

The Book of Esther & Purim



February 2021

The celebration of Purim occurs this week. Most people recognize it as a story of survival in the midst of a storm of hatred towards Hebrews. Modern day Jews observe it yearly as a time of gift exchange and appreciation for the survival of their people, in spite of all the odds meant to harm and extinguish them.

When King Achashverosh found his first wife, Queen Vashte, no longer acceptable to the Kingdom, he had her replaced. The eventual selection for a new wife led to Hadassah, whom he would only know as Esther. Hadassah was previously taken into the home of Mordechai at a young age after her parents death. As her guardian, Mordechai protected Hadassah as best he could under the Babylonian siege. The King's servant Hegai grew fondly of Hadassah,

"The girl pleased him and won his favor, so that he lost no time in giving her cosmetics, her portions [of special food] and seven girls from the king's palace to attend her; he also promoted her and the girls attending her to the best place in the harem's quarters. Ester did not disclose he people or family ties, because Mordechai had instructed her not to tell anyone." (Esther Chapter 2:9-10)

Hadassah changed her name to Esther to conceal her identity as a Hebrew, as per the direction of Mordechai.

Mordechai proved his allegiance to Esther after saving the King's life from would be assassins. Although he kept his relationship as kinsmen to Esther secret.

At this time however, Haman leader of his guardsman, demanded all to kneel in worship at his presence. Mordechai, knowing this was an offense to Yahweh refused.

"Haman was furious when he saw that Mordechai was not kneeling and bowing down to him. However, on learning what people Mordechai belonged to, it

seemed to him a waste to lay hands on Mordechai alone. Rather, he decided to destroy all of Mordechai's people, the Jews, throughout the whole of Achashverosh's kingdom." (Esther Chapter 3)

I personally find the parallel with our liberals today - uncanny. Somehow they place themselves in such high esteem, that nothing short of total control seems to suffice and please them. Comparable to Haman, they plot against those espousing freedom and allegiance to the Constitution. In Haman's case his lust for control led him to plot to have all the Hebrews killed having King Achashverosh decree their death. Haman spoke convincingly,

"There is a particular people scattered and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom. Their laws are different from those of every other people; moreover they don't observe the king's laws. It doesn't befit the king to tolerate them. 9 If it please the king, have a decree written for their destruction; and I will hand over 330 tons of silver to the officials in charge of the king's affairs to deposit in the royal treasury."

Mordechai hearing of the decree sent a message to Queen Esther asking for her helping in intervening on behalf of the Hebrews in Babylon. Esther sent message to Haman that she was bound by the Kingdom rules which left, even she, outside the King's inner courtyard unless summoned. She asked Mordechai and all the Hebrews to fast in anticipation of her speaking to the King.

As per God's Will, when Esther did appear, dressed in royal robes to the King. She found favor as he extended his golden scepter to Esther. She proceeded to ask he and Haman to a banquet she would prepare in his honor. Haman gloated at his good fortune at being invited to the Queen's banquet, but fell short of fullness of joy because upon seeing Mordechai, the

Hebrew, he still refused to bow in his presence. At this, Haman's wife advised, "Have a gallows seventy-five feet high constructed, and in the morning speak to the king about having Mordechai hanged on it. Then go in, and enjoy yourself with the king at the banquet."

Haman sought to speak to the King directly concerning Haman's lack of respect in not bowing. However, the King upon seeing Haman said the following, "What should be done for a man that the king wants to honor?" Haman, thinking the King spoke of himself, suggested the King mount this man to be honored, atop the King's horse, dressed in a crown and royal robes and present him throughout the city. Haman, extremely humiliated when he learned it was to be Mordechai who was honored and not he, proceeded with the presentation. Afterward he went home quickly to sulk before the impending banquet with Queen Esther.

As the Book of Esther recants, "3 Ester the queen answered, "If I have won your favor, king, and if it pleases the king, then what I ask be given me is my own life and the lives of my people. 4 For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, killed, exterminated. If we had only been sold as men- and women-slaves, I would have remained quiet; since then [our] trouble would not have been worth the damage it would have caused the king [to alter the situation]." 5 King Achashverosh asked Ester the queen, "Who is he? Where is the man who dared to do such a thing?" 6 Ester said, "A ruthless enemy — it's this wicked Haman!" Haman stood aghast, terrified before the king and queen. 7 In a rage, the king got up from the wine banquet and went out to the palace garden. But Haman remained, pleading with Ester the queen to spare his life; for he could see that the king had decided to do him in. 8 Haman had just fallen on the couch where Ester was, when the king returned from the palace garden to the wine banquet. He shouted, "Is he even going to rape the queen here in the palace, before my very eyes?" The moment these words left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's

face. 9 Harvona, one of the king's attendants, said, "Look! The gallows seventy-five feet high that Haman made for Mordechai, who spoke only good for the king, is standing at Haman's house." The king said, "Hang him on it." 10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows he had prepared for Mordechai. Then the king's anger subsided." (Esther Chapter 7).

In a great turn of events the secretaries wrote letters to the 127 provinces, "11 The letters said that the king had granted the Jews in every city the right "to assemble and defend their lives by destroying, killing and exterminating any forces of any people or province that would attack them, their little ones or their women or would try to seize their goods as plunder 12 on the designated day in any of the provinces of King Achashverosh, namely, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar." Subsequently Haman's ten sons were also hanged upon the gallows their father had meant for the Hebrews. (Esther Chapter 9).

Today, we are witness to a similar hatred towards true patriots. But if our story ends as this of Queen Esther, the protection by Yahweh's hand will be upon us!

