

ESTHER — AND THE GOD OF “COINCIDENCES”

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I think that we'd all like to see God's hand visibly in our lives?

Mostly ... we don't. We may often wonder — “is God really there? Is He answering my prayers? Is He involved?

It would be great if we had frequent intervention — say by an angel. But ... that's where the Book of Esther can help.

It's unusual in that we have a Bible Book that makes no reference to “God” or “LORD”.

Yet it is clear that God was absolutely involved ... to save the Jewish people from extermination — a precursor to the Holocaust.

What we have is a “Hidden God” ... yet we see a series of remarkable coincidences ... that reveal God at work.

It can be the same in our lives. Look for the coincidences.

Einstein: “Coincidence is God's way of remaining anonymous”.

Let's have a review of the Book of Esther. It is a great story-deliverance of the Jewish people. It tells us how the Festival of Purim came to be ... and shows us how God can work in our lives without being seen with “coincidences”.

The Jews had been in exile since Nebuchadnezzar. A minority had returned to Jerusalem ... but the majority were happy in their new land. This book is the story of how they were almost wiped out.

Esther 1:1-12

1 Now it came to pass **in the days of Ahasuerus** (*this was the Ahasuerus who reigned over one hundred and twenty-seven*

provinces, from India to Ethiopia), The King of Persia — better known as Xerxes. The story is set around 480–470 BC.

Esther 1:2-12

2 in those days when **King Ahasuerus** sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the citadel,

3 that **in the third year of his reign he made a feast for all his officials and servants—the powers of Persia and Media, the nobles, and the princes of the provinces being before him—**

4 when **he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the splendour of his excellent majesty for many days, one hundred and eighty days in all.**

5 And when these days were completed, **the king made a feast lasting seven days for all the people who were present in Shushan the citadel, from great to small, in the court of the garden of the king's palace.**

6 There were white and blue linen curtains fastened with cords of fine linen and purple on silver rods and marble pillars; and the couches were of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of alabaster, turquoise, and white and black marble.

7 And they served drinks in golden vessels, each vessel being different from the other, with royal wine in abundance, according to the generosity of the king.

8 In accordance with the law, the drinking was not compulsory; for so the king had ordered all the officers of his household, that they should do according to each man's pleasure.

9 **Queen Vashti also made a feast for the women in the royal palace which belonged to King Ahasuerus.**

10 **On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded** Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus,

11 to **bring Queen Vashti before the king, wearing her royal crown, in order to show her beauty to the people and the officials, for she was beautiful to behold.**

12 **But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command brought by his eunuchs;** therefore the king was furious, and his anger burned within him.

The request for Vashti to appear may have immodest overtones? She refuses.

Esther 1:13, 15-18

13 **Then the king said to the wise men** who understood the times (for this was the king's manner toward all who knew law and justice,

15 **“What shall we do to Queen Vashti, according to law, because she did not obey the command of King Ahasuerus brought to her by the eunuchs?”**

16 **And Memucan answered before the king and the princes: “Queen Vashti has not only wronged the king, but also all the princes, and all the people who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus.**

17 For the queen's behavior will become known to all women, so that they will despise their husbands in their eyes, when they report, ‘King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought in before him, but she did not come.’

18 **This very day the noble ladies of Persia and Media will say to all the king's officials that they have heard of the behavior of the queen. Thus there will be excessive contempt and wrath.**

Esther 1:19-21

19 If it pleases the king, let a royal decree go out from him, and **let it be recorded in the laws of the Persians and the Medes**, so that it will not be altered, that Vashti shall come no more before King Ahasuerus; and let **the king give her royal position to another who is better than she.**

20 **When the king's decree which he will make is proclaimed throughout all his empire (for it is great), all wives will honor their husbands, both great and small.”**

21 **And the reply pleased the king and the princes, and the king did according to the word of Memucan.**

The Law of the Medes and the Persians can't be revoked.

There is no reference to God in Chapter 1. No prophet. No reference anywhere else in the book.

Yet ... with a view to a real threat soon to come ... **“interesting” that an unexpected vacancy has now arisen for a new queen** — a new influence in the King's life?

Coincidence?

Esther 2:1-4

1 After these things, when the wrath of King Ahasuerus subsided, he remembered Vashti, what she had done, and what had been decreed against her.

2 Then the king's servants who attended him said: "Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king;

3 and let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather all the beautiful young virgins to Shushan the citadel, into the women's quarters, under the custody of Hegai the king's eunuch, custodian of the women. And let beauty preparations be given them.

4 Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti."

This thing pleased the king, and he did so.

Approximately 3–4 years later — after the failed attempt to defeat Greece .

The king might be having second thoughts? But his advisors won't want Vashti to return!!

It is best to set up a new project to distract him! A beauty parade!

Esther 2:5, 7

5 In Shushan the citadel there was a certain Jew whose name was Mordecai the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite.

7 And Mordecai had brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman was lovely and beautiful. When her father and mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.

The two key players!

Mordecai — a Benjamite.

Hadassah — (Myrtle) or Esther — (Star) ... which in Hebrew means something that is hidden ... or something concealed.

Esther 2:8-10

8 So it was, when the king's command and decree were heard, and when many young women were gathered at Shushan the citadel, under the custody of Hegai, that **Esther also was taken to the king's palace, into the care of Hegai the custodian of the women.**

9 **Now the young woman pleased him, and she obtained his favor; so he readily gave beauty preparations to her, besides her allowance.**

Then seven choice maidservants were provided for her from the king's palace, and he moved her and her maidservants to the best place in the house of the women. (*Esther gets great favour with the custodian of the house*)

10 **Esther had not revealed her people or family, for Mordecai had charged her not to reveal it.**

Esther is hidden. She has told no one that she is a Jewess.

More "coincidences"?

Esther 2:12-14

12 **Each young woman's turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus after she had completed twelve months' preparation, according to the regulations for the women,** for thus were the days of their preparation apportioned: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women.

13 Thus prepared, each young woman went to the king, and she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the women's quarters to the king's palace.

14 **In the evening she went, and in the morning she returned to the second house of the women,** to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who kept the concubines. **She would not go in to the king again unless the king delighted in her and called for her by name.**

The process!

Esther 2:15-20

15 Now when the turn came for Esther the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his daughter, to go in to the king, she requested nothing but what Hegai the king's eunuch, the custodian of the women, advised. And **Esther obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her.**

16 **So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, in the tenth month, which is the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.**

17 **The king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.**

18 Then the king made a great feast, the Feast of Esther, for all his officials and servants; and he proclaimed a holiday in the provinces and gave gifts according to the generosity of a king.

19 When virgins were gathered together a second time, Mordecai sat within the king's gate.

20 Now Esther had not revealed her family and her people, just as Mordecai had charged her, for Esther obeyed the command of Mordecai as when she was brought up by him.

Esther becomes Queen!

Another coincidence?

A young Jewish woman is now as close to the king as you can be.

The ducks are all lined up.

Even though no apparent danger yet to Jewish people ... and no obvious miracles ... **the Hidden God is moving his pieces on the Chess board.**

Esther 2:21-23

21 In those days, while Mordecai sat within the king's gate, two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh, doorkeepers, became furious and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. *(They planned to assassinate the king)*

22 **So the matter became known to Mordecai, who told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name.** *(Mordecai just happens to overhear)*

23 And when an inquiry was made into the matter, it was confirmed, and both were hanged on a gallows; **and it was written in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king.**

Strangely ... somehow the king and his officials just happen to overlook giving Mordecai a reward for his service — but —it all goes down in the book of the chronicles.

Did something just happen to divert the king's attention?

It turns out to be a major factor in the deliverance of the Jews. **Another COINCIDENCE?** Something else that just happened?

Esther 3:1

1 After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him and set his seat above all the princes who were with him.

Haman. The enemy!

A very proud and arrogant man.

Esther 3:2–6

2 And all the king's servants who were within the king's gate bowed and paid homage to Haman, for so the king had commanded concerning him. But Mordecai would not bow or pay homage.

3 Then the king's servants who were within the king's gate said to Mordecai, "Why do you transgress the king's command?"

4 Now it happened, when they spoke to him daily and he would not listen to them, that they told it to Haman, to see whether Mordecai's words would stand; for Mordecai had told them that he was a Jew.

5 When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay him homage, Haman was filled with wrath.

6 But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him of the people of Mordecai. Instead, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus—the people of Mordecai.

Destroy all of the Jews? Haman's Final Solution? Like World War 2 Holocaust.

Satan is hidden here too. The Messiah is from Judah — so eliminate the risk.

Esther 3:7-9

7 In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur (that is, the lot), before Haman to determine the day and the month, until it fell on the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar. (A HELPFUL COINCIDENCE?? It could have landed just a few weeks later with no time to organise a solution. Or the HIDDEN HAND OF GOD ... ensuring plenty of time)

8 Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, “There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from all other people’s, and they do not keep the king’s laws. Therefore it is not fitting for the king to let them remain. (Haman doesn’t identify the Jewish people)

9 If it pleases the king, let a decree be written that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who do the work, to bring it into the king’s treasuries.” (Like the Holocaust)

(Proverbs 16:33)

33 The lot is cast into the lap,
But its every decision is from the Lord.)

Esther 3:10-15

10 So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews.

11 And the king said to Haman, “The money and the people are given to you, to do with them as seems good to you.”

12 Then the king’s scribes were called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and a decree was written according to all that Haman commanded—to the king’s satraps, to the governors who were over each province, to the officials of all people, to every province according to its script, and to every people in their language. In the name of King Ahasuerus it was written, and sealed with the king’s signet ring.

13 And the letters were sent by couriers into all the king’s provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their possessions.

14 **A copy of the document was to be issued as law in every province, being published for all people, that they should be ready for that day.**

15 **The couriers went out, hastened by the king's command; and the decree was proclaimed in Shushan the citadel. So the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Shushan was perplexed.**
(Perplexed — confused)

The Jews are exiles in a foreign land. How could they defend themselves? They don't have armies — not military people. At risk ... as Israel was back in ancient Egypt.

It was just as well that God's "got their back".

Esther 4:1-3

1 **When Mordecai learned all that had happened, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city. He cried out with a loud and bitter cry.**

2 He went as far as the front of the king's gate, for no one might enter the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.

3 **And in every province where the king's command and decree arrived, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.**

Everyone is stunned and dismayed.

Esther 4:4-12

4 **So Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her, and the queen was deeply distressed. Then she sent garments to clothe Mordecai and take his sackcloth away from him, but he would not accept them.**

5 **Then Esther called Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs whom he had appointed to attend her, and she gave him a command concerning Mordecai, to learn what and why this was.**

6 So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the city square that was in front of the king's gate.

7 **And Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries to destroy the Jews.**

8 He also gave him a copy of the written decree for their destruction, which was given at Shushan, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her, and that he might command her to go in to the king to make supplication to him and plead before him for her people.

9 So Hathach returned and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

10 Then Esther spoke to Hathach, and gave him a command for Mordecai:

11 “All the king’s servants and the people of the king’s provinces know that any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king, who has not been called, he has but one law: put all to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter, that he may live. Yet I myself have not been called to go in to the king these thirty days.”

12 So they told Mordecai Esther’s words.

It was dangerous to approach the king uninvited.

Esther 4:13-14

13 And Mordecai told them to answer Esther: “Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king’s palace any more than all the other Jews.

14 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?”

Mordecai believes that relief and deliverance WILL ARISE FROM SOMEWHERE. But still no mention of God.

Who knows? The right person ... in the right place ... at the right time? All happened providentially?

A Jewish girl is Queen of Persia. What are the chances?

Decision time! Life or death potentially.

Courage to die for your people? To do right?

(“Time to be silent ... and a time to speak” — Ecclesiastes Chapter 3)

Esther 4:15-17

15 Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai:

16 “Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. **And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!**”

17 So Mordecai went his way and did according to all that Esther commanded him.

Fast. A recognised way of entreating God ... so still somewhat religious.

Esther 5:1-3

1 Now it happened on the third day that Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, across from the king's house, while the king sat on his royal throne in the royal house, facing the entrance of the house.

2 So it was, **when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, that she found favor in his sight, and the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand.** Then Esther went near and touched the top of the scepter.

3 And the king said to her, “**What do you wish, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given to you—up to half the kingdom!**”

If the king is in a bad mood — that is the end of the Jewish people — a win for Satan.

But ... **it just so happened** — the king is in a very good mood. And makes a generous offer.

(Proverbs 21:1

*1 The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord,
Like the rivers of water;
He turns it wherever **He** wishes.)*

Esther 5:4-8

4 So Esther answered, “**If it pleases the king, let the king and Haman come today to the banquet that I have prepared for him.**”

5 Then the king said, “**Bring Haman quickly, that he may do as Esther has said.**” So the king and Haman went to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

6 At the banquet of wine the king said to Esther, “**What is your petition? It shall be granted you. What is your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!**”

7 Then Esther answered and said, “My petition and request is this:

8 **If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, then let the king and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said.**”

Delay. Planned by Esther? Perhaps couldn't quite go through with it?

But the delay just happens to work out vastly better for all of the Jews. It gives time for other **HELPFUL COINCIDENCES to JUST HAPPEN.**

Esther 5:9-14

9 So Haman went out that day joyful and with a glad heart; **but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, and that he did not stand or tremble before him, he was filled with indignation against Mordecai.**

10 Nevertheless Haman restrained himself and went home, and he sent and called for his friends and his wife Zeresh.

11 Then Haman told them of his great riches, the multitude of his children, everything in which the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the officials and servants of the king. (*proud ... arrogant*)

12 **Moreover Haman said, “Besides, Queen Esther invited no one but me to come in with the king to the banquet that she prepared; and tomorrow I am again invited by her, along with the king.**

13 **Yet all this avails me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.”**

14 Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, “**Let a gallows be made, fifty cubits high, and in the morning suggest to the king that Mordecai be hanged on it;** then go merrily with the king to the banquet.”

And the thing pleased Haman; so he had the gallows made.

Haman will suggest the execution of Mordecai

Another COINCIDENCE.

We will look at the rest of the story next week.