

Purim { פּוּרִים } (Feast of Lots)

A Call to Courage

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Purim, the Festival of Lots, is one of the most joyous of all Jewish celebrations, as we are called to feast, rejoice and give gifts to one another and to the poor. Although not included as one of the Biblical Feasts of the Lord, it is a custom mandated by Mordechai to the Jews, as recorded in the Book of Esther.

“Mordecai recorded these events, and he sent letters to all the Jews throughout the provinces of King Xerxes, 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)



A Purim spiel (play)

The Fast of Esther Ta'anit Esther / תענית אסתר

The Fast of Esther is traditionally observed from dawn until dusk on the day before Purim in commemoration of the three-day fast observed by Mordechai and Esther and all the Jewish people in the story of Purim. On that very day, the enemies of the Jews had planned to subjugate and destroy them. The opposite, however, occurred and the Jews gained an amazing ‘against the odds victory’ over their enemies.

The practice of fasting was observed by the people of Israel whenever they were faced with war. Thus Moshe Rabenu (Moses our forefather) also fasted when he came to wage war against Amalek. The aim of the fast was to affirm that a man does not prevail by physical or military strength, but only by lifting his eyes heavenward in prayer so that Divine Mercy might give him the strength to prevail in battle.

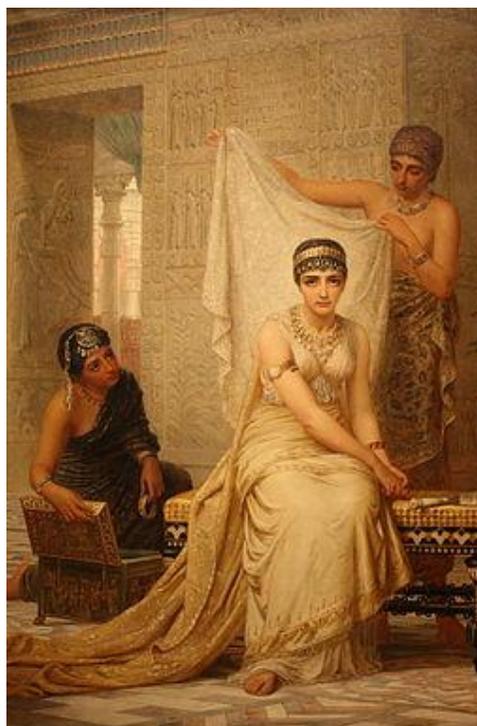
This was also the purpose of the fast observed by Israel at the time of Haman, when the Jewish people gathered to defend themselves against those who sought to destroy them. And in memory of that fast, a yearly fast was fixed for future generations on the same day. We are to recall that God accepts each person's prayer and penitence in the hour of his trouble.

The acceptance of this fast of the 13th of Adar on the part of Israel for later generations is alluded to in the Scroll of Esther:

‘And as they accepted upon themselves and upon their children, the matters of their fastings and their cry’ (Esther 9:31).

The fast is called by the name of Esther because it was she who first requested of Mordechai the observance of a fast:

‘Go and gather all the Jews who are found in Shushan and fast over me, and do not eat and do not drink three days, night and day; and I and my maidens will also fast thus.’ (Esther 4:16)



Queen Esther (1878) by [Edwin Long](#).

The fast which we observe is nevertheless not observed for a three-day period, as was the case with the original fast, nor is it observed on the same date. Originally the fast was observed by Esther and the entire people of Israel on the 14th, 15th and 16th of the Hebrew month of Nisan, immediately after Mordechai was informed of Haman's decree and of the letter of annihilation which Haman wrote on the 13th of Nisan.

Other traditional Purim customs include dressing up in costumes, holding joyous celebrations, putting on funny plays that dramatize the story of Purim, and reading through the scroll of Esther (Megillat Esther מגילת אסתר in [Hebrew](#)) in the synagogues.



King Agag of Amalek).

While the narrative is read, the congregants cheer the hero and heroine, Mordechai and Esther, and boo the villain Haman (Boo!) by making loud noises with a noisemaker called a 'grogger'. This is based on the Scripture that we are to blot out the name of Amalek ([Hebrew](#): עמלק) forever and ever ¹(Haman descended from



¹ Exodus 17:14, Deuteronomy 25:19



Jewish people also send gifts to one another called 'shalach manot', and eat triangular shaped cookies called 'oznei

haman' (ears of Haman) or 'hamantaschen' (in Yiddish) filled with sweet poppy seed, prune, or chocolate.



Sh'lach Manot

This tradition is based on the ancient Scriptural command:

“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 9:22)

The Cry of Mordechai

Purim is a time to remember God's great deliverance of His people in Persia from the forces of anti-Semitism that rose up against them in the form of the wicked Haman; but it is also a powerful call to Believers around the world to hear the cry of Mordechai – for the true and faithful kehilla (community) of Adonai to rise up with great courage on behalf of the Jewish people.

Today, there are forces in modern day Persia, which is Iran that again seeks to kill, destroy, and annihilate all the Jews. Mordechai, as a type and shadow of the Holy Spirit, is calling to the Church, as He did with Queen Esther, to plead with the King of Kings and Lord of Lords to save the Jewish people today from those with murderous agendas against her.



The Triumph of Mordechai, painting by [Pieter Pietersz Lastman](#)

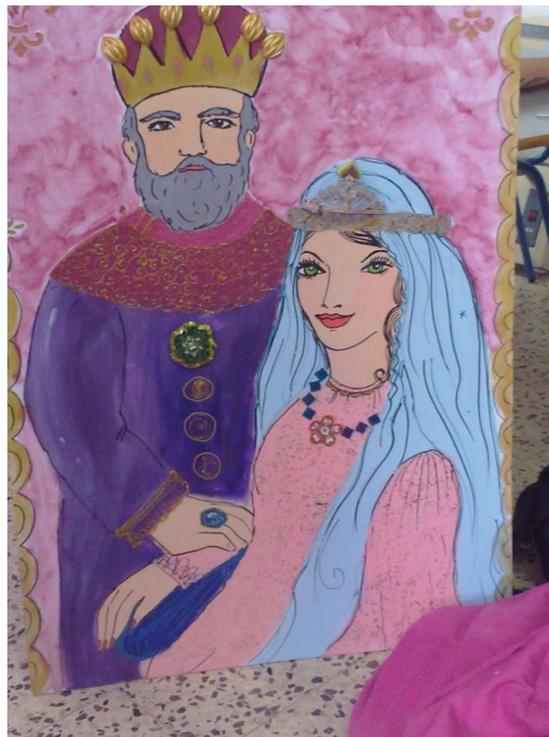
We must remember, however, that our battle is not ultimately with flesh and blood but with principalities, powers and rules of the darkness – spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:12)

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

Esther - the true Bride of Messiah

- In contrast to 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. (Esther 2:20)
- She showed herself to be the true Bride by her faithfulness, beauty, purity, and courage – even to the point of being willing to lose her life. Esther said,

“I and my attendants 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)
- Esther sought God through fasting and prayer. She carried the full authority of the King and His signet ring to issue decrees that cannot be revoked. (Esther 8:7,8)
- Esther is anointed with oil of myrrh (which is symbolic of suffering) as well as beautifying preparations and perfumes (Esther 2:12) She is the chosen Bride for the King.



An illustration of Esther & the King by local Israeli artist

Mordechai – the Holy Spirit

We can see how Esther symbolizes the true Bride of Messiah, but how is Mordechai a type and shadow of the Holy Spirit?

Mordechai is the one given the task of raising 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) It is the Holy Spirit 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). Just as the Ruach (Spirit) of God hovered over the waters at creation, he hovers over each of us to keep a protective watch.

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

Mordechai intercedes for God's people with cries and groanings (Esther 4:1) The Holy Spirit also intercedes for us with utterless groaning, 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)

Just as the Holy Spirit gives direction to the church and convicts of sin, Mordechai also exhorts Esther not to fear but to be of good courage and speak up on behalf of the Jews. He says, “

“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)

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

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.

Haman – the anti-Messiah spirit of Amalek

Haman, as a picture of the anti-Christ, hates with a venomous passion, all those who refuse to bow their knee to the Kingdom of darkness. Now is the time to speak up and not remain silent.

Martin Niemoeller, an influential Lutheran Pastor from World War II who was arrested and imprisoned in the Dachau concentration camp for withdrawing his support of Hitler, is believed to have been the author of this poem:

They came first for the communists, And I didn't speak up because I wasn't a communist.

Then they came for the Jews. And I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant.

Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up.

The Prophet Isaiah called upon the ‘**Watchmen upon the walls**’ to cry out to God day and night and not to remain silent on behalf of Zion and for Jerusalem’s sake.

“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)

In Hebrew, the word for watchmen or guard can be a ‘**shomer**’; but it may also be translated as a ‘**notzer**’. This comes from the same root as the related word, ‘Notzri’, which is the Hebrew word for Christian – as people who follow Yeshua of Natzeret (Nazareth).

True Christians are called to be these watchmen on the walls to speak up and not to remain silent on behalf of Israel and the Jewish people, especially in this critical hour of the end times. The people of God are being called to pray, as proclaimed by the prophet Joel:

“Blow the shofar in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly. Gather the people, consecrate the 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)

Even as we rejoice and celebrate with great joy this Purim, let us also draw upon and be inspired by the example of Esther’s bravery to rise up and speak out on behalf of the Jewish people and Israel.

It takes courage to stand up against the ‘*Hamans* of this world and to stand firm against popular opinion in our culture.

It will take courage for us, as the Bride of Messiah, to count the cost and say, as did Esther, ‘*If I perish, I perish*’. (Esther 4:16)

May the LORD answer you when you are in trouble. May the God of Jacob keep you safe.

May he send you help from the sanctuary. May he give you aid from Zion....

May he give you what your heart longs for. May he make all of your plans succeed.

We will shout with joy when you win the battle.

We will lift up our flags in the name of our God.

May the LORD give you everything you ask for.

(Psalm 20:1-5)

Shalom and Purim Sameach (Happy Purim)

Love Hannah