

חג פורים

A Messianic Perspective on the Feast of Purim



Hamantaschen - **המן-טַשָּׁנָן** the traditional triangular pastry for Purim

A teaching by Messianic Bible Teacher Paul Cohen



*Hope this is a blessing to you
Paul*

w: <http://messianicradio.podbean.com>
n: <http://www.facebook.com/pshjcohen>
e: pshjcohen@gmail.com

Dedicated to

Chin Yip



You will be missed till we meet again

Malachi 4:2 “*But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in its wings; and you will break out leaping, like calves released from the stall.*”

A Messianic Perspective on the Feast of Purim

Chach sameach v'chach Purim



The months of February - March roughly corresponds to the Hebrew month of Adar. In this month the Jewish people celebrate what Christians call the Feast of Esther, or as it is called in Jewish circles, Purim. Purim comes from the Persian word Pur meaning lot as in a lottery. There is one other name for this festival which is Mordechai's Day. This is a name found in the book of II Maccabees 15:36¹ and some early rabbinic writings. It was given this name, because it was actually Mordecai who inaugurated this feast. Esther 9:20-21: “*And Mordecai recorded these things, and sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far, enjoining them that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar and also the fifteenth day of the same, year by year*”

The Origin of the Feast

Esther 9:17-19: “*This was on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar, and on the fourteenth day they rested and made that a day of feasting and gladness. But the Jews who were in Shushan gathered on the thirteenth day and on the fourteenth, and rested on the fifteenth day, making that a day of feasting and gladness. Therefore the Jews of the villages, who live in the open towns, hold the fourteenth day of the month of Adar as a day for gladness and feasting and holiday-making, and a day on which they send choice portions to one another.*” And in Esther 9:22: “*the days wherein the Jews had rest from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to gladness, and from mourning into a good day; that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor.*”

For a different but shorter reading we could read the account of Josephus in Antiquity XI.6 especially paragraphs 3-4 & 10. Let me quote from the last paragraph, while the story is the same more or less it is masterfully rewritten so it does slightly differ:

Antiquity XI.6.10.... “*But God laughed to scorn the wicked expectations of Haman; and as he knew what the event would be, he was delighted at it, for that night he took away the king's sleep; and as the king was not willing to lose the time of his lying awake, but to spend it in something that might be of advantage to his kingdom, he commanded the scribe to bring him the chronicles of the former kings, and the records of his own actions; and when he had brought them, and was reading them, one was found to have received a country on account of his excellent management on a certain occasion, and the name of the country was set down; another was found to have had a present made him on account*

¹ 2 Maccabees 15:36 “*And they all decreed by public vote never to let this day go unobserved, but to celebrate the thirteenth day of the twelfth month -- which is called Adar in the Aramaic language -- the day before Mordecai's day.*”

of his fidelity: then the scribe came to Bigthan and Teresh, the eunuchs that had made a conspiracy against the king, which Mordecai had discovered.....”

As you noticed the account was rewritten by Josephus as any good preacher of the word would do. I am just glad he did not tell us how he knew that “*God laughed to scorn the wicked expectations of Haman*”.

Things to do

The Shabbat before the Purim celebration is called Shabbat Tzachor², the Shabbath of remembrance the Torah text includes Deuteronomy 25:17-19

Deuteronomy 25:17-19 “*Remember what Amalek did unto you by the way as you came forth out of Egypt; how he met you by the way, and attached those in the rear of you, all that were exhausted and straggling behind when you were tired and weary. He did not fear God. Therefore it shall be, when the LORD your God has given you rest from all your enemies round about, in the land which the LORD your God gives you for an inheritance to possess it, that you shall blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; you shall not forget.”*

The first line זכור את אשר-עשה לך - Tzachor et asher-asah lecha Amalek

We are told to remember! Keep in mind what they did, and if only Saul had done this, but more about that later.

The day before the feast there is a fast among the Orthodox called the fast of Esther, just as Queen Esther requested and Mordechai issued. This is done because the Rabbis hold Esther as one of the prophetesses of the Hebrew Bible so her request for a fast is considered binding.

But after the gloomy reading of the Shabbat Tzachor and the fast, there is the feast at last.

The Biblical text indicates that it needs to include three things:

- first, they should make these days of feasting and gladness, not fasting and sorrow;
- secondly, they should make these days of sending portions one to another, in place of having their possessions taken away;
- and thirdly, it should be a day of sending gifts to the poor, instead of the rich taking from the poor.

This is still the custom in Israel, and many people send gifts on Purim.

Modern day customs

1. Purim Pranks: most of the pranks played are much like our April 1st jokes. According to halakhic rulings (Rabbinical rules) men should not dress in women's attire nor vice-versa. Dirty jokes remain forbidden, as during the rest of the year. Comically denigrating one's fellow men, teachers, or Jewish leaders, even in the “spirit” of Purim, is forbidden. Rabbis insist on decorum even in the midst of the merry-making.
2. Purim Spiels or Purim Plays where children and sometimes even adults dress up and re-enact not only the story of Esther. Traditional the dressing up was very much as biblical characters but these days' spider-man and pop-stars are very much the go. With the older generation it was customary to hide your face, in remembrance of how God remained hidden throughout the Purim miracle. This is still done by some.
3. Purim Food as with any celebration this is a big issue, sending food portions to the poor so that everybody can celebrate is recommended. Often they include special biscuits called Hamantaschen - אוזני חמן in Yiddish or המנַטְאָשֶׁן Oznei Haman in Hebrew. They

² Each Sabbath has a name, often from the first significant word found in the passage, in this case not just the first significant word of the passage but also indicating what we are to do, **Remember**. It includes Deut 25:17-19 which starts with Remember.

- are folded into a triangle with stuffing of poppy seed or dates.
4. Boisterousness in the synagogue. A Purim “ra’ashan”, a noisemaker which is spun by hand, often made of wood and only used when Haman’s name is mentioned. Purim is an occasion on which much joyous license is permitted within the walls of the synagogue itself. For example, during the public service in many congregations, when the reader of the Megillah mentions Haman and that is frequent in some chapters for a total of 54 times in the whole story, there is lively hissing, stamping, and rattling. In accordance with the verse “*You shall blot out the remembrance of Amalek*” Deuteronomy 25:19. The rabbis introduced the custom of writing the name of Haman, the offspring of Amalek, on two smooth stones and of knocking or rubbing them constantly until the name was blotted out. This custom fell into disuse, with the knocking alone remaining. Some wrote the name of Haman with chalk on the soles of their shoes, and at the mention of the name stamped with their feet as a sign of contempt and wiping out the name literally.
 5. But there is also the rabbinical thought that one should drink enough to forget the difference between cursed Haman and blessed Mordechai, but not so much that you do not know the difference between Mordechai and Esther. This last one is in my view taking it too far, while I do not object to a glass of wine, being drunk is not a good thing. Let me paraphrase Paul in Ephesians 5:18 “*Don’t get drunk with any old wine, because it makes you lose control. Instead, keep on being filled with the Spirit of God* and let Him take control of your life”.

As with any Jewish holiday there are Mitzvot (commandments). These are just the main ones:

1. Listening to the public reading, usually in synagogue, of the Book of Esther in the evening and again in the following morning
2. Sending food gifts to friends
3. Giving charity to the poor
4. Eating a festival meal

1 Now regarding the Reading of the Megillah: that is the *Scroll of Esther*.

The first religious ceremony ordained for the celebration of Purim is the reading of the Megillah in the synagogue, a regulation ascribed in the Talmud (Megillah 2a) to the “Men of the Great Assembly”, of which Mordechai is reported to have been a member. Originally this enactment was for the 14th of Adar only; later, however, Rabbi Joshua ben Levi (3rd century CE) prescribed that the Megillah should also be read on the eve of Purim. Further, he obliged women to attend the reading of the Megillah, inasmuch as it was a woman, Queen Esther, through whom the miraculous deliverance of the Jews was accomplished. Women’s megillah readings have become increasingly common in more liberal circles.

2 Sending of food gifts to Friends, has taken a new spin in Israel while it is not the end of the academic year many teachers these days receive gift baskets with food from their students at Purim, this is separate from the giving of charity to the poor.

3 The giving of charity to the poor, from the synagogues, regular collections to charities are made on or near the festivals and the money is distributed among the needy, especially on this festival.

4 Festive meals called Suedat Purim: Like most festive meals from a Jewish frame of reverence and it goes like this: **someone wanted to kill us, we survived and over came, so let's celebrate and eat!**

Prophetic feast / confirming Biblical truth

Some Christians and Messianic Jews see a prophetic connection in this celebration for all kinds of reasons. While this is not a prophetic feast (all the feasts with a clear prophetic message are in Leviticus 23) it does show us a few things that confirm Biblical truth.

First the Book of Esther is a good example of a principle found in the Abrahamic Covenant which is found in Genesis 12:3: “*him that curses you will I curse.*” This principle of the Abrahamic Covenant teaches that those who curse the Jews will be cursed by God. The principle of the Abrahamic Covenant contains a promise of Jewish survival throughout the Times of the Gentiles.

Second that the Jewish people can not be completely annihilated by their enemies

Jeremiah 31:35 “*Thus said the LORD, Who gives the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, who stirs up the sea, that the waves thereof roar, the LORD of hosts is His name: 36 If these ordinances depart from before Me, said the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me for ever.*”

While it is a Biblical feast like the Festival of Chanukkah³, it should not be elevated to the same level as the prophetic feast of Leviticus.

Historical Significance

It is a celebration of Jewish deliverance as told in the Book of Esther. After the destruction of the Kingdom of Judah, the Jews were taken into the seventy-year Babylonian captivity. When ancient Persia took control, Haman, royal vizier to King Ahasuerus, planned genocide against the Jews, but his plans were foiled by Esther and Mordechai, showing God’s control of events. Even though God’s name is not mentioned, the early Rabbis argued greatly about this and in the end came up with a reason. They argued that God did not allow his name in this book as the Persians would copy this book too, and therefore defile his name.

The holiday of Purim has been held in high esteem by the Rabbinical at later times; one Rabbi said that when all the prophetic works are forgotten, the Book of Esther will still be remembered, and, accordingly, the Feast of Purim will continue to be observed (Jerusalem Talmud, Megillah 15a).

God’s Name

Although Jews believe that everything turned out in the end for the best as a direct result of Divine intervention (that is, a series of miracles), the Book of Esther lacks any mention of God’s name and appears to have been nothing more than a result of natural occurrences. On the other hand, Jewish scriptural commentators believe that the reason for the omission of God’s name is in order to emphasize the very point that God remained hidden throughout this series of events, but was nonetheless present and played a large role in the outcome of the story. Furthermore, this lesson can be taken into consideration on a much larger scale: Throughout Jewish history, and especially today, God’s presence has been felt more at certain times than at others. Megillat Esther (and the omission of God’s name in it) serves to show us that although God may not be conspicuously present at times, he nevertheless plays (and has played) an important role in our lives and in the future of the Jewish nation.

Esther in Hebrew is אֲסָתֶר. Which comes from the word sather, we find this word in Deuteronomy 31:18 - **וְאַנְכִּי הַסָּתֶר אֲסָתֶר פְּנֵי** **hester estir** pani And I will surely hide my face / presence (in Hebrew it is written “And I will Hide, Hide my face”, the double Hide is translated as surely hide) in both cases the root word is סָתֶר. The name Esther some Rabbi’s claim shares the same root. And etymologically this makes sense, some other references to hiding his face; Deuteronomy 31:17; Deuteronomy 31:18; Deuteronomy 32:20; Ezekiel 39:29, and Genesis 4:14 “**וּמִפְנֵיךְ אֲסָתֶר**” V’ma-panim esther “and from your face [presence] shall I be hidden”.

³ The Feast of Chanukah is found in John 10:22

The one who is truly hidden behind all the events of the Megillah is God. The Jewish Sages referred to His role as הסתר פנים (hester panim, or “hiding of the Face”, which is also hinted at in the Hebrew name for the Book of Esther, Megillat Esther, Perhaps it should be called *The scroll or the revelation of Him who is hidden*.

Some try to find the name of God with equidistant letter skipping or by looking for the First or last letters in a sentence, for example Lovely Orphans Readily Dance, (LORD) this kind of interpretation is very arbitrary and we will not speculate on wild theories. Deuteronomy 29:29 says “*The secret things belong unto The LORD our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law*” Lets remember that verse. The secret things belong to the LORD God and we are study the things He has revealed and Do what He has commanded us to do.

Fasting before Purim

The Fast of Esther, celebrated before Purim, on the 13th of Adar, is not an original part of the Purim celebration. Esther 9:18, Esther 9:31 “*The 13th was the time of gathering.*” This gathering is explained to have also had the purpose of public prayer and fasting. The fast of the 13th is still commonly observed amongst the Orthodox; but when that date falls on a Sabbath, the fast is pushed forward to the preceding Thursday, Friday being needed to prepare for the Sabbath and the following Purim festival.

Other facts about Purim

Haman is first mentioned in Esther 3:1 and is a descendant from Agag (which means the fiery one).

If you are a keen Bible student you will know who Agag is, but let me point it out in 1Samuel 15:8-9 it is written: “*And he (King Saul) took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but everything that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.*”

If King Saul had listened to the prophet then this problem would not have been. So too for us, if we do not listen to the words of the prophets (and especially The Prophet like Moses) we would have less trouble in the world and in our own life.

Mordechai (Esther 2:5) was a descendant of Kish from the tribe of Benjamin, as was King Saul, (1 Samuel 10:21). God gives a second chance to the sons of Kish of the tribe of Benjamin to redeem that which was squandered by Saul when he allowed Agag to live.

Name of the king

The name of the King Ahasuerus (A-ha-su-erus) or אחשורוש as it is pronounced in Hebrew Acha-shve-rosh, is probably Artaxerxes or better known in its ordinary Greek form of Xerxes.

Purim Katan

In a leap year in the Hebrew calendar, we have twice the month of Adar, and there for two Purim(s), the first is called little Purim (פורים קטן) Purim Katan) it falls in Adar I / February but this is not celebrated and the full festival of Purim is then celebrated in Adar II / March.

Other Haman's

According to the Rabbi's every generation has a Haman.

During the Biblical Times we see:

1. Pharaoh (Exodus 1:8 – who wanted to drown all the Jews)
2. Amalek (Exodus 17:8 – who wanted to destroy all the Jews)
3. Haman (Esther 3:1 – who wanted to kill all the Jews)
4. Antiochus Epiphanes III (Daniel and in the apocryphal writings 1 Maccabees 1:10-11)
“From them came forth a sinful root, Antiochus Epiphanes, son of Antiochus the king; he had been a hostage in Rome. He began to reign in the one hundred and thirty-seventh year of the kingdom of the Greeks. In those days lawless men came forth from Israel, and misled many, saying, “Let us go and make a covenant with the Gentiles round about us, for since we separated from them many evils have come upon us.”“ Antiochus was on the throne of the Syrian Kingdom from 175 to 164 BCE. He was single-minded about a policy to Hellenize his entire kingdom, that is, to make it observe Greek culture and thereby annihilating the Jews).

None of these will ever succeed because God has made a covenant with the Jews and He is faithful to fulfill his promises.

5. Roman Emperor Nero; who was the fifth Roman emperor, born at Antium 15th December, 37 CE, began to reign 13th October, 54CE, died 9th June, 68. He fiddled while Rome burned in July 64, “*and then blamed Christians whom he had arrested, and on the false charge of incendiarism and for hatred of the human race. They died by methods of mockery; some were covered with the skins of wild beasts and then torn by dogs, some were crucified, some were burned as torches to give light at night ... whence (after scenes of extreme cruelty) commiseration was stirred for them, although guilty and deserving the worst penalties, for men felt that their destruction was not on account of the public welfare but to gratify the cruelty of one (Nero)*” (*Tacitus, Annals xv. 44*).“ Taken from the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.

While the Body of Messiah can be attacked they too have promises in Messiah and the faithful God will keep them safe too.

Post Biblical

1. Pope Innocent III, although named innocent, this Pope was not so innocent of crimes against the Jews. He said that: *“Because of the Jews intolerable sin I will be your Lord, everlasting servitude on the Jews from ancient times as punishment for the Christ-killing.”*
2. Which of the Russian Czars was the worst to the Jews we do not know, but perhaps Czar Nicholas I (1825 to 1855) because he forced conscription of Jewish boys into the Russian Army. These boys were between the ages of 12 and 18 and were forced to serve for 25 years! Due to the horrendous conditions under which they were forced to serve, most of the boys who were conscripted didn't survive, and those that did were around 40 years of age with no discernable Jewish connection left in their lives.

This is not a complete list and others will come including the Antichrist, whoever he may be. I want to focus on the Purim connection in the last one hundred years.

1944

The Nazis banned Purim observances. Hitler, on January 31, 1944, said that if the Nazis went down in defeat, the Jews would celebrate a second triumphal Purim. How right he was!

1946

Julius Streicher (February 12, 1885 – October 16, 1946) was a prominent Nazi ideologist, prior to and during World War II. He was the publisher of the Nazi newspaper (*Der Stürmer*), which was to become a part of the Nazi propaganda machine. His publishing firm released three anti-

Semitic books for children, including the 1938 *Der Giftpilz*, (The Poison Mushroom), one of the most widespread pieces of propaganda, which purported to warn about insidious dangers Jews posed by using the metaphor of an attractive yet deadly mushroom.

After the war, Julius Streicher was found guilty of crimes against humanity at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial and sentenced to death on October 1, 1946. His last words, before execution on October 16, 1946, were "*Heil Hitler! Dies ist mein Purimfest. Ich gehe zu Gott.*" "*Heil Hitler! This is my Purim celebration. I go to God*"⁴ making him the only sentenced Nazi to declare this at the end. Streicher was not a member of the military and was not part of planning the Holocaust, the invasion of Poland, or the Soviet invasion. Yet his role in inciting the extermination of Jews was significant, the prosecutors' included him in the indictment.

His reference to the defeat of Haman and the hanging of his ten sons, enemies and persecutors of the Jews, in the Book of Esther I think was significant. It is believed that Streicher was making the observation that, likewise, ten contemporary enemies and persecutors of the Jews, himself included, were being hanged (the eleventh Nazi found guilty, Hermann Göring, had committed suicide the night before). By coincidence, Streicher was indeed executed on a Jewish holiday, but a very different one - Hoshanah Rabbah, which is the final day of Sukkot / the feast of Tabernacles which was on 16th October 1946) – Which is the day that Jews traditionally believe God seals the judgments for the fate of humanity for the year ahead.

1991

Sadam Hussein on the 14th of Adar surrendered to the Americans in the first Gulf war. This stopped the rockets falling on Tel-Aviv and Haifa.

26 Oct 2005

The world is silent when the Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad calls for Israel's destruction will he be the next Haman?



Purim Songs

אני פורם, אני פורם, שמח ומבדר
הלא רק פעם בשנה אבוא להתארח.
ל ל ל

⁴ Dennis Bark and David Gress, in *A History of West Germany*, vol.2

Shoshanat Ya'acov and Ani Purim are common folk songs to sing,
The song Shoshannat Ya'acov is based on Esther being the Lily or Rose (shoshannah) of Israel
(Ya'acov)

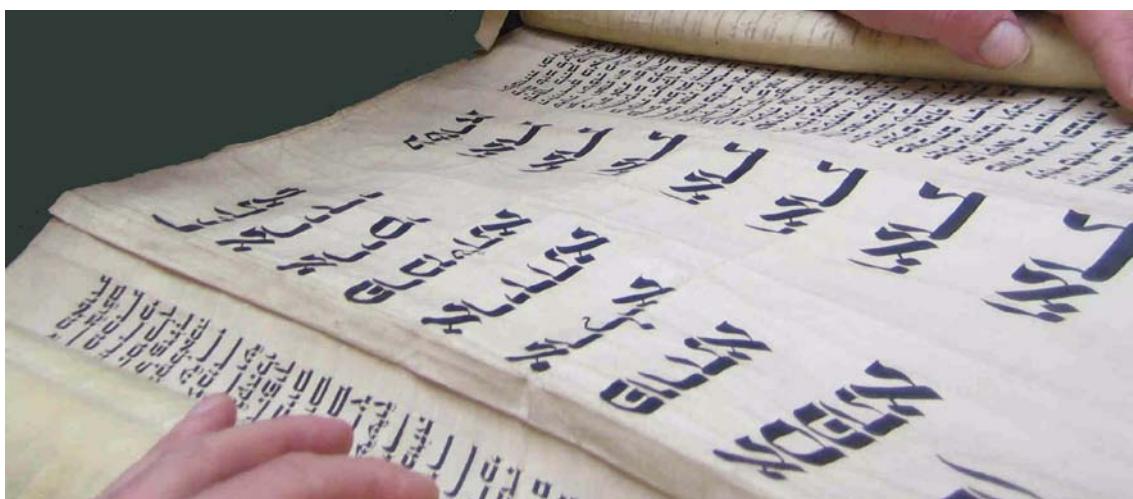
Shoshanat Yaakov
tsahala v'sameicha
birotam yachad
t'chelet Mordechai

The rose of Jacob
cheered and rejoiced
when they saw
Mordechai in royal blue.

Ani Purim is based on a old folk tune the song indicates that Purim comes but once a year.

Ani Purim, Ani Purim
Sameach um'vade'ach
Halo rak pa'am bashana
Avo l'hit'areach
La, la, la

I am Purim and I come, great fun and frolic bringing
Just once a year I visit you to cheer you with my
singing.
La, la, la...



Bibliography:

Bible Software: E-sword (<http://www.esword.net>)

1. Various Biblical Translations: including the Tanach; the Hebrew Bible, English translations include: JPS, ASV, NRSV with Apocrypha
2. Antiquities of the Jews by Flavius Josephus Antiquities, translated by William Whiston
3. Mishnah, Megillah

Purim the Feast of Lots: a Messianic Bible Study from Ariel Ministries

Dr. Arnold G Fruchtenbaum
<http://www.ariel.org>

The Purim Anthology

Phillip Goodman,
JPS; Philadelphia, 1973

Summary of the book of Esther⁵



The scene is “Shushan” the capital where the Persian kings lived. The book opens with the description of a festival. All the notabilities of the kingdom are present, both small and great. To grace the occasion, while the king is in high spirits he summons Vashti the Queen to appear before the guests, the queen refuses to obey. A council is immediately summoned. Vashti is degraded; and a decree is issued that every man bear rule in his own house (Esther 1). To find a successor to Vashti, the fairest damsels in the empire are brought to Shushan; and Hadassah, the cousin and adopted daughter of Mordecai, is of the number. Esther (2) closes with a notice of two incidents: (1) The coronation of Hadassah (now and henceforth named “Esther”) as queen; (2) Mordecai's discovery of a palace plot to assassinate the king. Esther 3:1-15 introduces another leading personage, Haman, the son of Hammedatha, whose seat the king had set “above all the princes that were with him.” All the king's servants who are at the king's gates prostrate themselves before the powerful favourite. Mordecai, who is not a trained courtier but a God-fearing Jew, refrains. Though expostulated with, he will not conform. The matter is brought to Haman's notice for whose offended dignity Mordecai is too small a sacrifice. The whole Jewish people must perish. Lots are cast to find a lucky day for their extermination. The king's consent is obtained, and the royal decree is sent into all the provinces fixing the slaughter for the 13th day of the 12th month.

The publication of the decree is followed by mourning among the Jews (Est 4). News of Mordecai's mourning is brought to Esther, who, through the messengers she sends to him, is informed of her own and her people's danger. She is urged to save herself and them. She eventually decides to seek the king's presence at the risk of her life. She presents herself (Esther 5:1-14) before the king and is graciously received. Here we breathe atmosphere of the place and time. Everything depends upon the decision of one will - the king's. Esther does not attempt too much at first: she invites the king and Haman to a banquet. Here the king asks Esther what her petition is, assuring her that it shall be granted. In reply she requests his and Haman's presence at a banquet the following day. Haman goes forth in high elation. On his way home he passes Mordecai, who "stood not up nor moved for him." Haman passes on filled with rage, and unbosoms himself to his wife and all his friends. They advise that a stake, fifty cubits high, be prepared for Mordecai's impalement; that on the morrow he obtain the royal permission for Mordecai's execution; and that he then proceed with a merry heart to banquet with the queen. The stake is made ready.

⁵ Taken from the International Bible Dictionary, with slight modifications.

But (Esther 6:1-14) that night Xerxes cannot sleep. The chronicles of the kingdom are read before him. The reader has come to Mordecai's discovery of the plot, when the king asks what reward was given him. He is informed that the service had received no acknowledgment. It is now early morn, and Haman is waiting in the court for an audience to request Mordecai's life. He is summoned to the king's presence and asked what should be done to the man whom the king desires to honour. Believing that the king can be thinking only of him, he suggests that royal honours be paid him. He is appalled by the command to do so to Mordecai. Hurrying home from his lowly attendance upon the hated Jew, he has hardly time to tell the mournful story to his wife and friends when he is summoned to Esther's banquet. There, at the king's renewed request to be told her desire, she begs life for herself and for her people (Esther 7:1-10). The king asks in astonishment, who he is, and where he is, who dared to injure her and them. The reply is that Haman is the adversary. Xerxes, filled with indignation, rises from the banquet and passes into the palace garden. He returns and discovers that Haman, in the madness of his fear, has thrown himself on the queen's couch, begging for his life. That act seals his doom. He is led away to be impaled upon the very stake he had prepared for the Jew. The seal of the kingdom is transferred to Mordecai (Esther 8). Measures are immediately taken to avert the consequence of Haman's plot (Esther 9 through 10). The result is deliverance and honour for the Jews. These resolve that the festival of Purim should be instituted and be ever after observed by Jews and proselytes. The decision was confirmed by letters from Esther and Mordecai.

