witnesses, he shouted, *“Purim! The festival of Purim 1946!”*

After the 3<sup>rd</sup> Reich fell, Joseph Stalin arose and followed in the footsteps of Haman (Amalek). In 1948, Russia became the enemy of the Jewish people and began their propaganda and attacks against them. One night as he made his plans of annihilation with his leaders, the Hand of God fell and Stalin suffered a stroke, dying a few days later. The day of his stroke was March 1, 1953— *the day Purim fell on that year*. Stalin had set the date of March 11 for the destruction of the nation of Israel. Years later, the system Stalin had created began to crumble by Lithuania declaring its independence. It was March 11, 1990—*the day Purim fell on that year*—the same day Haman had set to destroy the Jewish people.

As the Soviet Union crumbled, the spirit of Amalek (which is actually a high level wicked spirit) rose in the Islamic world, and within 25 days another person arose (whose hero was Stalin)—Saddam Hussein. He quickly began making threats to Israel. He sent 39 scud missiles landing in Israel, but there were stories of many not exploding, some were blown off course by high wind, and some mysteriously disappearing. There were more accounts of people emerging from destroyed houses and buildings without a scratch. Heavy rains and winds blew across Iraq, preventing them from using chemical warfare or it would have blown back on them. The day the first Iraq war ended was Feb. 28, 1991—*the day Purim fell on that year*. Saddam Hussein went into hiding and was finally captured on Dec 13<sup>th</sup> 2003. Now, that date may seem to not fit with the other dates, as Purim always falls in February or March. But...on the Hebrew calendar, the date Haman had slated to hang Mordecai, the first Purim, was the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month Adar... Saddam was captured on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of *OUR* 12<sup>th</sup> month December! When one enemy in the spirit of Amalek falls, another rises, just as God said He would have to war after them in every generation. But all of the events are precisely interwoven by the Hand of God to turn defeat into victory for His people.

The remembrance celebration of Purim teaches us important things about God and His fierce love for His people as He preserves, defends, protects, and does miracles for them. Each one of us has been miraculously delivered out of the hand of the enemy, by the Blood of Jesus. It reminds us that God orchestrates events of our lives, even when we cannot see His Hand at work. And perhaps we, like Esther, have been purposefully placed where we are—*for such a time as this*. And still future, it continues to prophesy God’s miraculous deliverance of His people made up of believing Israel and believing Gentiles—the Church—the Body of Christ from Satan and all of his evil forces. It’s just as Jesus proclaimed...that He would build His Church “and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18)!

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<sup>1</sup> Information adapted from: [www.jewsforjesus.org](http://www.jewsforjesus.org) “Purim Quick Facts” and articles; and [www.hopeoftheword.com](http://www.hopeoftheword.com) “The Mystery of the Yad Kedem,” audio message by Jonathan Cahn.