

FEAST OF PURIM

Pastor Gary Glenney

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1. **Purim** is the Jewish festival celebrated on the 14th and 15th day of the month of Adar, the last month in the Hebrew calendar; in the Julian calendar it is in the month of February or March.
2. **Purim** (פּוּרִים - in Hebrew) is the plural form of the Hebrew word **Pur** (פּוּר), meaning - lot, dice, part, portion; as used in gambling or selecting by casting lots. It came originally from the Persian language. (Esther 3:7; 9:24, 26, 28, 29, 31, 32)
3. Although not one of the seven major feasts of Israel, it is found in Esther 3:7; 9:24 ff.
4. The history of the festival is as follows:
 - a. Queen Vashti was deposed for disobedience to her king, King Ahasueras, also known as Xerxes I, the son and successor of Darius I, king of Persia, 486-465BC. (Esther 1:10-22)
 - b. King Ahasueras selected a young Jewish virgin named Esther (from the Persian “**Ishtar**,” translated “star,” the name of the great Babylonian fertility goddess) whose Hebrew name was *Hadassah* (meaning: myrtle, as a beautiful evergreen tree with white flowers and edible berries) to replace his deposed Queen Vashti. (Esther 2:2-17)
 - c. The king was unaware of her Hebrew lineage from the tribe of Benjamin or her relationship to one Mordecai, her cousin, who had adopted her as his daughter when her parents died. (Esther 2:15)
 - d. King Ahasueras promoted one of his princes, Haman the Agagite, to the post of Prime Minister. (Esther 3:1 with 1 Samuel 15:8, 32)
 - e. Haman hated the Jews, especially Mordecai, because he would not bow down or pay homage to him. (Esther 3:2-4)
 - f. Haman used lots or “purim” from day to day and month to month until the 12th month of the Hebrew calendar when he decided to approach the king with his disguised plan to annihilate all the Jews, one of whom was Mordecai. (Esther 3:7)
 - g. The king agreed, believing that this “certain people” would not obey the king’s laws. (Esther 3:8ff.)
 - h. Mordecai, who had already thwarted a plot to kill the king, learned of a plot to annihilate the Jews. (Esther 2:21-23)

- i. Mordecai related this plot to Esther so that she might intercede with the king for the Jews. (Esther 4:1-9)
 - j. Esther was reluctant at first to approach the king without being summoned. (Esther 4:10-11)
 - k. Mordecai replied to Esther with this famous quote: *“And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this.”* (Esther 4:12-14)
 - l. However, when Esther recognized her perilous situation, she decided to go in to the king no matter what might happen to her; and exercising great faith, she made this famous statement: *“And thus I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish.”* (Esther 4:15-16b)
 - m. Esther bravely approached the king and disclosed the deceit of Haman against her people, the Jews, at a private banquet for the king and Haman. (Esther 5:12; 6:14-7:6)
 - n. King Ahasueras decreed that Haman should be hanged on the gallows which Haman himself had prepared for Mordecai only two days earlier. (Esther 7:9-10)
 - o. Then the king made Mordecai his Prime Minister, and Queen Esther gave Mordecai the home of Haman. (Esther 8:1, 2)
 - p. In addition, the King decreed that the Jews could defend themselves and destroy anyone who might attack them in compliance with the former decree proposed by Haman. (Esther 8:10-17)
 - q. A total of 75,810 enemies of the Jews were killed in Susa, the capitol city, and in all the provinces of the king on the 13th of Adar, the day Haman had chosen by lot, “pur,” to annihilate the Jews. (Esther 9:1-16)
 - r. On the 14th and 15th of Adar they rested and made them days of feasting and rejoicing,....therefore, they called those days **“Purim”** after the name of “pur.” (Esther 9:17-19; 32)
5. The two day Festival of Purim is celebrated by giving gifts to neighbors and especially to the poor. (Esther 9:19)
6. In the time of the Maccabees the feast was called “Mordecai’s Day.” (II Macc. 15:36)
7. The great Jewish historian, Josephus, states that in his time all the Jews of the world kept the Festival of Purim. (Josephus. Antiquities. XI 6:13)