

ESTHER: STILL UP-TO-DATE TODAY

INTRO: This year, when the sun sets on March 7th of our calendar, it will be the beginning of the 14th day of the Jewish Month Adar, and all over the world Jewish people will celebrate the feast of Purim. There will be much joy once more in many Jewish homes because of an event that happened almost 2500 years ago. And though this event happened so many years ago, the book of Esther is still very up-to-date today. (How many did their assignment to read this book?)

I trust that this message may give you a new insight into the book of Esther the next time you read through this book. I trust that not only will it hold new historical meaning for you, but it will help you understand the news today. And I hope it will give you an interest as to what is happening in the Middle East today, and that you will pray for these countries.

You see, there is a very bad man in this book. His name was Haman. And he was what we would call today, an 'antisemitic'. That means he was against the Jews. Like Adolf Hitler, in WWII, he wanted to make this world, "Judenrein", clean of Jews. When I check the Jerusalem Post, the main Jewish newspaper of Israel, almost every time I read of a man who lives today, who is just like this man, Haman. And he is in the same country this Haman lived. And he hates the Jews just as much as Haman hated the Jews. And today, he is building a gallows by which he will try to get rid of the whole land of Israel. So, I want to begin by giving you some of the history of this book.

I. THE HISTORY OF PURIM

Let us begin by reading some verses beginning at 1:1, "Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus..." Let me stop there briefly. This man is also known as Xerxes by the Greeks. We go on with this parenthetical statement, "(this was the Ahasuerus who reigned over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, from India to Ethiopia)..." You see, he was a ruler of the second world empire, the Medes and the Persians, that Daniel had prophesied. We go on in verse 2, "...in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the citadel,

that in the third year of his reign he made a feast for all his officials and servants—the powers of Persia and Media, the nobles, and the princes of the provinces *being* before him— when he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the splendor of his excellent majesty for many days, one hundred and eighty days *in all*." So this was a very big feast. It was a six month feast!

Verse 5 then says, "And when these days were completed, the king made a feast lasting seven days for all the people who were present in Shushan the citadel, from great to small, in the court of the garden of the king's palace." The setting of this story takes place in a country we know today as Iran. It was Persia then. Shushan is the city of Susa and known as 'Shush' today. It is one of the oldest known cities. This city today has over 65,000 people.

Verse 6 continues, "*There were white and blue linen curtains fastened with cords of fine linen and purple on silver rods and marble pillars; and the couches were of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of alabaster, turquoise, and white and black marble. And they served drinks in golden vessels, each vessel being different from the other, with royal wine in abundance, according to the generosity of the king.*"

Well, let me tell you the rest of the story in short. On the last day of this great feast, Ahasuerus got drunk and ordered his wife Vashti to display her beauty, but she refused. This created a great disturbance and the end result was that she was deposed and search began for a new queen.

Well, a beauty contest was set up to find the most beautiful woman in all the areas that Ahasuerus ruled. Well, this of course took some time but when the beauty contest was finished, a beautiful young Jewish lady became queen. But there was something she had not told the king. She had not told him she was a Jew! Mordecai, who had adopted her, had instructed her to not reveal that she was Jewish.

Well, about that time two of the king's Eunuchs plotted to kill the king. But Esther's adoptive father, Mordechai discovered it and reported it, and

the king's life was spared and the two men were hung. Well, after that, the king promoted this very bad man, shall we call him the Ayatollah Haman. He was an Agagite above all the rest of the princes. This man was exalted to such a degree that the king decreed that everybody must bow to him, and everybody did, except one man. Mordecai would not bow to him. I suspect a reason for that. It is not sure what is meant by Haman being an 'Agagite' but I would think it highly likely that he was a descendent of another Agag, and thus an Amalekite. I have no doubt that Mordecai knew the heart of this man and refused to bow for that reason.

But let us now read 3:5-7 (read). Haman hated Mordecai. And when he learned that Mordecai was a Jew, he now thought that to kill Mordecai alone was not at all satisfying. Rather, he will kill the whole Jewish race. You see, here is an Ayatollah. Here is an Ahmadinjajad. This is current news of today! Right now, as far as we know, this is the greatest threat on earth today!

Now notice in verse 7 that in the first month, that is the first Jewish month Nisan, they cast Pur. That means that they cast the lot to determine which month and which day would be most fitting to kill every Jew. It is like Iran today, choosing the day to use their first nuclear bomb on Israel. And from this casting of lots, Pur, we get the word "Purim" and thus the feast of Purim. The feast that commemorates the casting of lots.

Well, you can read a little further, that Haman was able to pass a bill in the government of Persia for the day of destruction before king Ahasuerus and it was a done deal. You see, the law of the Medes and Persians says this deal cannot change. Not even the king himself can change it.

When Mordechai heard that all his people were doomed to die, he mourned in sackcloth and ashes and cried with a loud and bitter cry. And as this decree went out to all those provinces, the Jews all over the world began to mourn. Well, Queen Esther's maids told her how deeply Mordechai was mourning and she sent to find out the trouble. Well, Mordechai sent word to

her of the decree and also commanded her to make an appeal to the king. And Esther sent back notice that she could lose her head for such an appeal. Now look at Mordecai's word to Esther in 4:13-14 (read). And let us also read Esther's response to Mordecai (4:15-16).

Well, Queen Esther, at the risk of her life, did her part and appeared before the king. But the Lord gave her favor with the king and he said she could have whatever she wanted, even up to half of the kingdom. Well, in her request she invited the king and Haman to a banquet with her. Her request was granted and Haman could hardly contain himself with glee that he was the only one besides the king that had been invited. But look now at 5:9 (read). But verse 10 says he restrained his hatred. A better time would come.

Haman then went home and told his wife of his wonderful invitation. But look at what he tells her in verse 13 (read). You see, it is just like the Palestinians today. They can be given this part of the land of Israel and that part, and all of that avails them nothing as long as Israel exists. That is true for most of the Arab world. Well, his wife gives him a fatal piece of advice in verse 14 (read, 50 cubits, 75 feet). You see, today this same country is once more building gallows for Israel. Atomic gallows.

But, there was a God in heaven, to whom Israel was the apple of His eye, even as it is yet today. And so that night before the banquet the king could not sleep. He tossed and turned and yet he could not sleep. And so for some strange reason, yes God has these for some, he requested that the Persian book of records be brought to him. And in this book he read about how Mordecai saved his life when two of the king's Eunuchs plotted to kill him.

Well, the king determines that something must be done for Mordecai, since this thing had never been rewarded. And so he called Haman in. So look at 6:6-10. Is it not amazing what God can bring out of a sleepless night!

Well, the time of the banquet came. Haman could hardly contain himself. This was his glorious day! I wonder if Iran will have such a day yet in the near future. And so, at the banquet Esther told the king that she and her people the Jews had been sold out to be destroyed. And the king said, "Who is he? Where is he? Who dares to do such a thing?" And Esther said, "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman!" And let me tell you what happened that night. Haman hung on the gallows he had made for Mordecai!

Now, not all was over yet. The laws of the Medes and Persians could not be changed and the Jews were yet faced with the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, Adar. So here is what the king did. Look at 8:7-8 (read). So letters were sent to every province as we find in verses 10-11 (read).

Well, what happened? Look at 9:1-2 (read). The final result was that Haman's 10 sons were killed and 75,000 Persians who went against the Jews died.

Now look at 9:18-23 (read). And so, this year, in the 12th month on the 13th day of Adar, March the 7th, when the sun sets, Israel will once more commemorate this day.

II. THE PRACTICE OF PURIM

That is a bit of history regarding Purim, now let us look at the practice of this feast. When I went to Bible school, my wife and I were involved in Jewish outreach in Calgary. And one day we were taken to a Jewish synagogue to commemorate the Purim service with them. During this service young men, 13 and over, were assigned to each read a section of this story as recorded in the Bible. Whenever they read the name Mordecai they made happy noises and cheered but whenever the name Haman was read, they had these scratchy, grinding noise makers and they would stomp their feet and boo and grind these grinders with an awful noise.

Well, on Purim they also send gifts, 'Hamantaschen', Haman hats to one another. These are in the form of cookies. They give to the poor and they have a special Purim meal. It is a very joyous occasion.

III. MODERN PERSIA'S RESPONSE TO PURIM

But now, let me ask you another question: How does modern day Iran, the historical Persia, respond to Jews celebrating Haman's demise? You see, this day is not forgotten in Iran. Jewish people in Iran go to visit the tombs of Esther and Mordecai. This year, 2012 the 'israel today Magazine' gave this report: "The Iranian news agency MEHR reported that a couple of weeks ago, a group of 250 militant Iranian students gathered at the tomb and threatened to tear it down." Yes, they still hate this place and this holiday.

So, how does modern Iran keep their people from understanding what took place almost 2500 years ago in their land, an event still commemorated by Jews all over the world?

The 'israel today Magazine' article I mentioned earlier says, "For years already, Iran has been teaching schoolchildren that Purim marks the massacre of 75,000 Persians by the Jews under the command of Queen Esther. It is presented today as an ancient Iranian holocaust perpetrated by the Jews.

"The Iranian version leaves out the part where Haman, the royal advisor, convinces the Persian king to sign a decree permitting the wholesale slaughter (of) the Jews of the empire. When Esther reveals her Jewish background to the king and reveals that Haman was tricking him, the king issues a second decree, allowing the Jews to defend themselves. By God's grace, the Jews are largely spared, while their enemies are slaughtered.

"This year, Iran may go further than simply revising the biblical account. Iranian authorities have decided to downgrade the status of the "Tomb of Esther and Mordechai the Jews" in the city of Hamadan in central Iran. The tomb had previously enjoyed that status of an official pilgrimage site.

"Following the downgrading, the Iranian news agency Fars began pushing the idea that Esther and her uncle Mordechai were responsible for a massacre of

Iranians, and that their burial place had merely been tolerated until now", end quote. And let me just add here that this is the very country where the man 'Youcef' that we have been praying for, it appears has been sentenced to die for being a Christian.

Let me read for you an article in the Wikipedia entitle, "Purim and the Nazis."

"[Adolf Hitler](#) banned and forbade the observance of Purim. In a speech made on November 10, 1938, (the day after [kristallnacht](#)), [Julius Streicher](#) surmised that just as "the Jew butchered 75,000 Persians" in one night, the same fate would have befallen the German people had the Jews succeeded in inciting a war against Germany; the "Jews would have instituted a new Purim festival in Germany."^[52]

"Nazi attacks against Jews often coincided with Jewish festivals. On Purim 1942, ten Jews were hanged in [Zduńska Wola](#) to avenge the hanging of Haman's ten sons.^[53] In a similar incident in 1943, the Nazis shot ten Jews from the [Piotrków ghetto](#).^[54] On Purim eve that same year, over 100 Jewish doctors and their families were shot by the Nazis in [Czestochowa](#). The following day, Jewish doctors were taken from [Radom](#) and shot nearby in [Szydłowiec](#).^[54]

"In an apparent connection made by Hitler between his Nazi regime and the role of Haman, he stated in a speech made on January 30, 1944, that if the Nazis were defeated, the Jews could celebrate "a second Purim"^{[54][55]}, end quote.

Julius Streicher was known as "Jew Baiter Number One." He was hung for war crimes in the early hours of October 16, 1946. An article on Streicher in Wikipedia says, "When he mounted the platform, he delivered his last sneering reference to Jewish scripture, snapping 'Purim-Fest 1946!'".

Not 10 years after Hitler's efforts to make the world 'Judenrein', Russia's Stalin sought to get rid of the Jews in what is called the doctor's plot. Even Nikita Kruchev, who was no saint, later acknowledged the whole plot was fabricated. Kruchev testified that Stalin had said, and I quote, "Stalin told his Minister of State Security '[i]f you do not obtain

confessions from the doctors we will shorten you by a head.'" "

Well, he got his confessions. Nobody thought their head was something they could dispense with. Then he began to plan something like concentration camps in Siberia. This news leaked to the world causing great concern and causing a very serious meeting between Stalin and his presidium members. In this meeting, in which was a member whose wife was Jewish and who had been exiled to Kazakastan and he stood up to Stalin and Stalin flew into a rage.

Let me quote here from an archived Jewish Magazine article I found on the internet, "As Stalin's rage reached a crescendo, he collapsed on the floor suffering a massive stroke. As he lay stricken, no specialist arrived to help him. They were all executed and imprisoned during the 'Doctor's plot.' Fifteen to 20 minutes' later, doctors arrived. Stalin was brought to his private apartment where he lay gravely ill. Soviet party leaders surrounded him, many eagerly anticipating his imminent death and the end of his reign. In his final gesture, he pointed his finger towards those present at his bedside including his daughter suggesting their guilt or complicity in a conspiracy to kill him. Then he died.

"Following Stalin's death, there was concern that his successors would be as evil or even worse. No one knew what to expect from the Soviets. Perhaps the next leader would blame the Jews for the Premier's death. An editorial from a contemporary Jewish periodical concluded its summation on Stalin's death; 'The fate of Jews in the Red Empire hangs in the balance.'

"Stalin's death, which was announced on March 5, was actually cause for great relief. The purges almost immediately ended as did most of the media attacks against Jews and Israel. Soon, the surviving doctor's arrested were released. Soviet Jewry's struggles were far from over, but they were relieved of their greatest antagonist.

"Stalin died as he was planning Jewry's destruction in the Soviet Union. The exact day of his death

remains a mystery. Perhaps he died on Purim day (March 1) itself. But one thing could be said, in the safety of their private confines, Soviet Jews celebrated Purim marking the salvation of Jewry in ancient times and in their own as well."

This story of Stalin's death has not been confirmed but there is no evidence that it is not true either. There are other stories as well. However all that may be, I think Stalin did not die on Purim, but I think on the feast of Purim he suffered that major stroke that took his life.

Haman hung on the same gallows he had made for Mordechai. No Jew had to kill Hitler, he did it himself. And Stalin, it seems, suffered a stroke that took his life on Purim because there were no doctors nearby to save him, and they might not have if they could have.

And in light of all this history and the events of today's world, may it be that Ahmadinjajad is also building his own gallows? Well, watch as history unfolds. We may just be around to see the end result.

CONCL: The story of Esther, is it of value to this present age? The Jewish race began with Abraham. Abraham himself was a Gentile, but he was called him out of Ur of the Chaldees and God directed him to the promised land. His son Isaac was later called Israel, which means 'Prince with God'. However, Abraham is the father of the Jewish race and today I want to remind you that God said at the outset of this race of people, "I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse those who curse you." We have seen it today in Haman. We have seen it in Hitler and we have seen it in Stalin. All of them built their own gallows. I cannot see it will be otherwise with Ahmadinjajad.

It is my view that our own present blessing in this land of Canada is due to a Prime Minister that stands for Israel. He is not intimidated when he stands with a host of world leaders to speak up for Israel. I want to encourage all of us to pray for our prime minister. Pray for the US primary elections and the Presidential elections coming up this fall. I have come to where I pray almost daily for our government and other governments, and for the US, I pray that it might be in the good pleasure of our God to remove

Barak Obama. I read recently of a certain Jewish Rabbi who called Barack Obama a Haman, and I wouldn't doubt he's right.

And last, let us learn from Mordecai to stand for truth no matter what the cost. Let us not bow before that which is wrong, though the pressure becomes extreme. And let us learn from this beauty queen, Esther, not to let beauty or worldly privilege lure us into silence. Let us learn from her story to be willing to stand for truth, though it be at the risk of being shortened by a head.