



FEATURE

The Messianic Implications of Purim (The Feast of Lots)

By Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum

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Ministry News

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Field Representative



Although I may be a new name and face to most of you, I've been part of the Ariel family for many years and quietly on staff since 2015. Back in 1998, I

came across a copy of David Stern's *Jewish New Testament* at a flea market in San Diego, and that was my introduction to the Messianic movement. Over the next few years, I kept hearing the name Arnold Fruchtenbaum and eventually made the trip across the country to Camp Shoshanah. My theology and my life changed there. I was baptized by Arnold and Mottel and slowly grew in my understanding of the Bible from a Messianic Jewish perspective. Over time, my heart for the Jewish people also grew, and I became more focused on ministry to the Jews.

In February 2016, my wife Angi, our two sons, and I moved to Israel in hopes of gaining citizenship. Angi's grandfather was Jewish, and her lineage includes pastors and Messianic believers going back into the 1800s. Unfortunately, the Office of Immigration told us to leave Israel, and even though we had adequate proof and took our case to the Supreme Court, we were not able to stay.

While there, we served in a congregation in Karmiel, which is in Galilee. I was able to teach, Angi led the children's ministry and co-led the ladies' ministry, and our boys helped with setup and audio/visual. We also had outreach and personal witnessing opportunities.

We believe God is now calling us to continue ministry in Brooklyn, New York. One in four Brooklynites are Jewish. That's over half a million unbelieving Jewish people. Our hope is to move there this summer. The ministry remains basically the same: sharing the gospel with unbelievers and discipling believers in the Word.



The Messianic Implications of Purim (The Feast of Lots)

By Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum¹

This year, Purim falls on March 20/21. The feast was inaugurated in the *Megillat Esther*, the scroll of Esther. The events of this book cover the years 483 to 473 B.C., a ten-year stretch during the reign of the Persian King Xerxes I. In Hebrew, the king became known as Ahasuerus. He ruled over Persia from 486-465 B.C.

The story of Purim involves a plot by Haman, the wicked vizier of King Ahasuerus, against the Jewish people living in Persia. It also involves Haman's eventual defeat through the efforts of Mordecai the Jew and his cousin Esther.

On the 13th day of the month of *Adar*², the day that was originally set for their slaughter, the Jewish people living in the provinces victoriously defended themselves against their enemies, killing thousands of them. The next day, they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness (*Esth. 9:16-17, 19*). Those Jews who lived in Shushan³ assembled together on the 13th day of Adar, and on the 14th, they killed three hundred enemies. Then, they made the 15th day of Adar a day of rest and a day of feasting and gladness (*Est. 9:15, 18*).

According to Esther 9:19, the 14th of Adar was described in four ways:

1. It was a day of gladness rather than of sorrow.
 2. It was a day of feasting, in contrast to fasting.
 3. It was a good day, in contrast to a day of mourning.
 4. It was a day of sending portions one to another,
- in contrast to having things taken away from them.

According to Esther 9:20, Mordecai recorded everything concerning the observance of Purim and sent letters to all the Jews who were living in all the provinces of the King Ahasuerus, both near and far.

In Esther 9:21, he obliged his fellow Jews to keep both the 14th and the 15th day of Adar. Furthermore, he determined that the victory over Haman was to be celebrated annually.

The reason is given in Esther 9:22a: The feast was to be celebrated this way because the Jews had rest from their enemies on these days. They had rest from fear and war. Hence, the month was turned for them from sorrow to gladness and from mourning into a good day.

Finally, Mordecai spelled out the manner of observance in Esther 9:22b, which included three things: First, the Jewish people should make these days of feasting and gladness, not fasting and sorrow; second, they should send portions one to another, in place of having their possessions taken away; and



third, they should send gifts to the poor.

Esther 9:23 records the obedience of the Jews who undertook to do as they had begun, as the first observance was a spontaneous one. But now they committed themselves to continue this observance on a yearly basis, as Mordecai had written to them.

The next two verses summarize the historical background of Purim, beginning with the plot of Haman in verse 24 and its failure in verse 25, as Haman and his wicked sons were hanged.

Because of what happened in Esther 9:24, the Jewish people called these days "Purim," which is the plural form of a word that means "lot." Since Haman cast the lot to determine on what day the Jews should be destroyed, and since that day came down upon his own head and upon the heads of the enemies, the name chosen for this feast was the Feast of Purim, or the Feast of Lots.

Esther 9:26b gives the background as signaled by the word "therefore": that is, because of all the words of the letter of Mordecai (of Esth. 9:2022) and because of that which they had seen concerning this matter (the deliverance of the Jews from Haman and his followers) and because of that which had come unto them (the threat of destruction)—because of all that came the commitment of the next verse.

In Esther 9:27, the Jews obligated themselves to keep Purim. This commitment involved three people groups: the *them*, meaning the generation that was delivered from the hand of Haman; *their seed*, meaning the Jewish descendants of that generation; and *all such as joined themselves unto them*, meaning Gentile converts to Judaism. The purpose was that the feast should not fail to be observed. The content of the commitment was that they would keep these two days according to Mordecai's letter and according to the appointed time thereof, meaning on the 14th day and the 15th day of the month of Adar. Furthermore, Purim was to be observed on a yearly basis.

Esther 9:28 emphasizes the perpetuity: Purim should be remembered by every Jewish family everywhere.

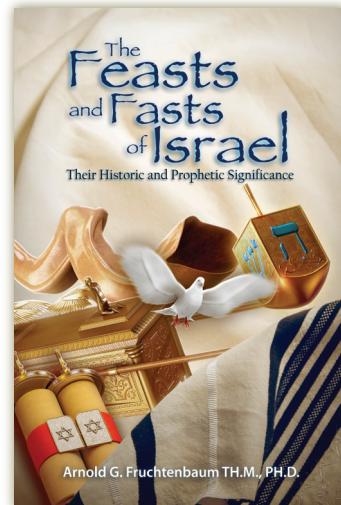
The Messianic Implications

The Feast of Purim does not contain any direct reference to the Messianic person or the Messianic program. It does, however, have something to teach about the Messianic people, the Jews. The book of Esther is a good example of a principle found in the Abrahamic covenant: *him that curses you will I curse* (Gen. 12:3). This principle teaches that those who curse the Jews will be cursed by God. Furthermore, it contains a promise of Jewish survival throughout the times of the Gentiles.

Both the Law and the Prophets emphasize the fact that the Jews will survive, regardless of how bad it may get for them during the times of the Gentiles—that is a biblical guarantee—and the book of Esther is an example of God's use of providence to secure the survival of Israel in the dispersion.

Interestingly, God's name is not mentioned at all in Esther. However, He is seen working on the basis of the Abrahamic covenant, especially on the one principle: *him that curses you will I curse* (Gen. 12:3). Since throughout most of human history, God chooses to work providentially rather than by means of direct intervention, this book is a great example of how that system works. It shows God's use of providence to secure the survival of Israel during the period of the dispersion. While great segments of Jewry may be killed, as it was with the Holocaust, God has guaranteed that the Jews as a people and as a nation will survive. And so it will be until Israel's national salvation and the return of the Messiah.

¹This article is based on a chapter of Dr. Fruchtenbaum's new book *The Feasts and Fasts of Israel: Their Historic and Prophetic Significance*, available through Ariel Ministries in April 2019.



²The Jewish month of Adar coincides with February/March of the Gregorian calendar.

³Shushan is the Hebrew name of the city of Susa, one of the main capitals of the Persian Empire. It was located roughly 150 miles north of the Persian Gulf and served the kings as a winter residence.