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## The Scroll of Esther

### God never forgets His covenant with His people

A Devotional Overview of Esther's Story  
October 3, 2018; revised March 5, 2024

## The Context of the Scroll of Esther

The Bible begins with the stories of Creation, Adam and Eve, Abraham, Noah, Moses, Joshua, and the stories of the judges who ruled the land. Then, the Israelites wanted kings. The first kings were Saul, David, and Solomon. Due to Solomon's sin, the kingdom was divided into the north and south. Most of the kings of these two kingdoms were grossly sinful. And so, both kingdoms were taken into exile by their enemies – the northern kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians in 714 BC; and the southern kingdom of Judah by the Babylonians in 586 BC.

In 538 BC, the Babylonian king, Cyrus, gave an edict for the Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. The books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi share these events. Joyfully in hardship many of the people returned. **But some did not return.** Esther was among the Jewish people who did *not* return with Cyrus' edict but stayed in Babylon among the pagans.

## A Masterpiece of Contrasts and Reversals

- God's Sovereignty – Our Responsibility
- Pride – Humility
- Destruction – Deliverance
- Annihilation – Propagation
- Shame – Glory
- Stranded in exile – never alone
- Paganism – Godliness
- Foolishness – Wisdom
- The Haphazard – Providence
- Fear – Joy
- Grief – Celebration

The theme of the entire book of Esther is – **God never forgets His covenant with His people.** He is faithful.

## Esther – One of Many Hidden Stars

The Persian name *Esther* means *star* and *hidden*. Her Hebrew name, *Hadassah*, means *myrtle* (an evergreen that symbolizes peace, justice, and strength in all seasons); its soft white bloom with a myriad of star-like filaments echoes the peace, justice, and strength she brought to her people. Truly, Hadassah was a tree planted by the rivers of water that gave its fruit in its season (Psalm 1:3). She was a *hidden star* in a land far from home “for such a time as this” (Esther 4:14) – to deliver her people from their enemy and protect their freedom.

Her life echoed Daniel's life from about 200 years earlier. Daniel was also a star, an exile in Babylon. He prophesied of God's people, “Those who are wise will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.” (Daniel 12:3)

About 700 years earlier, King David sang, “Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?... If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, even there Your hand will lead me, and Your right hand will lay hold of me.” (Psalm 139:7,9,10)

**Wherever God's people have been on the earth, however difficult and haphazard their circumstances, their lives sparkle up from the earth like stars to God.** He knows right where they are, and **He will never forget His covenant with them.** Hanani the seer prophesied to King Asa of Judah 300 years before the fall of Jerusalem saying, *"The eyes of Adonai move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His."* (2 Chronicles 16:9) He sees us!

Esther's story reminds us of God's faithfulness and deliverance to His people in a foreign land. In her shame and fear, God intruded with His love and redemption according to His promise. Esther was never alone.

**Where are you today?** Are you grieving, questioning, jobless, persecuted, misunderstood, disappointed, rejected? He sees you sparkling up from the earth. He calls you by name; you are His. He will never leave you. You are never alone. He delivered you from the domain of darkness and transferred you into the kingdom of His beloved Son in Whom you have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Colossians 1:13-14)

Father, give us insight to shine like the stars and to lead others in Your ways. (Daniel 12:3)  
We praise You because You have not left us without a Redeemer! (Ruth 4:14)

### Summary of the Scroll of Esther by Chapter for your Purim Celebration Reading

1. The Persian King Ahasuerus gave a large banquet to display his splendor and queen. The Queen Vashti refused to be displayed, and thus was expelled from the kingdom.
2. A competition ensued, and Esther, a young Jewish girl, found herself in the position of Queen. Mordecai, her cousin, delivered the king from an assassination plot.
3. Haman was elevated to second in the empire. He was angered when Mordecai did not bow down to him, and so he influenced the king to have all the Jews annihilated.
4. Mordecai asked Esther to intervene on behalf of their people. Approaching the King was a great risk, but finally she gave in to Mordecai's plea. She asked the Jewish people to fast for three days.
5. The king was open to Esther. She invited the king and Haman to a banquet where she invited them to another banquet the next day to hear her request. Haman built the gallows to hang Mordecai.
6. The king discovered that Mordecai had not been honored for saving his life. He asked Haman to describe how he should honor such a man. Haman, thinking he would be honored, gave the king a lavish description. Haman was then ordered to honor Mordecai according to his description, much to Haman's humiliation.
7. At the next banquet, Esther revealed Haman's evil plot. Incensed, the king left the room. When he returned, he thought Haman was assaulting the Queen, although he was just pleading for mercy. So, the king hung Haman on the gallows that Haman had built for Mordecai.
8. The king gave Haman's house to Esther. He took the signet ring from Haman and gave it to Mordecai. And he reversed the decree to kill the Jews on Adar 13 and allowed the Jews to kill their enemies on that day. Many people became Jews when they heard the decree.
9. The enemy had wickedly schemed to destroy God's people by casting lots. *Purim* (poo REEM) means *lots*. When God **reversed the curse** of these lots in His people's favor, Mordecai instituted *The Feast of Purim* or *The Feast of Lots* to be celebrated each year on Adar 14 and 15 with feasting, gifts of food to each other, and gifts to the poor. (See Esther 9:20-32)
10. Mordecai was second only to the King and great among the Jews. He sought the good of his people and spoke for the welfare of the whole nation.