



PURIM

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THE FESTIVAL OF LOTS

Commonly called "Purim" by Jews or "Kleyron" by the Greeks, the Festival of Lots is a celebration of the power of YHWH, the Elohim of Israel, to protect, promote, and provide for His people in all circumstances of this life. Without sending forth angels or letting His Voice be heard, YHWH Almighty moved in the past as He does in the present to accomplish His own perfect will in the world. Working through the lust of kings, the greed of princes, and the seemingly random toss of the dice, the King of Heaven makes happen on earth exactly what He has predestined in order that His promises to the Patriarchs might come to pass.

THE BOOK OF ESTHER

Because of their iniquity against YHWH and His holy Torah, Israel had been cast out of the Holy Land and taken away to Babylon, where they had been living nearly 60 years. The king at this time was Xerxes, a proud man who put his wealth on display for 180 days and with this his wives, particularly the queen Vashti, his favorite. But being strong willed she refused to obey her husband and was put away. A search was then made for a replacement for her, and of all women, Hadassah, a proper and beautiful Jewish girl, was chosen. She was commonly known as Esther, and she became queen in place of Vashti, being highly favored by Xerxes. The cousin of Esther was named Mordecai, who instructed her to hide her heritage, even from the king. Following the marriage of his cousin to the king, Mordecai uncovered a plot to assassinate King Xerxes. Having the ear of the queen, he informed her of the plot, who in turn told the king, and the traitors were impaled for crimes. A record was made of the deed and credit given to Mordecai, but no award was made and eventually the events were forgotten.... for a while anyway. After this time, Xerxes raised to prominence in the empire the Agagite named Haman, and all bowed before him in the streets....all but for Mordecai. Haman, enraged with Mordecai and learning that he was a Jew, began plotting not only to have Mordecai slain but all the Jews in Babylon as well. Intending to confiscate all their wealth when they were dead, Haman cast the lots against Israel selecting the 13th day of the 12th month for the destruction of all the Jews, and then came to the king to convince him to enforce the order. Because Haman pretended the Jews were a rebellious people and hateful, and because he did not name them to the king, Xerxes gave Haman his ring to legalize the wholesale slaughter. Worried for her cousin who was clothed in sackcloth and ashes and mourning about, Esther sent a messenger to him to discover what was wrong. Mordecai begged Esther to plea for the king's mercy, but it was forbidden for her to approach the king without his call. However, Mordecai warned her that she had been raised to queen for this very purpose and at that precise time. If she would not speak for them then "deliverance for Israel would arise from another place, he told her. Thus she asked all of Israel to fast for three days and three nights for her and then she would go to the king. Following the fast, Esther went to Xerxes and was granted an audience, asking that he and Haman attend the banquet she would have prepared that very day. Proud Haman, still raging against Mordecai and thinking himself honored by Esther's invite to that banquet, was invited to a second the next day. In his anger, he had built a high gallows for Mordecai to be hanged upon, but that night the king could not sleep and ordered the records to be read to him. Hearing in them of the heroic efforts of Mordecai, on behalf of the king's life and that he had not yet been honored, the king called for Haman and inquired of him what was to be done to honor a certain man. Believing himself to be that certain man, Haman said for the man to be dressed like the king and ride on the king's horse, led by a prince of the kingdom through the city and to be praised by all men. Upon hearing this, the king ordered Haman to do this exact thing for Mordecai, and then Haman was called to the second banquet of Esther.

There before king Xerxes, Esther begged her husband to save her life and that of her people, and to Haman's face she accused him. Xerxes was enraged with Haman and had him along with all his entire family impaled upon his own gallows. As for the fate of Israel,

nothing could be undone, but all preparation was made that day for war against any who would attack the Jews upon the 13th day of the 12th month. At the appointed time, the Jews slaughtered all who fought them. Then the king gave them also the next day to do likewise, and they fought once more to victory.

Mordecai was given Haman's position in Babylon to rule beneath the king and queen. Esther was given all the wealth of the house of Haman. And the order to remember the 14th and 15th days of the 12th month forever was issued by Mordecai himself. This is the origin of the festival of the day we call Purim.

THE FAST OF ESTHER

Although prayer is not mentioned, in the record of the book of Esther, it is an indispensable part of fasting and a central action, when commemorating the fast of Esther every year. Unlike the Day of Atonement, the Fast of Esther is optional, a solemn day of reflection, meditation, and remembrance, the day before the celebration of Purim. From Sunset to Sunset, we consecrate a time of self denial and special generosity neither eating nor drinking, we are encouraged instead to donate what we would have devoured to those less fortunate than ourselves. On this day, we are devoted to charitable action for a time, but also to finding solitude so we can focus all our desires toward Heaven and the King of that Place Who rules over also all our lives here on earth. Making space in this day as well to share with others also fasting is equally important.

The Fast of Esther commemorates the three days and three nights Esther and all Israel fasted and prayed for the favor of YHWH upon the queen, when she was set to face the king with the fate of her nation at stake. And yet, moreover, it memorializes, not only that one moment in time, but what that event embodies for every believer, the theme with which it was enthused. When we fast like Esther, we remember most clearly the confidence of Mordecai, as he informed his cousin that it was her destiny to deliver Israel and therefore also her duty. If she refused to be used by YHWH for His glory then He would use another, but she would not be spared herself. Mordecai was not in mourning because he believed he was doomed, but rather because he was humbling himself and believing in Heaven.

Spurred to action by these words, Esther said she would go to the king, and if she perished, then she perished. She was resigned to the lot. The Fast of Esther for us is a time set aside to accept the sovereignty of YHWH when we are in dire straits, and every day circumstances alike. We most often will not witness miracles, hear voices from Heaven, behold, blinding lights, be called upon by angels from Above, or any other supernatural happening, and yet within our ordinary lives, even in these modern times, our Elohim still moves in extraordinary ways, working wonders for the ones who love Him. As we fast as Esther, we are not trying to get attention from the Almighty. We are not attempting to curry favor. And we are not doing it to get Heaven to bless us. Instead, our intention is to attempt to focus our hearts away from whatever it is that we want, and onto the One Who alone provides. We seek Him for His own sake, not for any selfish motive. We are trying to get

our own attention so easily distracted by our personal desires. And we are fasting to bless Heaven rather than the other way around.

In the fast, we expressed our faith in YHWH that He is there, even if we can't see Him, or any evidence of His Presence. We rely on His provision when trouble comes. This is not an escape we seek, but a covering to keep us safe. Neither asking for a way out, nor pleading for our Heavenly Father to fight our battles for us. In fact, rather than asking, we are simply relying on our Saviour to do what He has already said in the Torah, and He helps us get to that level of faith. The Fast of Esther is a day to recognize that YHWH will be with us in trial, that He will make a way for our triumph, and that He will give us the strength to fight our own way to victory.

THE CELEBRATION OF PURIM

While the Fast of Esther looks forward with solemn expectation on the deliverance yet to come, the celebration of Purim looks backward, rejoicing at the faithful provision of salvation brought to pass on our behalf. The day after the fast, we commemorate Purim, the time of triumph over those who would have destroyed us. Purim celebrates, salvation anciently from the wrath of Haman and in these latter days from the wrath of the wicked of the ages, which have sought to devour the people of YHWH. And looking to the future, Purim reminds us that through the might of the Messiah, we shall be saved as well from the wrath to come.

The timing of Purim was selected by lot, but it was not chosen by chance. Haman had the die cast against Israel to decide on which day the Jews would die. However, as it is written, "The lot is cast into the lap, but it's every decision is from YHWH." - Proverbs 16:33. Thus it was that the enemy cast the lot against himself instead of us, in spite of his intentions, and so the purpose of Purim is to prove that what man means for evil YHWH intends for good. This is the example illustrated all throughout Scripture whenever a lot is cast. Always it is chosen by the Almighty. Whether it be the Urim and Thummim of the high priest, or the lot to replace the treacherous 12th disciple, the answer is always divine in nature, in spite of human design. Even when, chosen by pagans, as when the sailors drew lots against Jonah, or when Haman cast lots against the Jews, Purim remembers that every turn of fate, and all the faces of chance are held in the caring hands of YHWH.

At Purim, we are reminded how small we are, and how powerless to direct our own existence. And yet YHWH demonstrates also at this time how important we are to directing His own power over all existence. Whatever we choose in life, the lot will always be cast in His favor. But will it be also for our favor? It is vitally important for our well-being to choose those things of His life and all that which He favors.

It is our profound honor and our proud responsibility to practice every Purim, the memorial of the movements YHWH has made on our behalf in the past, so that the pattern of our present actions will reflect those same favorable results of long ago, not of Haman and the heathen, but for Esther and all Israel. What we hope, in the happy time to behold,

is all that our holy Heavenly Father has promised to those who love Him and are called, according to His purpose, that He will prevent harm from befalling us, protect us from the horrors of evil plots, preserve us in the hour of our suffering, and provide the way by which we may overcome our adversaries. And ultimately we rely on His goodness to ensure our prosperity thereafter.

Purim assures us of the presence of YHWH, His power working for us, even when it seems like it is all on our efforts, and even when it appears like we are utterly alone. Our Elohim has given us all we need to accomplish all that is required of us. He has made us the agents of His grace, as also we shall be the recipients. As it was, when Esther had to boldly face the king to beg his kindness for her people, as it was when Israel had to fight for their own lives on the day of the lot's decision, so also we are tasked to do the will of YHWH within our world without regarding what else our senses may be telling us. Maybe we don't see Him. Maybe we don't hear His voice. Maybe we don't feel His Presence, but we remember Who He is, how He works, and what He has promised He will be and do for us, in every generation to the ending of the world.

PURIM SERVICE (OPENING)



Reader #1

Blessed is YHWH Eloheinu, King of the universe, Who granted us life and health to see once more this celebration. In Your compassion for Your people, Father YAH, show us Your presence near unto us within our hour of need. When Your hand is unseen, help us hold it in faith. When Your Voice is unheard, let us listen with hope. And when Your NAME is unspoken, may we proclaim it in love.

Hear, Oh Israel, YHWH is our Mighty One, YHWH is One.

Blessed is His NAME, and His glorious Kingdom forever and ever.

[Shema yisra-ayl YHWH Eloheinu YHWH echad. Baruch shem k'vod malchuso L'olam va-ed.]

You shall love YHWH Eloheicha with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you today shall be upon your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and you shall speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road, when you lie down and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as reminders between your eyes. And you shall write them upon the doorposts of your house and upon your gates.

(Reader #2 PSALM 62

Reader #3

Blessed be the Elohim and Father of our Master Yahshua Messiah, the Father of mercies and El of all comfort, Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by YHWH. For as the sufferings of Messiah abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Messiah.

Reader #4 PSALM 27

Reader #5 PSALM 91

Reader #6 PSALM 23

KIDDISH

Reader #14

May YHWH grant all the desires of our hearts, fulfill all our purposes and all our petitions. May YHWH hear from Heaven, quickly answer all our requests and save us in the day of adversity. In the Name of Yahshua, King Messiah defend us from our enemies, from poverty, and from bondage.

EVERYONE SAYS :
Hag Sameach!
HALLELUYAH ! !

Reader #15 ESTHER 1-5

Reader #16

Assist us in Your mercy, YHWH, our Almighty Father, as we offer up our prayers and supplications to Your NAME. You Who know the desires of our hearts and the dedication of our lives to Your will; You Who draw us to Yourself and direct us in The Way, provide for us in our time of trouble, and protect us in our hour of need. Among all the changes and chances of this mortal life, may we ever be defended by Your gracious and ready Help. Through Yahshua, King Messiah. Amein.



PURIM SERVICE (CLOSING)

Reader #1

Blessed is YHWH Eloheinu, King of the Universe, Who defends and delivers His people. With His unseen Hand, He moves our enemies to destroy themselves. With unheard Voice, His Word comes to pass. And with unspoken NAME, He makes the Way of Salvation.

All:

HALLELUYAH

Reader #2

Oh, sing to YHWH a new song! For He has done marvelous things; His Right Hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory. YHWH has made known His Salvation; His righteousness He has revealed in the sight of the nations. He has remembered His mercy and His faithfulness to the House of Israel; All the ends of the earth have seen the Salvation of YHWH.

Reader #3 ESTHER 6-10

Hear, Oh Israel, YHWH is our Mighty One, YHWH is One.

Blessed is His NAME, and His glorious Kingdom forever and ever.

[Shema yisra-ayl YHWH Eloheinu YHWH echad. Baruch shem k'vod malchuso L'olam va-ed.]

You shall love YHWH Eloheicha with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you today shall be upon your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and you shall speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road, when you lie down and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as reminders between your eyes. And you shall write them upon the doorposts of your house and upon your gates.

Reader #4 PSALM 7:2

KIDDISH

Reader #8

May YHWH grant all the desires of our hearts, fulfill all our purposes and all our petitions. May YHWH hear from Heaven, quickly answer all our requests and save us in the day of adversity. In the Name of Yahshua, King Messiah defend us from our enemies, from poverty, and from bondage.

EVERYONE SAYS :

Hag Sameach!
HALLELUYAH ! !

Reader #9

Blessed is YHWH Eloheinu, King of the Universe and our Benevolent Father. From remotest days and in all generations, Your great grace has been made manifest on behalf of Your people. In Your mercy, oh King Eternal, You plead our cause at all times against the unholy; You shelter us from the raging storms of the ages and protect us from numberless, powerful adversaries as they rise to oppose us.

Reader #10

If, YHWH, had not been with us when mere men stood against us, we would surely have been destroyed by the wicked. If YHWH were not our Guardian, we would have gone to the Grave. Let the people say ...

All: ...If YHWH were not our Guardian, we would have gone to the Grave.

Reader #11

If YHWH had not stood with us, their hatred would have swept us away. If YHWH was not our Strength, we would be crushed by their rage. Let the people say ...

All: If YHWH was not our Strength, we would be crushed by their rage.

Reader # 12

For we dwell in a den of ravenous wolves. We are denizens of a wrathful world, living like lambs among lions, but YHWH is our Refuge, and so we shall not fear. Let the people say ...

All: YHWH is our Refuge, and so we shall not fear.

Reader #13

In all ages and through all generations, He Who was and is and is-to-come, frustrates the counsels of the wicked, confounds the plans of the faithless, and causes the traps of our enemies to spring back on them and not us. But He leads the just to Salvation, the pure into freedom, and the righteous on to victory.

Reader #14

Therefore, YHWH Eloheinu and Father, our hearts shall praise You, and our lips shall bless Your NAME. Raising our hands to You, YHWH our Salvation, bending our knees to Your Glorious Name, and turning our feet to follow Your Wondrous 'Son', Yahshua our Saviour, we praise You for the uncountable wonders wrought on our behalf, both now and afore time. For the deliverance You dealt our fathers and the assistance You apportioned to us today, but above all for our eternal Salvation in the Name of Yahshua, King Messiah, we glorify Your NAME forever.

All: HALLELUYAH

Reader # 15 REVELATION 7 :10, 12



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