

Purim

God's name is not mention in the book of Esther

Esther = 'str - Hidden

The very name of the book, Megillas Esther means "the revealing of the hidden," for the word Megillah, a scroll comes from "*galuy*," meaning "revealed" and the name Esther is from "*hester*," meaning "hidden" Indeed, the whole story is about the hidden hand of God.

So, when Queen Esther says "Let the king and Haman come today" (5:4), the Hebrew has "*Yavo Hamelech V'Haman Hayom*," in which the first letter of each word is an acronym of the Divine Name.

The Rabbis thought that **Deuteronomy 31:18** included a hidden reference to Esther and is the reason that God's name is absent from the book read on Purim.

Talmud Hullin 139b asks, "Where is Esther indicated in the Torah?" The answer is a quotation from **Deuteronomy 31:18**, where God declares, "And I will surely hide [hstr - 'str without the vowel points] my face (or 'presence') from them."

- **Deuteronomy 31:17-18** - "Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, 'Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us?' And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods."

Also, the "many evils and troubles" that would befall Israel when they would forsake the Lord are two words - *ra'ot* (evils) and *sarot* (troubles, enemies) both of which are used in Esther to describe Haman.

[Another explanation of Esther's name is in Talmud Megilla 13a was because "she hid facts about herself" i.e. she "did not reveal her people" to the king initially.]

Ultimately, however, the example of Esther shows that even when God hides his face, He is actively guiding the providence of Israel. How He does that exactly is hidden, too. Perhaps this is another of those "secret things" that belong to the Lord (**Deuteronomy 29:29**).

(Recall Cain's cry when being cursed by God in **Genesis 4:14** "I will be hidden [*essater*, unpointed version of '*str*'] from your face/presence.")

But this question also points to Christ on the cross, where Jesus cried out "Why hast Thou forsaken me?" as He took on the sin of the world. Although God had to turn away from the sin, His will was still being performed, and His care for His Son never wavered.

The mandate on Purim is to drink "until one cannot tell the difference between 'arur Haman' (cursed be Haman) and 'barukh Mordechai' (blessed be Mordecai)" (Babylonian Talmud, Megillah 7b) This can also mean "until one cannot know." And that leaves us once again in humility.

Amalek - Remember to Forget

- **Exodus 17:16** - "For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

- **Deuteronomy 25:12–19** - "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; How he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God. Therefore it shall be, when the LORD thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it."

Haman

The Talmud offers as the origin of the name Haman the verse in Genesis that refers to Adam's sin: Hast thou eaten of the tree (*Hamin HaEtz hazeh*), whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? (**Gen. 3:11**)

Haman is an called an "Agagite," which the rabbis associated with the Amalekite king Agag, spared by King Saul but then "hewn in pieces" by Samuel the prophet.

The rabbis taught that Agag was unusually cruel, and mocked Israel's rite of circumcision by mutilating every Jew that fell into their power. According to some authorities, the death of Agag, described in the Bible by the unusual word *va-yeshassef* ("hewed in pieces," I Samuel 15:33), was brought about in a much more cruel way than the word denotes.

- **1 Samuel 15:32-33** - "And Samuel said, "Bring Agag, the king of Amalek, near to me." And Agag went to him delicately. And Agag said, "Surely, the bitterness of death has passed/turned."

Rashi - Indeed, I know that the bitterness of death has turned toward me, and is approaching.

"And Samuel said, "As your sword bereaved women, so will your mother be bereaved among women." And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal."

Rashi - He cut him into four pieces. There is no similarity to this word. The Targum renders: '*ufashah*.' And in our Gemara (i.e., T.B., Bets. 33b) we find: He broke a branch

off (*'m'fashah'*), and gave us each several sticks, meaning that he split.

Agag means "high" and was probably a dynastic name for all the Amalekite kings.

Thus the prophecy of Balaam in **Numbers 24:7** that a future king of Israel would be "higher than Agag and its kingdom exalted" is also a pun meaning Israel's king would be "higher than high."

According to the rabbis, the leniency shown by King Saul, the son of Kish, to Agag, the king of the Amalekites (**I Samuel 15:9**), made it possible for Haman the Agagite to appear (**Esther 3:1**); his cruel plot against the Jews could only be counteracted by another descendant of Kish, Mordecai (Pesik. R. xiii.).

1 Chronicles 10:13 asserts that Saul died "for the trespass which he had committed against the Lord." The Rabbis list four such "trespasses" committed by Saul: the massacre in Nob, the city of priests; taking pity on the Amalekite king Agag; not heeding Samuel's request to wait seven days for him; and communicating with the necromancer, instead of consulting the Lord (Lev. Rabbah 26:7).

Every year, therefore, the chapter, "Remember what Amalek did unto thee" (**Deuteronomy 25:17-19**), is read in the synagogue on the Sabbath preceding Purim, and the story of Saul and Agag in chapter 15 of I Samuel is read as the Haftarah.

First Contact

As soon as Israel coalesces into a nation and receives the life-giving water from the Rock, it is attacked by Amalek. The Amalekites probably heard about the water, and wanted to get it for themselves.

This is a picture of the ongoing battle within us between the flesh and the Spirit.

- **Galatians 5:17** - "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

Or, as the NET has it: "For the flesh has desires that are opposed to the Spirit, and the Spirit has desires that are opposed to the flesh, for these are in opposition to each other, so that you cannot do what you want."

Amalek was a grandson of Esau. In some rabbinical interpretations, the name Amalek means "a people - am - who "lick" blood, i.e. Amalek "came to suck the blood of Israel." They represent the archetypal enemy of the Jews.

Amalek "feared not God" (Deuteronomy 25:17-18) and is described by Balaam: "Amalek was the first of the nations that warred against Israel, but his latter end shall be that he perish forever." (**Numbers 24:20**)

Prayer

The battle is accomplished through prayer.

Moses stood during the battle with uplifted hands - which always represent prayer and supplication.

- **Psalm 28:2** - "Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle."

- **1 Timothy 2:8** - "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting."

Moses' Prayer

Moses said: "O Lord of the world! Through me has Thou brought Israel out of Egypt, through me hast Thou cleft the sea, and through me has Thou wrought miracles; so do Thou now work miracles for me, and lend me victory to Israel, for I well know that while all other nations fight only to the sixth hour of the day, this sinful nation stand in battle ranks till sunset." Moses did not consider it sufficient to pray alone to God, but he raised his hands toward heaven as a signal for the whole nation to follow his example and trust in God. As often as he then raised his hands to heaven and the people prayed with him, trusting that God would lend them victory, they were indeed victorious; as often, however, as Moses let down his hands and the people ceased prayer, weakening in their faith in God, Amalek conquered. - *Legends of the Jews*

But Moses got tired and his hands got heavy.

- **Luke 18:1** - "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint."

Although we often pray without others around, it's not a solitary affair. We encourage and comfort one another, as Aaron and Hur did for Moses. But we also have the Holy Spirit and the intercession of Christ to aid us.

- **Romans 8:26-27** - "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

- **Hebrews 7:25** - "Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."

- **1 Timothy 2:5** - "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus"

Defeat of Amalek

- **Exodus 17:13** - "And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword."

The sword represents the word of God, and the scriptures.

- **Ephesians 6:17** - "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"

- **Hebrews 4:12** - "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

The result is a never-ending battle (in this life) "from generation to generation," with an interesting mental twist - we are to "remember" to "forget" Amalek, self and the flesh.

Rabbi Abba, who was the son of Rabbi Kahana and who lived in the Roman administrative capital of Caesarea, declared that so long as the seed of Amalek exists, it is as if God's face is concealed, but that when the seed of Amalek will be uprooted from the world, the face of God will be revealed.

The 'Crucifixion' of Haman

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/why-crucify-haman/>

Michelangelo's depiction of the story of Esther in the Sistine Chapel shows Haman as crucified.

Luther believed the Book of Esther displayed the "bloodthirsty" and "vengeful" character of the Jews, and felt the book should be ignored. Other medieval scholars took a sympathetic view of Haman, and banned Purim, believing the Jews annual burning of Haman in effigy secretly displayed disdain for the crucified Jesus.

As early as the fifth century, there was a Jewish custom to burn an effigy of Haman on Purim. The spectacle aroused the wrath of the early Christians who interpreted it as a disguised attempt to ridicule their faith, and prohibitions were issued against such displays under the reign of Flavius Augustus Honorius (395–423) and of Theodosius II (408–450).

(None apparently discerned the amazing substitutionary type of a cross prepared for Mordechai/Jesus instead defeating Haman/Satan).

The Hebrew word for Haman's gallows is *etz* (**Esther 9:25**), meaning tree, pole or stake. The same word is used in the Hebrew version of Matthew to describe the cross.

- **Deuteronomy 21:22-23** - "And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he

be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree (etz): His body shall not remain all night upon the tree (etz), but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance."

- **Galatians 3:13** - "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. For it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.'"

This was not only a punishment of the Persians but also of ancient Assyria (impaling) and in Egypt at the time of Joseph (**Genesis 40:19**).

Josephus - familiar with the Roman style of execution - in his telling of the Purim story has Haman prepare a cross for Mordecai, and in Josephus' version Haman's death is by crucifixion.

Jesus was crucified on the second day of Passover, and Haman was hanged/impaled/crucified on the same day, according to the Talmud.

Psalm 30 linked to Purim

Rashi said the Sages explained the entire psalm as referring to Mordecai, Esther, and Haman, in the Pesikta Zuta:

"Weeping may endure for a night." Zeresh advised Haman to erect a gallows for Mordechai, and all of Israel retired in weeping.

"But joy cometh in the morning." i.e., the hanging of Haman, after which 'there was light and joy.'

Haman: "And I said in my tranquility"

Esther: "I cried to thee, O LORD; and unto the LORD I made supplication. What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth? Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be thou my helper."

Mordecai (and all Israel): "Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness"

The ultimate transformation will occur in the Messianic age, the Rabbis said, when 'I will transform their mourning to joy and will comfort them and make them rejoice from their sorrow' (**Jeremiah 31:12**).

[See <http://www.thejewishstar.com/stories/Considering-Tehillim-at-Purim,13243>]