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The Lot Fell on the Twelfth Month, the Month of Adar, in the Presence of Haman 3: 7-9

The lot fell on the twelfth month, the month of Adar, in the presence of Haman DIG: What is the *pur*? What was the significance of the eleven-month delay secured by lot (compare verses 7 and 12)? Was this God's providence or coincidence? If Haman the Agagite is a descendent of king Agag (First Samuel 15) and the hated Amalekites, what would that mean for the Israelites? How did King Saul's failure to extinguish all the Amalekites come back, five hundred years later, to haunt Israel?

REFLECT: How do believers seek God's direction today? King David said: Delight yourself in the LORD and He will give you the desires of your heart (Psalm 37:4). So sometimes, do you think that we have a choice which direction we can go? Why or why not? James tells us: If any of you lacks wisdom you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you (James 1:5). Can ADONAI use our wrong decisions for our benefit and His glory? Has that happened in your life? How did you change? How was He glorified as a result?

A little more than four years had gone by since **Esther** had become queen in 478 BC. It was more than a century after the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, some sixty-four years after the first return with Zerubbabel, and sixteen years before **Ezra's** return to Jerusalem. Mordecai and **Esther** were from Jewish families that had stayed in Mesopotamia even after the first return from captivity.⁴²

The author included a seemingly obscure part of the account by recording that **Haman** used a *pur* for **the lot** (singular), to decide when **he** should launch **his** attack. There was only one **lot**; however, the name of the fest is **Purim** (which is plural). In English we call this feast, the feat of **Lots**. So, there was another lot and that's **the lot** that determines everything else, it is the sovereign will of ADONAI. The original readers of **Esther** would have understood that ADONAI was working to

protect His people even in the timing of events. As things worked out, the Jews had almost a year in which to prepare themselves for the conflict with their enemies.

To determine the favorable time for the attack on **the Jews**, **Haman** consulted the **pur**, or **the lot**. **In the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, on the first month, the month of Nisan, the pur (that is, the lot) was cast in the presence of Haman to select a day and month of the massacre (3:7a)**. It was believed that in **the first month of the year lots** were **cast** to choose opportune days for important events. Archaeologists have discovered *purim*, which were clay cubes with cuneiform characters or dots that looked virtually the same as modern dice. Casting **the lot** literally meant *throwing the dice*. Today, dice are used for gambling or board games, but during the time that **Esther** was written they were used for divination. It was their way of asking the gods for answers to questions about the future.

Purim is a Hebrew pluralized form of an Akkadian word that was also used by the Babylonians later on to refer to these cube-shaped objects of divination. This word is found only in the book of **Esther** and nowhere else in the TaNaKh, and when the author first uses it, he also gives his readers the equivalent Hebrew word used to refer to the cube, the *goral*, with the NIV translates as **lot (9:24)**.⁴³ The *goral* was worn by the high priest (see **Exodus, to see link click [Ga](#) - Fashion a Breastpiece for Making Decisions**) and used to inquire of the LORD (see **Exodus [Gb](#) - The Urim and Thummim: The Means of Making Decisions**).

Haman cast the purim and the lot fell on the twelfth month, the month of Adar (3:7b). **Haman** would have to wait eleven months for the most favorable day, but he immediately spread the word of their future execution (**3:12-15**). It ordered the citizens of Persia to kill their Jewish neighbors; the young and the old, women and children, exactly eleven months later.⁴⁴ The most important thing to him was to choose the “luckiest” day, even if he had to wait almost a year to carry out his wicked plan. But he didn’t understand that the hand of God controlled even his dice so that the Jews would have eleven months to prepare for their defense. **The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD (Proverbs 16:33)**. **Providence!**

Dear Heavenly Father, Praise Your love and your constant care of Your children. Thank You that though You guide big governmental issues of countries around the world, and you watch over the orbital pattern of huge planets like Jupiter and Saturn; you always have time to care for each of Your children. Nothing they do

ever misses your attention. **You discern my thinking from afar. . . You are familiar with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, Adonai, You know all about it (Psalms 139:2c, 3c-4).**

Praise You for not only knowing what people think and say before they say it; but how glorious that You live in those who love You thru the **Ruach Ha’Kodesh. I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper so He may be with you forever - the Spirit of truth. . . Yeshua answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him (John 14:16-17a, 23).** What a comfort it is to have God living within us. What an Awesome promise that You will never leave Your children **(John 1:12)! For God Himself has said, “I will never leave you or forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5).**

How wonderful to please such a wise and loving Father. When trials and problems come, I will look up to you and remember that my time on earth is short, the problems and pain will be over soon. **For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us.** The joy and peace of heaven will be for all eternity for those who love You. **He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more. Nor shall there be mourning or crying or pain any longer, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:1-4).** It is so wonderful to remember that our trials will soon be over and an eternity of joy and peace for all who love you! Praising and loving you dear Daddy! In Yeshua’s holy name and power of His resurrection. Amen

Another detail that has been considered improbable by some is that Haman would cast lots to determine the date for the execution of the Jews eleven months in advance. Many people in the ancient near East cast, or threw **lots** to receive guidance from the gods. It represented a view toward life that was part of the ancient world. They thought that fate was predetermined, and that humans could only succeed if they cooperated with destiny. They believed that the signs and omens in the stars, nature, and elsewhere revealed fate to the knowledgeable, and everything was preordained according to lucky days.⁴⁵ As a result, in **Haman’s** world view it was vital to find the most opportune day to carry out his scheme and then stick to it.

Yet the casting of **lots** had a sense of irony to it. The original Jewish readers of the story would have already known how it ended. They were, after all, still alive! When

Esther was read, the readers quickly realized that the casting of **lots** would not mean the destruction of the Israelites; ironically it meant that those who **cast the lots** would suffer the fate intended for them.



True to form, **Ahasuerus** carelessness took precious little persuading to give **Haman** the freedom to exterminate **a certain people** he portrayed as a threat to his kingdom. **The king** let Memucan advise him on how he should deal with Vashti (**1:16-22**), and then the magi suggested how he should choose the next queen (**2:1-4**). Here, **Haman** very cleverly conceals his own evil intentions by making it seem like what he proposed was in **the king's** best interest. **Then**, in a deceptive way, **Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There are certain people dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom who keep themselves separate" (3:8a)**. Which implies that they had retained their identity. **Haman** carefully avoids mentioning that those **people** were Jews, and **Ahasuerus** was so uninterested that he didn't even ask who they were.

"Their customs are different from those of all other people, and they do not obey the king's laws; it is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them" (3:8b). **Haman's** presentation was a mixture of truth (**dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom**), half-truth (**their customs are different from those of all other people**) and lies (**they do not obey the king's laws**), in that order. While it was true that the Jews had their own laws, it was false to accuse them of disobeying the laws of Persia. **In fact, in the rabbis taught that, "The law of the country in which you live is binding."**

Now for the first time we learn that **Haman** was a wealthy man. He appealed to **Ahasuerus'** need to refill **the treasury** drained by **the king's** disastrous war with Greece. **Haman** sweetens his request by saying: **If it pleases the king, let a**

decree be issued to destroy them, and I will give ten thousand talents of silver (or about 375 tons or 340 metric tons equivalent to several tens of millions of dollars today) **to the king's administrators for the royal treasury (3:9)**. At that time Persia used **silver** as its money standard. The word translated **treasury** is a Persian word, which shows that the author was well acquainted with the vocabulary of the court at Susa. This would foreshadow the betrayal of another Jew, Yeshua Messiah, for thirty pieces of **silver** (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ Kc - Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus**).

The Greek historian Herodotus recorded that the annual income of the Persian Empire was about 15,000 talents from taxes. If this figure is correct, **Haman** offered two-thirds of that amount - a huge sum. Even if he was planning to steal the property of the Jewish families he was going to slaughter, his proposition would have been absurd if he had not had the money already at his disposal.⁴⁶

Most of us like to think that through careful planning we can have some control of our lives. While much of the time life might cooperate with our plans, all of us can remember circumstances beyond our control. Sometimes things might turn out better than we expected, and sometimes things turn out worse, but either way our sense of being in control is at times revealed by life's circumstances to be an illusion.

Whether we like it or not, we often feel caught in circumstances beyond our control. There are many seemingly insignificant events, that when we look back on them, really changed the course of our lives. This chain of events continues to happen every day. We have no idea how one leads to the other. Only ADONAI is outside of time and knows the end from the beginning. The author of **Esther** demonstrates the workings of divine **providence**. He works through a series of "coincidental" events and human decisions, even those based on questionable motives at best or evil intent at worst, to carry out His plan. All of the "chance" events in the book of **Esther**, and in our own lives, are really working toward the end that God knows will happen.

Esther suffered the humiliation of being taken into **the king's** harem to be sexually used. Apparently no one considered what plans she might have had for her own life, plans perhaps to be a godly wife with a home and family. But her plans were changed forever when **the king's** men seized her from her home. Mordecai suffered the humiliation of being deprived of his recognition after saving the life of **Ahasuerus** after overhearing two of **the king's** officers conspire to assassinate

the king. To make matters worse, **Haman** was gaining the power to turn against Mordecai and the Jews. There is a sad irony that when the wicked prosper, God's **people** are seemingly overlooked and unrewarded (**Psalms 37** and **73**). When all is said and done, ADONAI uses even injustice to fulfill His promises to us. As Joseph made clear to his brothers: **You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good (Genesis 50:20)**.

The revelation of Jesus Christ was written to encourage believers who, like the Jews of Persia, found their existence threatened when the government under which they lived threatened to destroy them. Believers all over the world experience persecution today. One source estimates that in this century alone, an average of 300,000 believers have been martyred each year. The prayer of the earliest believers, "Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness," must continue to be the prayer of the Church today, offered up with a confidence in the LORD's powerful **providence**.

The book of **Revelation** shows that despite the overwhelming power the world empires now have, **Yeshua Messiah** will ultimately prevail (see my commentary on **Revelation Ex - The Eight Stage Campaign of Armageddon**). Believers are to live faithfully for that day, even under the threat of persecution and death. After describing the beast and his satanic power, **John** acknowledges that those saved during the Great Tribulation will suffer and die when the government of the antichrist turns against them. However, because **Jesus** arose never to die again, they will be safe in **Christ**. **Whoever has ears, let them hear. If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity they will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword they will be killed for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the holy ones** (see my commentary on **Revelation Dn - All Inhabitants of the Earth will Worship the Beast**).

God intends to save and protect His **people** in **Messiah (Romans 8:28)**, and ultimately He plans to destroy those who remain steadfast in their opposition to Him. There is no power, no enemy, that can defeat His **elect (Second Timothy 2:10)**. We, too, like David in **Psalms 16 CJV**, can praise ADONAI because He has made our **lot** secure in **Yeshua**.

**Protect me, God,
for You are my refuge.
I said to ADONAI, "You are my Lord;
I have nothing good outside of You."**

**The holy people in the Land are the ones
who are worthy of honor; all my pleasure is in them.**

**Those who run after another god
multiply their sorrows;
to such gods I will not offer
drink offerings of blood
or take the names on my lips.**

**ADONAI, my assigned portion, my cup;
You safeguard my share.
Pleasant places were measured out for me;
I am content with my heritage.**

**I bless ADONAI, my counselor;
at night my inmost being sustains me.
I always set ADONAI before me;
with Him at my right hand, I can never be moved;
so my heart is glad, my glory rejoices,
and my body too rests in safety;
for You will not abandon me to sh'ol,
You will not let Your faithful one see the Abyss.
You make me know the path of life;
in Your presence is unbounded joy,
in Your right hand eternal delight.**