

Purim and Resurrection Week: Prophetic Parallels in Rare Calendar Convergence

This year, as Christians mark Holy Week to prepare for Resurrection Day, Jews celebrated Purim on March 24. Purim is based on the book of Esther.

The merry festival recounts God's victory over His enemies' attempt to annihilate the Jews. Calendar convergence of the two holidays is quite rare. Yet prophetic parallels exist in the highly unusual confluence. (Resurrection Day does not occur by the Hebrew calendar until after Passover, but God mercifully speaks to His people through a variety of ways and means.)

First, the back story: Both holidays reflect the ongoing war of Amalek against Yahweh. In this war, God Himself battles for His people (Ex. 17:14-16). Amalek was a descendant of Esau. In the Scriptures Amalek epitomizes the spirit of anti-Semitism and is driven by pure evil. By extension, the Amalek spirit can manifest as the spirit of antichrist. On both Purim and Resurrection Day, God wondrously defeats Amalek, gaining sure victory for His people.

Hundreds of years before Esther's time, God told King Saul to slay the Amalekite king, Agag (1 Sam. 15). Saul disobeyed. Later in history, when most of the Jewish people lived in the Persian Empire, it was an Agagite ruler named Haman who came close to destroying them all. Not coincidentally, it was also a descendant of Saul, named Mordecai, who God used to defeat Haman's genocidal plan (Esth. 2:5). Haman is described in Esther as a *tsorer*. In the Hebrew Scriptures, *tsorer* is the word closest in meaning to "antichrist." Haman can be seen as a type of antichrist.

Mysteries Abound

Mysteries abound in Esther ("Hadassah"). It is the only book in the Bible that does not mention God's name. Nevertheless, His lead role in the story shouts loudly from behind the scenes. Divine finger and footprints appear at every turn of events. The Lord is always in control, no matter what personal, national or global crisis His people face. Sometimes, when we do not understand what is taking place or why, He has hidden Himself behind the scenes for a purpose greater than we're to know at the time.

Esther and her Uncle Mordecai lived in Persia during the reign of King Ahaseurus (Xerxes). At Mordecai's behest, Esther conceals her Jewish identity in order to marry the king and become Queen of Persia. The two can be seen as shining examples of followers of Yahweh. But the rabbis have long questioned why Purim's hero and heroine were still living in exile. Why weren't they in the promised land when, many years earlier, King Cyrus had decreed the Jews could return to Judea?

The Jewish citizens of Persia were a prosperous lot. To a large extent, they'd assimilated into local pagan culture and enjoyed the comforts of exile. Could this have been true of Mordecai and Esther? If not, the rabbis wonder, why would Mordecai encourage his niece to marry a nonbeliever, live among those for whom the laws of Yahweh were irrelevant—and hide her Jewish identity? And why did she choose to follow his advice?

Does God care if His people prefer exile? Perhaps these matters, like His role in the story, are intentionally hidden from plain view.

If, however, Esther and Mordecai were a bit more "human" than we may have thought, Purim reveals even more powerfully how God's mercy and grace extends to His people, despite their/our

disobedience, to fulfill His covenant purposes. He is faithful even when we are not.

Esther's Lot Is Ours

But now, back to the facts of the story. Haman, the king's chief adviser, decrees that everyone in the empire must bow down before him. When Mordecai refuses to bow, Haman purposed to kill Mordecai—and all of Mordecai's people. He sets the date for his genocidal campaign by casting lots or "purim." Then he builds special gallows on which to hang Mordecai.

Queen Esther knows nothing of the plan until Mordecai, grieving and weeping, informs her. The fate of the Jews, he says, might depend on Esther's willingness to intercede on their behalf and appeal to the king. "Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, 'Do not think that in the king's palace you will be more likely to escape than all the other Jews. For if you remain silent at this time, protection and deliverance for the Jews will be ordained from some other place, but you and your father's house shall be destroyed. And who knows if you may have attained royal position for such a time as this?'" (Esth. 4:13-14).

Under Persian law, Esther would put her life at risk to appear unsummoned before the king. So she replies to Mordecai, "Go, gather all the Jews who can be found in Susa, then fast for me. Stop eating and drinking for three days, night or day. I and my young women will fast likewise. Only then would I dare go to the king since it is not allowed by law, *and if I perish, I perish*" (Esth. 4:16, italics mine)

Today, most Jews who observe the Esther Fast do so 1-3 days before Purim. The traditional rabbinic interpretation of Esther, however, is that the original fast actually took place at Passover. On the "13th day of the first month," Haman issued his decree to annihilate the Jews (Esth. 3:12). It was believed the fast began later that day or the next, although

Scripture is not entirely clear. In any case, “the first month” is Nisan. So Passover would have occurred two days after Haman’s decree, on Nisan 15. If the traditional interpretation is correct, Esther’s original fast occurred during Passover. But this led to a dilemma.

Not eating or drinking at the time likely set by Esther would conflict with the traditional prohibition against fasting on Passover. An exception may have been appropriate in Esther’s immediate situation. But the rabbis determined future fasting should be at another time. Therefore, most Jews today who observe an Esther Fast do so on Adar 13, the date set by casting lots for their destruction. Some fast for the full three days. Then, on Adar 14, we merrily celebrate God’s turnaround victory as Purim. Based on Esther 9:18-22, “Shushan Purim” extends the holiday through Adar 15.

Today’s pre-Purim Esther Fast may or may not prove consistent with the actual historical date. But it can still be of tremendous value. Your cry to God at this season for favor, deliverance and turnaround kingdom victory does matter!

Divine Turnaround

In the book of Esther, when King Ahaseurus learns of Haman’s wicked scheme, divine turnaround follows. The king executes Haman and his sons on the very gallows Haman built to hang Mordecai. Then he issues a decree authorizing the Jews to defend themselves against any who might attack them. As a result, “fear of the Jews” falls upon the Persian Empire (Esth. 8:17). Afraid to harm God’s people, many turn around and worship Him. Revival comes to the kingdom!

Esther proved courageously willing to lay down her life for God’s purposes. Today, you and I are called to nothing less. The Lord of Love tells us to take up our cross and follow Him. “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me [My people] will save it” (Luke

9:24-25).

We surrender all at the cross. There Yeshua's embrace escorts us to heavenly courts in the spirit realm. As with Esther, He can use us to shift kingdom realities on earth. At the cross we engage with the prophetic parallel between Purim and Resurrection Day. The cross, like Esther's willingness to perish, leads to divine turnaround. There's no better example than Resurrection Day!

But make no mistake: the spirit of Haman/Amalek is still alive. Globally, anti-Israel and anti-Semitic (as well as anti-Christian) events are escalating. Earlier this month, Iran (ancient Persia) launched a nuclear-capable missile with a message written on it in Hebrew: "Israel must be destroyed."

In the face of mounting threats against His people, God is raising up a company of "Esthers." These valiant ones will stand before the King—and kings—to intercede on Israel's behalf. If today's Esthers keep silent, God will see that relief and deliverance for the Jews comes from another source.

But the church will begin to perish in the sense she will diminish in her full identity and destiny. Christian friend, "Who knows but that you have come to royal position in the kingdom for such a time as this?" Will you embrace the cross, knowing your intercessory prayers and deeds will lead to turnaround victory? If you do, rejoice with me and be greatly encouraged, for wondrous resurrection is ahead.

Sandra Teplinsky *has been in Messianic Jewish ministry since 1979. She is president and founder of Light of Zion, a Messianic outreach to Israel and the Church based in California and Jerusalem.*

For the original article, visit .