

A Secret Allegory of the L-rd's Return

The Jewish populace generally celebrates Purim with the flair of Mardi Gras; that is, with masks and costumes and drinking. Masking one's appearance is a feature of this holiday that reveals the underlying theme of the Book of Esther, *hester panim*, concealment of the L-rd's countenance. G-d declared (Deuteronomy 31:16-18)

that if His people Israel forsook Him, He would hide His face from them. This period of exile known as the intertestamental period was such a time. Yet, G-d *appears* throughout the story in the form of apparent coincidences.

G-d's name is never mentioned in the Book of Esther, but His name (Yahweh) formed by the four Hebrew letters: *yod, hey, vav, hey* appears four times in the form of an acrostic. In fact, three ancient manuscripts are known in which the acrostic letters are written larger than the others so that they stand out boldly.

As Purim approaches, it is worthwhile to review this historic narrative, which recounts how the supernatural force of G-d protects Israel even when she is not in G-d's favor. The story takes place while the Jews were in *galut* (exile) from Israel for their rebellion, during the period known to Christendom as the intertestamental period: the 400 years between Malachi, the last prophet of the Old Testament, and John the Baptist, the first prophet of the New Testament. The victorious outcome of this popular legend resulted in the establishment of a new feast, the Feast of Purim, which the rabbis declare will survive all other feasts because it encompasses them all. It is, in truth, a secret allegory of the L-rd's return.

The rabbis employ four different modes of Scripture interpretation, which they call *Pardes* meaning garden, (Garden of the Torah).

Pardes

is an acronym (PRDS) for:

Peshat –meaning “simple, plain, or literal”

Remez –meaning, “hint, allusion, or allegory”

Derash –meaning “homily or sermon”

Sod–meaning “secret or mystical”

Both the derash (sermon) and sod (secret) interpretations of Scripture reflect the expositor’s own understanding of a narrative to which he has applied his knowledge of events and prophecy. It does not purpose to negate other interpretations, but seeks, instead, to offer new insight about a Bible story.

The Book of Esther, written before the New Testament of course, has often been described as an allegory about the future Gentile Church. However, because Esther was clearly a Jewess, and Vashti obviously a Gentile, this common allegorical interpretation would have to contain elements of replacement theology [that is, Esther the Jew being replaced by the Gentile Church] *or* the interpretation is faulty. Yet, by taking a closer look at the legend through the *Pardes* it is possible that Esther can be both Jewish and the Church.

The Legend of Esther and Mordecai (*Peshat*)

The story begins with the king of Persia, Ahasuerus, holding a great feast during the third year of his reign. On the seventh day, he orders his queen Vashti to come out wearing the royal crown to show off her beauty, but she refuses to come. Ahasuerus, in his fury, asks his advisors what to do. Memuchan suggests that he depose Vashti and then hold a kingdom-wide search for another queen selected from all the maidens in his vast empire.

Mordecai, a Jew that was exiled to Babylon during King Nebuchadnezzar’s invasion of Judah, had raised his orphaned cousin Hadassah whom he called Esther. Esther, a very beautiful maiden, is chosen to be among those presented to King Ahasuerus in his search for a queen. Mordecai warns Esther not to reveal her Jewish identity to anyone during the year she is being prepared for royalty. Not surprisingly, when she is finally taken to the king, he chooses her as his queen.

Some years later, the king elevates Haman the Agagite to Prime Minister. A decree is issued that all people would have to bow down and prostrate themselves before Haman. But Mordecai

Unmasking The Message of Purim

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the Jew refuses to bow. Haman slanders the Jews to the King and advises extermination. The King agrees, giving Haman his signet ring to seal the decree. Haman then casts lots for the best day to slaughter all the Jews and steal their property. Soon afterward, Haman sends the decree throughout Ahasuerus' kingdom with the chosen date of Adar 13. Haman, in anticipation of his victory over Mordecai, builds a gallows on which to hang his enemy.

Mordecai and the rest of the Jews don sackcloth and ashes to mourn and weep over the decree. He sends word to Esther that it is time for her to reveal her Jewish identity and plead with the king for her life and the lives of her people. Esther worries that she could be executed for going to the king unbidden, so she calls for a three-day fast amongst the Jews, after which she goes to the king.

Ahasuerus receives Esther with joy and promises to fulfill any request she makes. She asks only that the king appear with Haman at a banquet she has prepared. At the banquet, the king restates his desire to grant any request she makes, but she asks only that he come to a second banquet with Haman the next day at which time she would make her request known.

Ahasuerus, unable to sleep that night, orders a servant to bring and read his book of remembrances to him. He discovers that Mordecai the Jew had uncovered a plot to overthrow his throne and was never rewarded. The following morning, the king asks Haman what he should do for someone he wants to honor. Haman, thinking himself to be the man, suggests that the king put his robe and crown on the man and parade him through the city on the king's horse led by one of his highest officials. Then, have the official announce to everyone that this is what the king does for one so honored. Ahasuerus orders Haman to do so for Mordecai the Jew. Thoroughly humiliated after being forced to honor the man he despised, Haman rushes home only to be quickly whisked away to the second banquet prepared by Esther.

At the second feast, Ahasuerus again asks Esther what he can give her. She requests that her life be spared and those of her people because they had been condemned to die. When asked who would dare to do such a thing, she points her finger at the evil Haman. The king stomps out of the room to ponder the situation and returns to find Haman laying on his queen, begging for his life. The king becomes enraged and orders that he be hung on the gallows he built for Mordecai.

Ahasuerus bequeaths Haman's property to Esther and promotes Mordecai to the position of Prime Minister. He gives his signet ring to Mordecai and allows him to issue another decree

giving the Jews permission to defend themselves on the 13th of Adar. Mordecai and Esther declare that a holiday be perpetually observed on the 14th

of Adar to commemorate the day when the evil planned by Israel's enemies fell upon themselves.

The obvious interpretation (peshat and derash) would be that those who plot evil against others will be rewarded thusly. On a slightly deeper level (remez), the story hints at the idea that all those who purpose to come against Israel will be frustrated in their attempts to do so. Key Scriptures that reveal this theme are 4:14 and 6:13.

The Allegorical Drama (*Remez*)

The main players in this prophetic drama form the basis of *an allegory* of the Church with Jewish roots coming together with their Jewish brethren forming a strong bond that will hasten the L-rd's return as they pray and fast.

Vashti [a type of the Gentile Church without a Jewish identity & without the Spirit of G-d] is exposed as being unworthy for her position when she refuses to don her crown (*symbolic of the visible presence of the Holy Spirit in her life*) and royal apparel (*symbolic of her Jewish identity*). She is deposed and never sees the king again.

Mordecai [a type of Jesus/Yeshua] raises his beautiful relative Esther [a type of the New Testament Church having a Jewish identity] to maturity before turning her over to Hegai [a type of the Holy Spirit in His role as man's silent instructor] who prepares her for the king. After the period of preparation, Esther is found worthy to wear the crown and royal attire.

Hathach [a type of the Holy Spirit in His role as Communicator] communicates to Esther the message from Mordecai that Haman

[a type of the antichrist, the devil] has planned a day for the annihilation of the Jews and lets Esther know the details of Haman's plot.

He advises Esther that it is time to reveal her identity to the king. Esther fasts and prays, and finally devises a plan that will bring victory over Haman's evil scheme.

Because the King [A type of G-d the Father] loves Esther, he vows to give her whatever

she wants. She asks only for her life and that of her people.□

Haman falls upon Esther, but the King appears and orders Haman to be hung on the gallows Haman prepared for Mordecai.

Esther is bequeathed Haman's property and Mordecai is promoted to the highest position in the land, second only to the King himself. Mordecai proclaims that all who oppose Esther [the Church with a Jewish identity, filled with the Spirit of G-d] be put to death. Her enemies are destroyed and a holiday is established to celebrate the reversal of the decree calling for the destruction of the Jews.

The Secret, Mystical Interpretation. (Sod)

The interpretation of this popular legend that is most intriguing, though, falls into the *Sod* category.

Esther's Hebrew name was Hadassah (myrtle); but her cousin Mordecai called her Esther (star), which comes from the Hebrew root, 'seter', meaning hidden or concealed. This name served to indicate that Esther's Jewish identity was hidden. The narrative is filled with hidden irony and even humor.

An important

(*Sod*

) feature of the story is the hidden agendas of the antagonist and protagonist: Haman and Mordecai.

Haman is an Agagite (Esther 3:1), a descendant of king Agag of the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15:32) . G-d

said that the Israelites would have war with the Amalekites from generation to generation (Exodus 17:16)

. The Amalekites brutally attacked women, children, the aged, and the sick as they wandered through the wilderness

(Deuteronomy 25:17-19).

Thereafter, the name, Amalek, became synonymous with evil. Amalek was the grandson of Esau

(Genesis 36:12)

on whom the L-rd pronounced harsh judgement: Esau and all his descendants, He said, would be completely destroyed

(Obadiah 18)

.

Mordecai was a Benjaminite (Esther 2:5). King Saul, also a Benjaminite was ordered to attack the Amalekites and destroy everyone and everything that belonged to them because of what they did to Israel when they entered the Promised Land (1 Samuel 15:2 & Exodus 17:8)

. Saul failed to do as the L-rd commanded when he took spoils from the battle and spared *Agag their king. Mordecai, on the other hand, would not bow to the Amalekite Haman and succeeded in destroying him and his whole family as the L-rd instructed should and would be done.

(*Although the Prophet Samuel killed King Agag, legend says that his wife escaped the Israelites with her son).

Coincidence or Grand Design? (Sod)

The hidden message in the story is that Esther is the Church with a Jewish identity, comprised of people from every tribe and nation. The Scriptures (Ezekiel 37:16-22) record that the time will come when G-d will rejoin the 'stick' of Judah

(Israel)

with the 'stick' of Joseph, which is in Ephraim's hand

(i.e. the Church)

. Jacob prophesied that his 'son' Ephraim would become a fullness of Gentiles (Genesis 48:19)

. And, "they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again" (Ezekiel 37:22).

The Esther-Church is the *One New Man* described by the apostle Paul (Ephesians 2:14-16), Jew and Gentile working together to defeat the enemy of all mankind (Zechariah 9:13-17)

. Esther's identity has been kept secret and has indeed even been 'masked' to such a degree that her Jewishness is unrecognizable. In fact, Esther still appears very Gentile.

It is time for Esther to reveal her true identity so that she and her people can be rescued from the fate decreed by her enemy, the devil. The Church *must* put on her royal apparel in preparation for the king; it's time for the Church to be identified with her Jewish mentor Jesus.

"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?" (Esther 4:14)

Barukh HaShem (Blessed is the Name of the L-rd)