

## **Myrop - PURIM – A Special Celebration of God’s Preservation of the Jewish People**

Purim is the story of Esther. The story of a woman “called to the kingdom for such a times as this.” This is the story of a woman who had to keep her true identity hidden until such a time when God could use it for His glory. Esther learned that living life was not about her comfort or her place of safety, but it was about bringing glory to God. And bring glory to God she did!

It all began in a country that today is Iraq. The Jews were living in exile. As in every country where the Jews lived in exile, there was a hidden underlying sickness of anti-Semitism that rose to threaten the very existence of the Jews. The germ that infects a person or nation with anti-Semitism is JEALOUSY. So it was with Haman, a powerful official in the king’s court. He hated Mordecai, Esther’s cousin and palace official, because he would not bow down to Haman when he passed by. Haman’s hatred turned to jealousy when he saw the king’s favor and blessing on Mordecai, because Mordecai uncovered a plot to assassinate the king. However, instead of Haman focusing his anti-Semitic jealousy and hatred on just Mordecai, he projected it onto all of the Jews of the kingdom. This is just how the enemy works to spread his venom of anti-Semitism. Haman then devised a plot to not only have Mordecai hung on gallows that he personally built but also to have all of the Jews of the kingdom annihilated. This probably would have happened but God intervened ahead of time by allowing Esther to be the queen of the kingdom where she was an exile. An exile who could not reveal her true identity to the man she married.

In Nissan, the first Hebrew month of the year 474 B.C., Haman consulted the astrologers and magicians to determine by the casting of lots (purim in Persian), which would be the right day to destroy the Jews. They determined that the day would be the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the Hebrew month of Adar. This gave ample time for the plot to be revealed. Obviously the astrologers and magicians did not know Proverbs 16:33 “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.” NIV

When Haman’s plot became known to Mordecai, he sought Esther’s help. She agreed to go before the king and ask his help only if all of the Jews in the kingdom would fast and pray for three days. Esther, called to the kingdom for this hour, asked to see the king. This was a very dangerous thing even for a queen to do. She was only to be in the king’s presence if he requested her to be there. Obviously, Esther had conducted herself in a very pleasant manner in her position as the queen, She had won such favor with the king that even when she revealed to him that she was a Jew, he granted her request to not only spare the life of her Uncle Mordecai but the lives of all the Jews of the kingdom.

Purim is celebrated to commemorate and remember the day when the Jews lives where spared. *Esther 9:20-28 “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.*

*So the Jews agreed to continue the celebration they had begun, doing what Mordecai had written to them. For Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them and had cast the pur (that is, the lot) for their ruin and destruction. But when the plot came to the king's attention, he issued written orders that the evil scheme Haman had devised against the Jews should come back onto his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. (Therefore these days were called Purim, from the word pur.) Because of everything written in this letter and because of what they had seen and what had happened to them, the Jews took it upon themselves to establish the custom that they and their descendants and all who join them should without fail observe these two days every year, in the way prescribed and at the time appointed. These days should be remembered and observed in every generation by every family, and in every province and in every city. And these days of Purim should never cease to be celebrated by the Jews, nor should the memory of them die out among their descendants.” (New International Version)*

Today, Jews all over the world celebrate Purim with carnivals, giving gifts to the poor, a special meal and many dress up in costumes representing those in the story of Esther and also other heroes who have protected and delivered Jews. After the Gulf War in 1991, many school children in Israel dressed up like General Swartzkof. (An interesting note – the Gulf War ended on February 28, 1991, which was Purim. At 10:00 a.m. that morning General Shai announced that Israelis could remove the plastic from their windows and put their gas masks away. For sure this was not a coincidence. Once again on Purim, God spared the Jews from an evil Haman, Saddam Huessein.) Also on Purim the book of Esther is read and every time Haman’s name is mentioned, Jews make noise with noisemakers and boos to blot out his name that it not be remembered. Special cookies called hamentaschen are eaten.