

**Esther 4 & Genesis 8** And as you turn there, I will pray... As you may know we will be celebrating Purim this year on March 13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup>. Purim is one of the most festive Jewish celebrations on the Hebrew calendar. Both children and adults dress in masquerade to demonstrate the “unseen” presence of God in the story of Esther. Know that God is always in the background drawing people to Himself.

Often children put on a Purim play and recount the story of Esther with a modern, humorous twists. When the ***Scroll of Esther*** is read, noisemakers are sounded to blot out the name of Haman. ***Hamantaschen*** is baked, a special poppy seed, sweet pastry. Families attend parties, parties, parties; and in Jerusalem, they dress in costumes and party for two days. This minor but joyous holiday is commemorated annually on the 14th day of ***Adar*** on the Hebrew calendar. The book of Esther details the Purim story of rescue through an engaging account of **secrets and revelations**. It’s the only book that does not mention GOD at all, yet He is obviously behind the scenes orchestrating the miraculous deliverance of Jews from 127 provinces in the Persian Kingdom of the 5<sup>th</sup> century from Haman’s decree to have them all exterminated. It’s interesting how, **Antisemitism has been evident for thousands of years!**

History records **a beauty pageant, an assassination plot** against the king, **an evil villain** who schemes to kill every Jewish person in the land, **and two unlikely Jewish heroes**. It leaves us with powerful messages of Hope and inspiration to live out our faith with courage. Jewish people around the world honor this day of deliverance with feasting, laughter, and celebration.

**Synopsis:** The book of Esther – Purim on a page!

**Purim** is the plural Hebrew form of the word *pur*, which means "lot." The holiday is called "lots" or Purim referring to the historical account of Haman who cast lots to see which day the Jews would be killed in Persia. Ironically, this evil villain was killed instead of his enemy, Mordecai, when King Xerxes (Zerkcees) became aware of his evil plans.

**The theme that kept coming to me:** (**Psalm 139:7-10 NLT**)

<sup>7</sup> I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence! <sup>8</sup> If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the grave, you are there. <sup>9</sup> If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans, <sup>10</sup> even there your hand will guide me, and your strength will support me.

We can appreciate the thought that God is always with us and that God's plan will always be carried out. It's good to know that God has people in place to make things happen, but **what if you are His chosen vessel?** Queen Esther received her encouragement from her cousin Mordecai in **Esther 4:13-14** <sup>13</sup> And Mordecai told *them* to answer Esther: "Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews. <sup>14</sup> For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

GOD will provide deliverance if Esther is unwilling. Don't you just love the Irony? Esther is such a powerful book of deliverance, yet it is ironic that the Lord's name is not mentioned nor is prayer for that matter. Although we all know that fasting is closely related... Still the Lord Almighty is present in the mysteries and the revelations of the historical account of Purim. He is always orchestrating, guiding and strengthening behind the scenes. Esther recognizes this and so her response is appropriate in **verse 16** <sup>16</sup> "Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day.

My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and **if I perish, I perish!**" SHE IS ALL IN! THERE IS NO TURNING BACK, NO SECOND THOUGHT!!!

The irony that faces us today as disciples of Jesus is what He taught in the New Covenant, "**to find life, you must lose it... to receive, you must first give ... the greatest of all is the servant... the last shall be first and the first last.**" JESUS, Himself, lived a life of irony – **born King of the Jews and yet came to us in the most humble of places; a stable.**

This is the mind-set that we need to take away from this book... Esther was a Jew and should not have been chosen Queen, but she was, Haman should have killed all the Jews, but he didn't. Esther had a choice, are you going to step up to the plate or not? Either way, GOD will come through for us! **They NEVER lost their HOPE!**

Let me give you some HOPE from the book of **Genesis 8:6-12**  
This is the account of **Noah and the ARK...** <sup>6</sup> So it came to pass, at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made. <sup>7</sup> Then he sent out a raven, which kept going to and fro until the waters had dried up from the earth. <sup>8</sup> He also sent out from himself a dove, to see if the waters had receded from the face of the ground. <sup>9</sup> But the dove found no resting place for the sole of her foot, and she returned into the ark to him, for the waters *were* on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took her, and drew her into the ark to himself. <sup>10</sup> And he waited yet another seven days, and again he sent the dove out from the ark. <sup>11</sup> Then the dove came to him in the evening, and behold, a freshly plucked olive leaf was in her mouth; and Noah knew that the waters had receded from the earth. <sup>12</sup> So he waited yet another seven days and sent out the dove, which did not return again to him anymore.

**Water.** All Noah could see was water. We can relate.

We've all experienced our share of floods. Flooded by sorrow at the cemetery, anger at what seemed to be a shattered dream, fear of the uncertainty at work. We needed what Noah needed; **HOPE!**

Sometimes all we need is a little hope. That's all Noah needed, and that's what Noah received. This is how the Bible describes the moment: **Genesis 8:11**

*When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf!*

Hope is an olive leaf — evidence of dry land after a flood.

Could you use some hope?

Could you use a fresh start?

At some point in life, we all could!

Here is the good news... our God is a God of fresh starts.

He is the God who told a weary and discouraged people in **Isaiah 43:19** *See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.*

But these streams are streams of grace and mercy and love, not the floods that have burdened your heart. Our prayer for you is that you will experience a flood of God's Love and His grace to drive away your despair, disappointments, discouragements, and grief:

**Romans 15:13** *I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.*

**Like Esther**, God's face may seem hidden, yet He is working to bring deliverance and eternal purpose in your life and mine. We may not see Him, but we have faith in Him! **Like Noah**, if we could just see an olive branch. A glimpse of hope for dry land in a flooded situation.

As the book of Psalms says, there is no place on earth where He is not. You can't hide from Him, and He is busy guiding and making you strong. Do not despair when you can't quite see His face. Like the song says, even when we don't see Him, He's working, even when we don't feel Him, He's working!

**Let's Stand:** We take great hope in our lives as we live for Jesus and receive His promise of a blessed hope. A place called HEAVEN forever and ever!

**Titus 2:11-13** <sup>11</sup> For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, <sup>12</sup> teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, <sup>13</sup> **looking** for the **blessed hope** and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. **AMEN?**

**Altar Call** – Where is your HOPE today? Are you able to trust in JESUS? If not, it's because you don't know Him personally. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, our everlasting HOPE... He's ready to deliver you from sin and write your name down in the book of life. Only those, whose name is found in that book will enter eternity in Heaven. If you're not sure if your name is in that book, it's not! But here's the good news, you can be sure today! **Let me lead you in a prayer of {SALVATION} today, you will receive HOPE to the End....**

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**Prayer:** Thank you, KING JESUS, that You are working behind the scenes for our good. You always have our very best interest at heart. We trust you even when we cannot clearly see Your face in our circumstances, You are in charge and you are ordering our steps according to **Psalms 37:23**. We are so grateful that there is no place that we can hide from You, even when You seem hidden from us, still You are there, and for this Father, we are eternally grateful! Thank You for giving us HOPE today, we praise You and give You glory, in JESUS Name, AMEN!