

EXAMINING THE BOOK OF ESTHER

Part One: ESTHER, THE QUEEN OF PURIM, A TALMUDIC TALE OF TERROR AND TREACHERY

By **Dr. Harrell Rhome**

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The curious Book of Esther, one of only two in the Bible not mentioning God, may have been composed BCE485-464 during the reign of King Ahasueris, roughly concurrent with the reign of Xerxes I in Persia. The names certainly are similar. Many scholars dispute its provenance and authenticity of Esther. Only the first part is found in the Greek Septuagint scriptures, and it is the only book of the Tannakh not found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. Because of discrepancies in Hebrew texts, St. Jerome divided it into the older and newer parts when he organized his Latin Vulgate Bible in the late fourth century CE. Notably, the first time the word Jew (Judean) is used in the Bible, rather than Hebrew or Israelite, is in Esther. Set in Persia, the story incorporates key elements of Persian paganism. Fertility rites always occur in spring, and so does Purim. This is set on 14 Adar. Because the Hebrew calendar is lunar, this falls in March. Not to digress, but demonstrating the strong Judeo-Persian cultural confluence, the names of the Hebrew months are Babylonian. Purim may be a Judaized recreation of an ancient springtime gala celebrating the victories of the gods Marduk and Ishtar over rival deities. This and other Near Eastern pagan themes made pretty good background material for concocting this very Jewish, very Talmudic fairytale.

Esther reads more like an adventure romance novelette than a book of scripture. Its sole purpose was to establish Purim, a holiday when the ancient Jews ruthlessly struck back against their former oppressors. In Hebrew, Purim means lots, named after the lottery Haman used to choose the day for the massacre. The Persian word is Pur. On this day, the Talmud gives permission, even encouragement, to getting drunk, cursing, reviling and spitting on Christians. To begin Purim, the entire book, called the Megillah (simply means scroll in Hebrew), is read in the synagogue. Hence the Jewish expression, “the whole Megillah”, is like saying “the whole nine yards”,

meaning the entirety of something. *Free Dictionary Online* appropriately adds “tediously detailed or highly embroidered account”. The services are held in the evening, after the beginning of the new Jewish day and commemorating Esther’s deadly after-dark dinner party. Jewish women are rabbinically required to attend. In older times, and where it was tolerated, as in the ghettos and shtetls, loud boisterous street parties went on for much of the night with dancing, singing and drunken carousing, concluding with the burning of Haman in effigy. The *Talmud Bavli* tell us more.

"All are obligated in the reading of the Megillah" Orakh Chayim 689.

"Rava said: It is the duty of a man to get drunk with wine on Purim until he cannot tell the difference between "cursed be Haman" and "blessed be Mordechai". Rabbah and Rabbi Zera joined together in a Purim feast. They became drunk and Rabbah arose and cut Rabbi Zera's throat. On the next day he prayed on his behalf and revived him. Next year, he [Rabbah] said "Will your honor come and we will have the Purim feast together?" He [Rabbi Zera] answered: A miracle does not take place on every occasion!" *Megillah 7b.*

"The Jew is to say on Purim Day: ... cursed be all non-Jews, blessed be all Jews." Orach Chaim, 660, 16.

Always called the Megillah (and ranked right alongside the Torah) by the Jews, Esther is the name given by Christian translators. The outcome of this rabbinical creative writing project was edited and reworked over the centuries. Since it does not appear in the late fourth century BCE Septuagint, and since St. Jerome worked with confusing manuscripts in the late fourth century CE, we see a time frame when the Judeo-Babylonian Talmudists put the final touches on the Megillah. While his German-language Bible has the Book of Esther, translator and theologian Martin Luther was very critical of it, saying that even the Hebrew text was of little value. We suppose he was unwilling to bowdlerize the already existing Judaic Masoretic, Greek Septuagint and Latin Vulgate versions of the Old Testament, so he included it.

"They are real liars and bloodhounds who have not only continually perverted and falsified all of Scripture with their mendacious glosses from the beginning until the present day. Their heart's most ardent sighing and yearning and hoping is set on the day on which they can deal with us Gentiles as they did with the Gentiles in Persia at the time of Esther. Oh, how fond they are of the

book of Esther, which is so beautifully attuned to their bloodthirsty, vengeful, murderous yearning and hope. The sun has never shone on a more bloodthirsty and vengeful people than they are who imagine that they are God's people who have been commissioned and commanded to murder and to slay the Gentiles.” Martin Luther, *On the Jews and Their Lies (Der Juden und Ihre Lugen)*, 1543.



Esther entertains King Ahasuerus.

The story goes like this. Our leading lady joins King Ahasueris' harem. She keeps her Hebrew origins a secret, yet one of the Jews, our male protagonist, Mordecai, her cousin, is a prominent man in the government. Mordecai, a dedicated friend of his Jewish people, has a sworn enemy, a classically anti-Semitic, heavily embellished theatrical wicked villain called Haman. While his motive is unclear, Haman hates the Jews and does everything he can to harm them. The plot thickens. He eventually persuades the King to sign a decree of extermination, a holocaust of ancient times. By this time in the story, our heroine is called Queen Esther, having progressed from mere oriental harem prostitute to the position of chief wife. To make a rather predictable tale less tedious, she intercedes with her charms, but there is good and bad news. The good news is (surprise, surprise) the King grants the comely concubine's request. The bad news is that back in these olden days, once the King sends out a decree with his seal attached, it supposedly cannot be rescinded. This does not really make much sense as it seems an all-powerful sovereign could do as he pleased and change his mind, but the story line is not so simple. Instead, the King intervenes personally, providing shelter and protection in his palace. Thus he and Queen Esther stop the Persian pogrom and extermination of the Jews, planned by Hitler – oops, I mean Haman! – the wicked anti-Semite. Haman is hanged on the gallows he prepared for Mordecai.

Since the death threat is over, the Jews rejoice with feasts and merriment. Along with these festivities, they set about causing the extermination of their enemies. Mind you, the original threat is over. This killing spree on the first Purim sprang solely from cold-blooded revenge. First, Esther has the King invite Haman to an evening state dinner, where they will unexpectedly attack him when he is off guard. As we would expect, this femme fatale character is seen by Talmudic Jews and Zionists as a brave and valorous woman, and today's Christians perpetuate the lurid legends through studies about women in the Bible. Not only that, the Hebrew Harlot is a main character in the traditions of the women's Masonic Order of the Eastern Star. Mind you, these folk are supposed to be reading and studying the Bible, but we must ask ourselves if they're actually reading the texts of the tale! Or maybe they're just too embarrassed to point out that "the empress has no clothes"! Read what the Bible tells us about the brutal, bloody events following Esther's cowardly conspiracy to slay Haman, the adversary and would-be exterminator of the Jews.

[Begin quoting.] The King Ahasueris said to Queen Esther, ‘Who is he that would presume to do this [that is, to kill all the Jews]?’ And Esther said, ‘A foe and an enemy! This wicked Haman!’ Then Haman was in terror before the king and queen ... for he saw that evil was determined against him by the king. So they hanged Haman on the gallows which he had prepared for Mordecai.

The Jews had light and gladness and joy and honor. And many from the peoples of the country declared themselves Jews for the feat of the Jews had fallen upon them.

[The Jews prepare for their revenge.] ... a day when the Jews should get the mastery over their foes, and the Jews gathered in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasueris to lay hands on such as sought their hurt. And they could make no stand against them, for the fear of them had fallen upon all peoples.... So the Jews smote all their enemies with the sword, slaughtering and destroying them, and they did as they pleased to those who had hated them. In Susa the capitol itself the Jews slew and destroyed five hundred men ... and the ten sons of Haman... Now the other Jews who were in the King’s provinces also gathered together ... and got relief from their enemies, and slew 75,000 of those who hated them. ...and on the fourteenth day they rested and made that a day of feasting and gladness. [End quoting.] Selected verses, Esther: 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

“Again, the history and traditions, the faith and practice of the Jew ever placed before his eyes the absolute and immeasurable superiority of his own caste, the ‘Peculiar People, the Kingdom of Priests, and the Holy Nation.’ This exaltation justified the Hebrew in treating his brother-men as heathens barely worthy of the title human. ‘Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations’ -- an unfriendly separation and an estrangement between man and man equally injurious to the welfare of Jew and Gentile. ... Their virtues are their own, but their faults are the fruit of eighteen centuries of outlawry and oppression.” Burton, *The Jew, The Gypsy And El Islam*, 1898.

Both Esther and several passages from the *Talmud Bavli* affirm endorse and sanction tribal blood lust and ethnic cleansing. Want a precedent for arrogant Zionist actions of vengeance against the Palestinian people? Look no further than this Talmudic tale of terror. It really makes no difference whether Esther is authentic or not. When we apply the tools of literary

deconstructionism and biblical Hermeneutics, critically dissecting both the Biblical and the Talmudic texts, certain ancient atavistic archetypes of blood lust and deep-seated vengeance clearly come to light. And not just in bygone eras, but before us in today's news. In some ways, little has changed since the days of the Purim concubine queen. The Talmud says the story never ends.

“All the books of the Prophets and all the Writings will be annulled in the days of the Messiah, except for the Book of Esther. It will continue to be binding like the Five Books of Moses and the entire Oral Law which will never be invalidated. Even though all memory of our suffering will be erased... still the days of Purim will not be annulled. As it is written, ‘These days of Purim will not pass away from the Jews and its memory will never leave their descendants.’ (Esther 9:25).” *Rambam in Hilkhos Megillah 2:18.*

Part Two: PURIM AND THE WHOLE MEGILLAH, A MORE THOROUGH EXEGESIS OF THE BOOK OF ESTHER

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This is a further exposition of my thoughts about the Purim revenge fest portrayed, created and legitimized in the Old Testament Book of Esther. Its main thrust was to establish and legitimize the Judaic Purim holiday, which as we shall see, comes from non-Hebrew pagan traditions.

PURIM, “A MEMORIAL OF DESTRUCTION”.

“Although there may be an historical basis for the story, in its present form it seems to be a popular romance. It contains indeed very little of a directly religious purport, and it is noticeable that no mention is made in the book of the name of God.

The probable reason for its inclusion in the canon of the Old Testament is that it described the institution of Purim....

There are no quotations from Esther in the New Testament, nor, so far, have any fragments of the book been found among the Biblical mss at Qumran.” *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1989.

The text affirms not only their right to self-defense, but their right to utter vengeance and death over their opponents.

“By these [decrees] the king allowed the Jews who were in every city to gather together and defend their lives, to destroy, to slay, and to annihilate any armed force of any people or province that might attack them, with their children and women, and to plunder their goods, upon one day throughout all the provinces... on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar... and the Jews were to be ready on that day to avenge themselves upon their enemies.” Esther 8:11-13.

In the Apocrypha, there is more of Chapter 10 plus chapters 11-16, as found in the Septuagint. This extra material clearly affirms the same psychodynamics of bitter revenge. The real or alleged events of the first Purim should be considered as a genuine “final solution”, bringing an end to the problem of those who opposed the aspirations and machinations of Judaic politics and religion. Purim, as the scriptures tell us, certainly is “a memorial of destruction” to those who opposed the Jews back in old Babylon.

“That both now and hereafter there may be safety to us, and the well affected Persians; but to those which do conspire against us as a memorial of destruction. Therefore every city and country whatsoever, which shall not do according to these things shall be destroyed without mercy with fire and sword, and shall be made not only unpassable for men, but also most hateful to wild beasts and fowls forever.” *Apocrypha, The Rest of the Chapters of the Book of Esther* 16:23-24.

WERE THE JEWS JUSTIFIED IN THEIR ACTIONS?

As other commentators have said, in order to justify what the Jews (obviously, they must have been numerous) are said to have done, one must believe in the mysterious imperial decree that even the emperor can't revoke.

“The Irrevocable Edict. At this point all that's seems needed to bring the story to a happy ending is the withdrawal of the decree of extermination. But so simple a solution would not explain the annual celebration of Purim.”

Interpreters One Volume Commentary on the Bible, 1971.

Regardless of your feelings about the Bible or the Jews, the facts are clear. The original danger was over; there was no more threat. Also of interest and concern is that nothing is said of the criteria used to determine who their enemy really is. Was it anyone who opposed Judaic power and influence at high government levels? Was it anyone who criticized their religion, then a proselytizing faith? In other words, was the enemy anyone whom they considered to be an “anti-Semite”? Did this make them a valid terrorist target for extinction? It appears this is one of the key doctrines of Purim. Hence, the Jews received permission to practice genocide against their opponents all over the Persian Empire. While the figure of 75,000 slain is probably fictional (the Greek Septuagint says 15,000), the real and rather graphic meaning of the image stands out when the themes of this odd scripture text are deconstructed. Through the Book of Esther, Purim directly confirms and affirms the right of the Judaic people to vengeance and bloodthirsty revenge against their opponents, the true meaning of this important festival.

IS ESTHER THE PAGAN GODDESS ISHTAR?

In yet another curious conundrum about the Megillah text is that Esther is not our heroine’s actual name. Why is it used? The name, Esther, is related to Ashtoreth, a consort of the Egypto-Semitic deity called Jah-Hovah, also the same as the widely worshipped Middle Eastern goddess, Ishtar. Esther’s real name was Hadassah, which in Hebrew means Myrtle tree, but parallels with a Persian word meaning star. Isaac Asimov tells us much more.

“The name Mordecai is not Hebrew and instead, seems to be suspiciously like that of the chief god of the Babylonians, Marduk, which in its Hebrew form, is Merodach. As for Esther (the official throne name that came to be carried by Mordecai’s cousin), that is even clearly a form of Ishtar, the chief Babylonian goddess. Indeed, the Aramaic version of that goddess’s name is Esther. The name Hadassah, by which Esther was originally known within the family, is closely related to a Babylonian word for ‘bride’, which is used as a title for Ishtar. And in Babylonian mythology Marduk and Ishtar are cousins, as are Mordecai and Esther.... It may have been one of the purposes of the writer of the Book of Esther to revise the Babylonian myth into Jewish history and convert a pagan festival into a patriotic Jewish observance.” *Asimov’s Guide to the Bible, 1969.*

Wikipedia tells us yet another interesting name for the book and perhaps why God is never mentioned.

“Esther can also be understood to mean ‘hidden’ in Hebrew, and her name is interpreted thus in another Midrash, where it is said that Esther hid her nationality and lineage as Mordecai had advised. Because the methods and aims of God are believed to be similarly hidden, ‘The Book of Esther’ in Hebrew can be understood as ‘The Book of Hiddenness’, representing God's hiddenness in the story.”

But, while the story of Esther-Ishtar-Ashtoreth-Hadassah, does have more than a bit of “hiddenness”, there is little if anything concealed about the bloody themes of this hateful Talmudic treatise called the Megillah.

IS HAMAN IS A PROTOTYPICAL CHRIST FIGURE?

In the sordid history of the Judaic Kabalistic ritual murder cult, Purim and Passover are the proper times for the sacrifices. Dr. Ariel Toaff speaks of Purim and the Book of Esther in his now classic work, *Blood Passovers*. He is a respected Professor of Medieval History at Bar-Ilan University in Israel. Later forced to withdraw his book, it tells the bare truth about many things. As you will see, Toaff even goes so far as to assert that the execution-crucifixion of Jesus was a traditional Jewish sacrificial murder. The ritualized figures of Amalek, Haman and Jesus are all the same thing.

[Begin quoting.] For a number of reasons, not least that of its not infrequent proximity to Holy Week, *Purim*, also called the "festival of the lots", came, in time, to acquire openly anti-Christian connotations and the related celebrations became openly suggestive in this sense, both in form and substance, sometimes audaciously and openly.

Haman, equated with that other Biblical arch-enemy of the Jews, Amalek (Deut. 25: 17-19), whose memory was to be blotted out from the face of the earth, was transformed, over time, into Jesus, the False Messiah, whose impious followers were once threatening the Chosen People with extermination. Moreover, Haman was killed, hanged, as Jesus was said to have been, and there was no shortage of exegetic material reinforcing this paragon. In the Greek translation of the Septuagint as well as in Flavius Josephus (Ant. Jud. Xi, 267, 280), Haman's gallows was interpreted as a cross,

and the execution of King Ahasuerus's belligerent minister was described, in effect, as a true and proper crucifixion.

The equation between Amalek, Haman and Christ was self-evidently obvious. Haman, who, in the Biblical text is referred to as *talui*, "the hanged one", was confused with He who, in all anti-Christian Hebraic texts, was the *Talui* by antonomasia [the replacement of a proper name by an epithet], i.e., the crucified Christ.

The sensational trial of the most prominent members of the Ashkenazi communities of northern Italy, accused of vilifying the Christian religion was held in Milan in the spring of 1488. In reply to inquisitors demanding the name used by Jews with reference to Jesus of Nazareth, Salomone da Como, one of the accused, answered unhesitatingly: "Among ourselves we call him "Ossoays" ("that man", from the Hebrew *oto' ha-ish*, according to the German pronunciation), or *Talui* ("the hanged one", "the crucified one"), while, when speaking to Christians, we always refer to him as "Christ". It is not surprising that a text by 4th century writer Evagrius describes the Jew Simone, in an argument with a Christian, Theophilus, should have equated "the cursed and despised Passion of Christ" with Haman's "crucifixion".

According to the great English anthropologist James George Frazer, Christ died while playing the role of Haman (the dying god) in a drama of *Purim* in which (Jesus) Barabbas, the double of Jesus of Nazareth, played the part of Mordechai (the god that resurges). In the model of the god that dies and is reborn -- which is common in the Near East -- Haman is said to have played the part of death and Mordechai that of life, while the celebration of *Purim* is said to constitute the Hebraic ritual of death and resurrection.

Based on this consideration, one might hypothesize that, in the past, the Jews, at the culmination of the festival, might have been accustomed to putting a man to death in flesh and blood reality, and that Jesus was crucified in this context, playing the role of Ahasuerus's tragic minister, the arch-enemy of Israel. There is no shortage of testimonies of the celebration of rituals, within the framework of the carnival of *Purim*, intended to vilify and outrage the image of Haman, reconstituted in the semblance of Christ hanging from the cross. [End quoting. *Blood Passovers*, pp. 131-132.]

WHAT DID HAMAN REALLY DO?

Taking his statement in and of itself, did Haman actually lie about the Jews? As we can see in reading Esther, there must have been quite a few of them living in Persia. Did Haman misinform the Emperor? Or just try to warn him of a lurking and impending danger? Was he wrong? Considering the nature of his demise, he was correct.

“There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom, their laws are different from those of every other people, and they do not keep the king’s laws, so that it is not for the king’s profit to tolerate them.” Esther 3:8.

SUMMATION.

Of course, Haman and his party were a definite threat to the Judeo-Persians, but from the standpoint of morals and ethics, I can’t see why Christians would ever find role models in either Haman’s camp or that of Esther and her cabal of court Jews. While Judaic and Christian publications glorify and proclaim the alleged virtues of Esther, a closer look reveals the truth about this heavily fabricated folktale. More of a novella rather than scripture, its whole purpose was to create an underlying biblical footing for the Purim Revenge Fest, never mind all its pagan archetypes and prototypes. If you are still in doubt about any of this, then read “the whole Megillah” one more time and decide for yourself. I’ve done this so often now that I can only close by thoroughly agreeing with Martin Luther.

“Their heart's most ardent sighing and yearning and hoping is set on the day on which they can deal with us Gentiles as they did with the Gentiles in Persia at the time of Esther. Oh, how fond they are of the Book of Esther, which is so beautifully attuned to their bloodthirsty, vengeful, murderous yearning and hope.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR.



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