

# Purim – A Call to Courage



*Queen Esther*

“Blow the shofar in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly .... Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her chamber. Let the cohanim (priests), who minister before the LORD, weep between the portico and the altar. Let them say, ‘Spare your people, LORD.’” (Joel 2:15–17)

**One of the most joyous of all Jewish celebrations, Purim (Festival of Lots), will begin this Saturday at sunset (11 March 2017) and end on Sunday at sunset (12 March 2017)**

In preparation for this fun, boisterous holiday that celebrates the deliverance of the Jewish people from annihilation in the ancient Persian Empire,

observant Jewish adults will fast tomorrow from daybreak to nightfall, to commemorate Esther's three-day fast.

### **Purim: Evil Plans and the Courage to Expose Them**

The story of Purim is recorded in the Book of Esther (**Megillat Esther**). This wonderful book essentially has three main characters: Esther and her cousin Mordecai, the heroes of the story, and Haman, the villain who wickedly plots to destroy the Jewish People.

Esther, an orphan who had been raised in Persia by her cousin Mordecai, is a beautiful, young Jewish woman. When Vashti, the Queen of Persia, falls out of favor with Ahasuerus, King of Persia, Esther becomes part of his harem.

The hidden hand of God is at work in her life in the king's harem, and he falls head over heels in love with her. He loves her so much, in fact, that he singles her out to be his queen.

The king does not know, however, that Esther is a Jew, since Mordecai had advised her not to reveal her identity.

Although Mordecai is wise and loyal to the king, the king's adviser (the villain Haman), hates him because Mordecai refuses to bow down to this proud, haughty man. As a Jew, Mordecai can bow to no one. Enraged, Haman plots to destroy the Jewish people. (*Esther 3:1–5*)

Haman unfolds his evil scheme to King Ahasuerus in Esther 3:8:

"There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your realm. Their laws are different from those of every other people's, and they do not observe the king's laws; therefore it is not befitting the king to tolerate them."

The king accepts Haman's counsel and hands over the fate of the Jewish People to him. He then makes plans to exterminate all of the Jews. (Sound familiar?)

## Esther: If I Perish, I Perish

Mordecai counsels Esther to save the Jewish People by courageously visiting the king and pleading on their behalf, telling her that she has probably risen to the position as queen for this very purpose.

“Do not think that because you are in the king’s house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?” (*Esther 4:14*)

Going in to the king, of course, may seem like the logical thing to do, but it actually will put Esther’s life in immediate danger.

Even though she is queen, she cannot come into the king’s presence without his first summoning her. She knows she may be put to death if she shows up uninvited.

Though the name of God is not mentioned in the Book of Esther, we see by Esther’s preparation to come into the presence of the king, that she commits her ways to the Lord:

“Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.” (*Esther 4:16*)

She fasts for three days before going to the king, and when she enters his presence, she finds his grace, instead of his wrath.

In a series of comical twists and turns (you’ll have to read Esther to find out what they are), God humbles the proud and exalts the lowly who trust in Him.

Esther, the Jewish orphan who rose to become a Persian Queen, finally has the opportunity to expose Haman and save the Jewish People from his savage plot to destroy them.

## Purim Festivities: A Fun Time for All

On this fun Jewish holiday, we are called to feast, rejoice and give gifts to one another and to the poor.

Although Purim is not included as one of the Biblical Feasts of the Lord, it is a custom mandated by Mordechai:

“Mordecai recorded these events, and he sent letters to all the Jews ... near and far, to have them celebrate annually the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar as the time when the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month when their sorrow was turned into joy and their mourning into a day of celebration. He wrote them to observe the days as days of feasting and joy and giving presents of food to one another and gifts to the poor.” (*Esther 9:20–22*)

Traditional Purim customs include reading of the entire scroll of Esther in the synagogues, dressing up in costume, cheering at the mention of the hero and heroine, Mordechai and Esther, and booing the villain, Haman. (*Boo!*)

The Jewish people also send gifts to one another called **mishloach manot** and eat triangular cookies called **oznei haman** (ears of Haman) or hamantaschen (in Yiddish).

## Purim: More than a Time to Remember

While Purim is a time to remember God’s deliverance of the Jewish People from anti-Semitic forces in Persia about 2,500 years ago, it is also a time to remember that enemies have risen against the Jewish People in every age.

Purim, however, is more than a time to remember. It is also a time for Believers around the world to heed the call of the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) to rise up like Esther on behalf of the Jewish People.

Today, there are forces in modern-day Persia (Iran) that again seek to annihilate Israel.

Haman, as a type of anti-Messiah, not only hates the Jewish People with a venomous passion, but all those who refuse to bow their knee to the kingdom of darkness.

## **Mordechai and the Leading of God's Spirit**

In Purim's call to action, there are some subtle parallels between Mordechai and the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit).

As Mordechai implored Queen Esther to plead for the Jewish People before King Ahasuerus, the Ruach HaKodesh is calling to those who follow Yeshua (Jesus) to plead with the King of Kings and Lord of Lords to save Israel from those with murderous agendas against her.

We must remember, however, that the battle is ultimately not with flesh and blood, but with principalities, powers and rulers of the darkness—spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places. (*Ephesians 5:12*)

Yeshua called us to pray for our enemies, and therefore, even as we seek God's deliverance of Israel, we also pray for the salvation of those who are now enemies of the Jewish People, of Israel and even of God Himself.

This is not a time for true Believers, the Bride of Messiah, to remain silent. We cannot be complacent and think that we are safe simply because we are in the King's house.

The forces that seek to destroy the Jews also have in their evil plans to annihilate all of God's people, including Christians.

## **Mordechai: A Picture of the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit)**

Many other, interesting parallels can be drawn in the Book of Esther between the Ruach HaKodesh and Mordechai.

For instance, Mordechai seems to have one real task and that is to raise Esther to maturity.

He instructs, teaches, leads and guides her, directing her when to speak and when to remain silent. (*Esther 2:10; 4:14*)

Similarly, it is the Ruach HaKodesh that faithfully continues the work that has begun in us, leading and guiding us, bringing us to maturity and preparing us to be a beautiful Bride without spot or blemish.

Mordechai faithfully watches over Esther, the bride of the king. He stands outside the gate; hovering over her to make sure she is kept safe. (*Esther 2:11*)

Likewise, the Ruach (Spirit) of God hovered over the waters at creation, and he hovers over each of us to keep a protective watch.

Mordechai is privy to secret information (such as the plot against the king), just as the Ruach knows all deep and secret things of the hearts of men.

Mordechai intercedes for God's people with cries and groaning. (*Esther 4:1*) The Ruach also intercedes for us, even when we don't know what to pray.

"We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God." (*Romans 8:26–27*)

Like the partnership between the Holy Spirit and the Body of Messiah, Mordechai partners with Esther to carry out the authority of the King in saving the Jewish people from destruction.

### **Esther: A Picture of the Body of Messiah**

On the surface, the Book of Esther has some simple lessons, but digging deeper, it also reveals some surprising mysteries.

The heroine, Esther, seems to reflect the Bride of Messiah (His followers) in several ways:

In contrast to Queen Vashti, who was rebellious to her husband and King, occupied with her own "agenda" and, therefore, banished from the kingdom, Esther proved herself to be obedient to Mordechai (who typifies the Ruach HaKodesh) and to the king's servant Hegai. (*Esther 2:20*)

In a similar way, the world is occupied with its own agendas, wealth, and prestige. But followers of Messiah are occupied with obeying and serving their Lord and Savior, Yeshua HaMashiach (Jesus the Messiah).

Esther submitted herself to a prolonged preparation time before being brought into the king. She was anointed with oil of myrrh (which is symbolic of



suffering, cleansing, healing, and anointing), as well as beautifying preparations and perfumes. (*Esther 2:12*) Esther desired to please the king, and therefore, over all the other women seeking to be elevated to the position of queen, she was chosen as his bride.

Believers continuously prepare to meet Messiah Yeshua. This process begins with the anointing of the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit), who washes and renews us (*Titus 3:5*), brings us into unity (*Ephesians 4:3*) and enables us to obey the truth (*1 Peter 1:22*), among other important works.

Esther was faithful, beautiful, pure, and courageous—even to the point of being willing to lose her life to save her brethren. In carrying out the leading of her benefactor, Mordechai.

With the help of the Ruach (Spirit), the Bride of Messiah is called to be faithful to God's word, beautiful and pure in spirit, and courageous in sharing the truth of who Yeshua is. As a result of their courage, many Believers suffer severe persecution, even death.

Esther relied on God and not her own talents and natural abilities. She sought God through fasting and prayer before embarking on a courageous plan of action.

So, too, Believers know they cannot accomplish anything for the kingdom of God without relying totally on God's leading and protection.

Esther carried the full authority of the King and the seal of his signet ring to issue decrees that cannot be revoked. (*Esther 8:8*)

Likewise, Yeshua gave His followers the authority to defeat the works of the enemy. (*Luke 10:19*)

### **God's Watchmen Stand Against Haman**

As Purim is kept with great joy this Saturday night and Sunday, remember Esther's bravery in rising up and speaking out on behalf of the Jewish People.

It takes courage to resist the "Hamans" of this world and stand firm against popular opinion in our culture, which is most often opposed to God and righteousness.

In these end times, it will take courage to count the cost and say with Esther, “If I perish, I perish.”

Nevertheless, now is not the time to remain silent.

The Prophet Isaiah called upon the watchmen to cry out to God day and night on behalf of Zion and for Jerusalem’s sake. (*Isaiah 62:1*)

While the Hebrew word for watchman or guard can be a “**shomer**,” it can also be “**notzer**.”

This comes from the same root as **Notzri**, the Hebrew word for **Christian** – as in the followers of Yeshua of Natzeret (Jesus of Nazareth).

True followers of Yeshua are called to be watchmen on the walls on behalf of Israel and the Jewish People, especially in these end times, as multiple Hamans arise calling for Israel’s destruction.

“For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch.” (*Isaiah 62:1*)

**To wish someone a Happy Purim, say  
“Chag PurimSameach!”**

