

Purim: The Story of Queen Esther

Story by Curtis & Carolyn Loftin (cdloftin@charter.net)

Adapted and edited by Marianna Alacchi

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

NARRATOR: _____

Esther: _____

King Xerxes: _____

Queen Vashti: _____

Mordecai: _____

Haman: _____

Zeresh: _____

Wise guy/man: _____

Faithful Attendant: _____

Purim Play Notes

Parts are not memorized beforehand, but instead the roles appear to be being assigned as the Narrator reads his/her part. Everyone should appear to be happy and willing to take a part. Props and costumes are at each character or are added to the characters by the Director during the play, which adds a bit of humor to the story. Actors should play the script lightheartedly and for the humor. The story meaning will not be missed for the humor. Humor in Judeo/Christian plays is sort of like a velvet-covered boxing glove!

Purim Play Props & Costumes

Ideas to build upon and improvise, add or subtract from!

Queen Esther: Scarf, clip-on curls, perfume, funny-looking pink cowboy hat with built in crown, also blue southern belle outfit with hand fan.

King Xerxes: Wear flannel shirt & blue jeans! Burger King crown, 2 "Ring-Pop" rings, golden scepter; cowboy costume hat and boots.

Queen Vashti: Glitz n glamor crown, sunglasses, men's pants (*"You can tell who wears the pants in the family"*)

Mordecai: kippah (*yarmulke*), talit (prayer shawl), gold cap.

Haman: Three-cornered hat, flannel shirt, blue jeans & boots.

Zeresh: Black & gold outfit with elaborate feathers, etc.

Wiseguy/Man: Wiseguy biker guy outfit. Wear Black t-shirt, jeans and shoes. Blue jeans are ok, but all black is better. Tattoo sleeve, handcuffs, sword.

Faithful Attendant: Brown tunic with built-in off-white shirt, chain mail cap, silver chain mail leggings, sword, handcuffs, hangman's noose for Haman

NARRATOR: Hear ye! Hear ye! Hear ye! This is the story of "How Purim Got Started." "The Feast of Lots," otherwise known as "Purim," is what we are celebrating here today!

This celebration commemorates the salvation of the Jewish people through the heroism of ONE YOUNG JEWISH WOMAN. Her real name was "HADASSAH." Through her personal sacrifice in being taken away from her family to serve in the king's harem, she became "Queen Esther" and saved the entire Jewish race!

You see there was a terrible man who was an enemy of the Jews. This man occupied a high position and plotted to completely **destroy** the ENTIRE JEWISH RACE. He was close to the king and manipulated the king into issuing a decree that would destroy all the Jewish people!

As a result of the brave heroism of the lovely Queen Esther, we and the Jews still celebrate this great

deliverance and continued survival of the Jewish race on Purim.

Welcome one! Welcome all! Let me continue by introducing and telling you a little more about the cast of characters in our story tonight.

This is Hadassah, the beautiful Jewish girl...with a destiny!

ESTHER: I am Hadassah, but my Uncle Mordecai renamed me Esther, for my protection from those who hate us Jews.

You'll notice me even before I get *close*. I'm "the *Most!*" I even smell like cinnamon *toast!*

It comes from all of those months of special beauty treatments...six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes and cosmetics.

XERXES: Yeah! Yeah! So she smells sweet. But every story needs a hero...a real "He-Man". ...a real stud-ly guy! (Actor does a toothy "Dudley Do-Right" type of

grin, or like Gaston in Beauty and the Beast!)

NARRATOR: This is King Xerxes! You should recognize him even from afar...rather distinguished looking...don't you think? Notice the noble chin and BIG crown.

XERXES: That's me. Xerxes. I'm the king of Persia Media.

NARRATOR: But he's not **really** of "royal" blood.

(Whispering) He "bought" his position, so they say ... he used to be a stable-keeper.

This is Xerxes' wife, Queen Vashti. **She's** the one with **royal** blood, from the family of King Nebuchadnezzar... his granddaughter. Xerxes' only real claim to the throne stems from Vashti, and they both know this very well.

(Whispering) She continually reminds him of it, too!

VASHTI: I'm called Vashti. I'm the Queen of Persia Media. You think Women's Lib is something new? Well, let me tell you, I had my ideas about that subject thousands of years ago.

NARRATOR: Some of you may recognize the Jew, Mordecai. He's a godly man and often sits by the gates of the city. He's wise and well respected by all. ...BUT, he was exiled from Israel by King Nebuchadnezzar years ago.

There is ONE more thing you as our audience will need to know before we continue on to our play.... the meaning of a very special word, "HaShem"! It is a way of referring to The Name of ... (Narrator points up instead of saying the word "God") you know... the FATHER.... THE Almighty? because the Name is considered too holy to use so we refer to Him as "HaShem!"

MORDECAI: Yes, I'm Jewish. I'm Mordecai, of the Tribe of Benjamin. We Jews have never asked for trouble, but HaShem, Blessed be His Name, seems to continually bless us with an ample supply. True? Of course, true!

NARRATOR: Every story has a villain. In this one, it's this guy (Points to Haman) It's customary to show your

distaste for him with a “Boo” or a “Hiss” or by stomping your feet whenever his name is spoken. ...And his name is...HAMAN!

(Pause and Encourage Boos & Hisses!)

He is the guy I spoke of before who greatly hated the entire race of Jews. This Haman was an Agagite and had 10 schmuck sons, just as evil as himself!

HAMAN: Haman’s the name...self-promoting is my game. You’re not Jewish are you? I just can’t stand those Jews!

NARRATOR: Let’s move on. This is Haman’s wife, Zeresh. They say she’s much smarter than her husband...even able to speak several languages!

ZERESH: I’m Zeresh, the “supportive” wife of Haman and mother of his 10 sons. Perhaps you know my three eldest sons, Saddam, Osamah, and Adolf? They’re just like their dad, real chips-off-the-old-block.

NARRATOR: We also have with us tonight one of the

king's WISEGUYS uh... I mean WISEMEN.... and the king's faithful attendant.

This is the story of what happened in the days of King Xerxes, who ruled over 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia. King Xerxes gave a 7-day banquet for all nobles, officials, princes and military leaders of Persia and Media

Now, Queen Vashti *also* gave a banquet for the *women* in the royal palace.

...BUT King Xerxes made a **command!**

XERXES: Bring Queen Vashti to the banquet wearing her royal crown, in order to display her beauty to everyone!

.... What's the **point** of having a Queen of noble birth if you can't show her off every now and then?

NARRATOR: The king's command wasn't received so well...

VASHTI: Who does he think he is? Just because he's the king, and my husband, that doesn't give him the right to tell me what to do. Maybe I'll go...and then...maybe I just won't! We'll see who wears the pants in this family!

NARRATOR: So, Queen Vashti refused to go.

XERXES: I'm so mad! I'm furious! What will the guys think? What should I do to Queen Vashti for not obeying my command?

WISEMAN: King Xerxes, Queen Vashti has disrespected you and everybody at the party by refusing your request!

If other women hear that the queen has disobeyed her husband and was not punished then they will all rise up against their husbands and the result would be chaos! The king must banish her.

Let Vashti never again enter the presence of the king and may the king give her royal position to someone else! Someone who is even better looking than Vashti!

Someone who knows how to listen to her husband's wishes!

XERXES: Yeah! I can go along with that! So be it!

NARRATOR: The king did as the Wiseman proposed.

ATTENDANT: Let's search for beautiful young virgins and bring them into the king's harem! The girl who most pleases the king will be the new queen instead of Vashti. Remember, only beautiful girls...no homely ones, please!

NARRATOR: Now there was a Jew named Mordecai. He raised his cousin Hadassah as his own daughter when her father and mother died. ...and man, was Hadassah "hot".

ATTENDANT: I understand that there is a beautiful young woman living in your home.

MORDECAI: Yes. Would you care to come in? ...or shall we stand here in the streets solving all HaShem's riddles?

ATTENDANT: Just tell the girl to get her things. She'll

be going to the palace with me!

MORDECAI: Hadassah, the king's attendant is here, and wants to take you to the palace. The king is looking for a new wife. Perhaps this is an "in" for all the Jewish people to gain favor and protection from the king!

ESTHER: But I don't want to be the new Queen. I'm afraid!

MORDECAI: Of course! So don't tell them your true Jewish name. From now on you will be called, eh...eh... "Esther." HaShem, blessed be His Name, seems to have plans for you.

Your beauty will open the door for you... but you must be faithful to HaShem and his chosen people. True, dear cousin? Of course, true!

NARRATOR: You see, for her own protection, Mordechai told her to keep her Jewish heritage a secret from all those in the palace. Many girls were brought to the palace harem, including Hadass..uh, uh, eh...eh... "Esther"!

Esther did **not** reveal her Jewish name or roots.

Before each girl's turn came to go in to the king, she had to complete 12 months of beauty treatments, and only then would she be invited to the king's chambers. She would not return again to the king unless he was pleased and asked for her.

The king favored Esther more than any other girl, so she won his favor and he set a royal crown on her head, and made her the new queen!

Mordecai spent his days sitting at the king's gate. One day, he overheard two of the king's attendants conspiring to kill the king! So, he did the smart thing and told Queen Esther.

She reported the plot to the king and gave credit to Mordecai for saving the life of the king! And the king had the two who plotted the murder hanged!

One day sometime after that, the king decided to honor Haman, by giving him a seat of honor higher than all the other nobles and princes.

Everybody at the King's Gate knelt down and paid honor to Haman but Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor because as a Jew. He would bow to no one but HaShem. Haman was enraged.

HAMAN: Why aren't you bowing to me? Don't you know who I am?

MORDECAI: Me bow to you? HaShem should strike me dead first should I EVER bow to you! Yes, I know who you are, but I'm Mordecai, a Jew, and I bow before no one but HaShem.

NARRATOR: Haman was furious!!! And Since Mordecai was a Jew, and refused to bow to him, Haman plotted to destroy not only Mordecai but all the Jews throughout Persia. He convinced King Xerxes to issue a decree for their annihilation.

HAMAN: King. There is a group of people scattered among the peoples in your kingdom whose customs are different from those of our people and who do not obey the king's laws. These "Jews" are vermin – the very

cause of every woe that has come upon us all! If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them. They're worthless people ... and they have UGLY daughters!

XERXES: Sounds like a good plan, Haman. I'll give you the signet ring from my finger. Do with these people as you please...especially the UGLY ones.

HAMAN: We will send out dispatches with the order to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews—young and old, women and little children—on a single day. I've just cast the "pur" (that is, the lot), and the 13th day of the 12th month, the month of Adar, is the chosen day to kill the Jews and to plunder their goods.

NARRATOR: When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, and put-on sackcloth and ashes. Esther heard what he was doing, and she sent a eunuch to find out why.

MORDECAI: Esther, that evil Haman, has made plans to have all the Jews killed on the 13th day of Adar. You

must go to the king to beg for mercy and plead for your people.

ESTHER: You know that anyone who approaches the king without being summoned will be put to death. The only exception to this is for the king to extend the gold scepter to him and spare his life. Thirty days have passed since he called for me.

MORDECAI: Do not think that because you are in the king's house that you will escape. If you keep silent at this time, deliverance for the Jews will come from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. I believe that you have come to royal position for **such a time as this!**

ESTHER: We need a miracle, and men cannot work miracles without the hand of the Eternal. Gather together all the Jews to fast and pray for me. After that, I will go to the king, uninvited ... and if I perish, I perish.

NARRATOR: Mordecai encouraged her to go into the king's presence and beg for mercy on behalf of the

Jews. Believing that God had prepared her -- "for such a time as this" -- as a vessel of deliverance for her people. She was about to risk her own life to request an audience with the king.

MORDECAI: HaShem's great pleasure is making miracles from the dust of our despair; we Jews will pray for a miracle.

NARRATOR: So, Mordecai carried out all of Esther's instructions.

On the third day, Queen Esther put on her finest royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king's hall. When the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter in his hand. So, Queen Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter.

... And she **found favor** with the king!

XERXES: What is your request, my Esther? Even up to half of my kingdom, I will give you.

ESTHER: My king, come to a banquet I have prepared for you ... and bring Haman, too.

NARRATOR: So, the king and Haman went to the banquet she had prepared.

XERXES: OK, sweetie, we're here. Now what do you want from me? I will give you anything. Even up to half of my kingdom.

ESTHER: If you really like me... If you really, really, like me... You'll come **again** tomorrow, along with Haman, to another banquet I will prepare for you. Then I will answer your question.

NARRATOR: Haman went out that day happy and in high spirits. He called together his friends, Zeresh, his wife, and his sons. ...And boasted about his vast wealth, many sons as he had 10 of them! He boasted about all the ways the king had honored him & how he had elevated him above the other nobles and princes in Persia.

HAMAN: And that's not all. I'm the only person Queen Esther invited to accompany the king to the banquet! She invited me along with the king **again** tomorrow. BUT... all this gives me NO satisfaction as long as I see that Jew, Mordecai, sitting at the king's gate and refusing to bow to me!

NARRATOR: Well! Haman's wife gave him a suggestion...

ZERESH: I suggest that you that you just get rid of Mordecai. Have a gallows built, and in the morning, ask the king to have Mordecai hanged on it. Then go with the king to the dinner and be happy!

NARRATOR: The suggestion delighted Haman, and he had the gallows built...right outside of his own house. Coincidentally, that night the king could not sleep and ordered that the chronicles of his reign be read to him. The king then heard again the record of how Mordecai had saved his life by exposing the two attendants who had conspired to kill him.

XERXES: Hmmmmmm.... I forgot all about that. What honor and recognition has Mordecai received for saving my life and bringing this matter to my attention?

ATTENDANT: (Looking through the scrolls...) Uh.... Uh.... Well.... NOTHING, Nothing, your highness.

NARRATOR: Shortly after that Haman entered the room.

XERXES: Haman, what should be done for the man the king delights to honor?

NARRATOR: Haman thought to himself ...

HAMAN: (saying as an aside to the AUDIENCE...) *Who is there that the king would rather honor than me?*

(To the king, with false humility.) Oh king, if there is someone you desire to honor, then you should bring a royal robe the king has worn and a horse the king has ridden, one with a royal crest placed on its head. Then let your attendants robe the man that you desire to honor, and lead him on the horse through the city

streets, proclaiming what this man has done and how the king delights to honor him.

XERXES: Great idea, Haman! Go at once, get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested ... for Mordecai, the Jew... because he has not yet been properly rewarded for saving my life!

NARRATOR: King Xerxes and Haman came to the second banquet of Esther the Queen. And the king said to Queen Esther:

XERXES: What is your petition, Queen Esther? And it shall be granted to you, even to the half of my kingdom.

Esther: If I have found favor in your sight, oh king, and if it pleases the king let my life and the life of my people be spared from destruction.

Xerxes: Who is he that has dared and presumed in his heart to do such a thing!

Esther: The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman!

NARRATOR: Haman began shaking because he was **SOooooo, angry and terrified!** The king got up in a rage and went out into the palace garden. Haman, realizing that the king observed his guilty behavior figured out that the king had already decided his fate so he stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life.

Well... after the king cooled his temper off a bit, he returned from the palace garden to the banquet hall.

Just as the king entered the room, he saw Haman falling on the couch where Esther was reclining, attempting to persuade her to change her mind.

HAMAN: Queen Esther, PLEEEEEEEEEZE Pleeeeeeeeze, pleeeeeez pretty please with sugar on top, forgive me!!!
(Tripping and falling on top of her...) Oooop-see!

ESTHER: EEeeeeeeek! Unhand me you beast!

XERXES: Will you even molest the queen while she is with me in my house? I know she's "hot", but she's also MINE! What am I to do with you?

ATTENDANT: There is a gallows by Haman's house. He had it made for Mordecai, who spoke up and saved the king's life.

XERXES: Then, hang him on it! ...and good riddance!

NARRATOR: So, they hanged Haman on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai.

It had been a difficult time for the Jews living in Persia Media during the Babylonian captivity, but HaShem never left them or forgot about them. They had always been and will always be the apple of His eye.

Monarchs will come and go, empires will rise and fall, but HaShem, blessed be He, will always be in everlasting covenant with the seed of Israel.

King Xerxes gave Queen Esther the estate of Haman. Learning that Mordecai was Esther's guardian, the king brought Mordecai into the palace.

XERXES: Mordecai, the Jew, here is my signet ring. You shall be second in rank only to the king.

NARRATOR: The king was pleased to listen to Queen Esther even as she revealed the truth of her identity as a Jew and then pleaded for her own life and the lives of her people. As she pleaded with the king, she fell at his feet, weeping and begging him to put an end to the evil plan Haman had devised against the Jews.

He granted her requests and reversed his previous order to have the Jewish people destroyed.

So, the king made a new law granting the Jews the right to assemble and protect themselves; to destroy, kill and annihilate any armed force of any nationality that might attack them and their women and children; and to plunder the property of their enemies.

XERXES: Now, Queen Esther, what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your further request? It will also be granted.

ESTHER: If it pleases the king, give the same edict again tomorrow, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged on the gallows.

NARRATOR: The king commanded that this be done.

In summary, Haman had plotted against the Jews to destroy them and had cast the "*pur*" for their destruction. But when the king found out, he issued written orders that the evil scheme Haman had devised against the Jews should come back onto his own head, and that Haman and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. Therefore, these days were called Purim, from the word "*pur*."

And Mordecai the Jew remained second in rank to the king. He was held in high esteem by his many fellow Jews, because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for the welfare of the Jews.

He encouraged all Jews to participate in an annual celebration of feasting and joy, in remembrance of this great salvation and turn of events. And this joyful remembrance is continued even unto this very day!

And Queen Esther and King Xerxes lived happily ever after!