

Wednesday, March 8, 2023
FEAST OF PURIM

Just a day ago, the Feast of the Jews called Purim ended. Let's talk a little bit about this feast so that we can understand it from a biblical framework. We will look at the beginning of the feast and how it is celebrated today in Israel.

The Feast of Purim does not find its beginnings in the days of Moses like many other Jewish feasts or appointed times. Purim finds its beginning much later in the book of Esther. The backdrop for Purim is the kingdom of Persia. The Jews have been exiled from their homeland due to their constant rebellion against God. Purim began in the days of King Ahasuerus better known as Xerxes. He ruled over a vast kingdom including the land once settled by the Jews. In an attempt to display his splendor, Xerxes gave a banquet for nobles from the entire province. This banquet lasted 180 days and was held in the citadel of Susa.

When the 180 day party was over, the king gave another party lasting seven more days and invited everyone who lived in the citadel. During this same time, Xerxes' queen, Vashti hosted a party for the women in the palace. A drunken king called for Vashti to come parade before him and his officials so that he could show her off just as he was showing off everything else he owned. Vashti refused to answer Xerxes' summons and the plot begins. In short, the king removed Vashti from her royal position because of her insolence. Thus began a province wide search for her replacement. Young virgins from all over the realm were brought to Susa and given beauty treatments to be brought before the king. The woman who pleased him most would be the new queen. One of the girls brought to Susa was a Jewess named Hadassah:

[Esther 2:5-7 \(NIV\)](#)

The king chose Esther as his new queen. While checking on Esther one day, Mordecai overheard talk of a conspiracy to assassinate the king. He told the queen and she reported it – giving credit to Mordecai. The conspirators were killed, the incident recorded, and it was forgotten. Xerxes elevated a new noble higher in position than all others. His name was Haman. A hater of the Jews, Haman was second in command to the king. People paid him homage when he passed by – everyone that is except Mordecai. Mordecai's lack of reverence burned Haman who decided to pay Mordecai back by killing not just him but all the Jews in the province.

[Esther 3:5-7 \(NIV\)](#)

Haman slandered the Jews to Xerxes and his petition of destruction was granted. The day of doom loomed over the Jewish people of the province. Mordecai goes to Queen Esther for help. Esther explains to Mordecai that what he is asking for is not as easy as it sounds. It could cost Esther her life to approach the king about this business.

Esther 4:12-14 (NIV)

After 3 days of fasting and prayer, Queen Esther approaches the king at the risk of her life. The king shows favor to Esther. Esther asks the king and Haman to come to a special banquet and there, Esther will share her request with the king. The night before the banquet, Haman is at home boasting to his wife and friends about his splendor and position. Then, Haman remembers Mordecai and his insolence. Haman cannot wait for the day of doom, he wants Mordecai killed now. So, he has a gallows built on which he will hang Mordecai with the king's permission which he will secure the next day.

Esther 6:1-10 (NIV)

Haman is mortified and scared. It is time to attend Esther's banquet. The king asks Esther what her petition is – saying it will be granted. Esther reveals the plot against her and her people.

Esther 7:5-10 (NIV)

The king writes an order overruling the edict of Haman and instead, allows the Jews to avenge themselves on those who hate them. The Jews carry out this plan on the same day that was designated as their day of doom.

Esther 9:20-27 (NIV)

Purim is still celebrated in Israel. On Purim, the Jews:

- Exchange gifts of food and drink
- Donate charity to the poor
- Eat a celebratory meal
- Public recitation of the Scroll of Esther

There are also Purim parades, the wearing of costumes and hats, the eating of Haman's pockets, and much drunkenness. Esther teaches us that each of us play a role in God's plan of deliverance. I'll end with Mordecai's words:

“For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise from another place, but you and your family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your position for such a time as this?”

Today's Scriptures:

- Esther 2:5-7 (NIV)
- Esther 3:5-7 (NIV)
- Esther 4:12-14 (NIV)
- Esther 6:1-10 (NIV)
- Esther 7:5-10 (NIV)
- Esther 9:20-27 (NIV)