

## A Reason to Celebrate

*... as the time when the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month when their sorrow was turned into joy and their mourning into a day of celebration. — Esther 9:22*

The great victory that Esther and Mordecai led in Persia so many centuries ago is still celebrated today by Jews during the feast of *Purim*. It is a time when the Jews' *"sorrow was turned into joy and their mourning into a day of celebration."*

Instead of losing their families and their lives, the Jews of Persia gathered together to celebrate God's deliverance. Instead of losing their property, they gave gifts to one another. But Mordecai realized that people tend to have short memories when it comes to God's faithfulness. Both Esther and Mordecai felt so strongly about the observance of Purim that they made it a decree and sent it throughout the empire with the king's full authority behind it. Mordecai became such an important figure in Persia that his story was recorded in the annals of King Xerxes.

The book of Esther was a tremendous encouragement to Jews who had returned to the land of Israel from foreign captivity and who also faced many obstacles and enemies. Imagine the inspiration, comfort, and strength they must have received from this thrilling story of God's watchful care over His people. We can take comfort, as well, in knowing that God is still watching over us and all His people today.

*Purim* is also a reminder of the importance to take time to recall God's blessings and express praise and thanksgiving to Him for these gifts. Celebrations of feasting, gladness, and gift-giving are important ways to remember God's specific acts.

When we pause in our daily routines to participate in such celebrations and we retell these stories, we are passing along the legacy of faith from one generation to another. We are instilling in those who follow us to become "Esthers" and "Mordecais" of their generation.

And through these celebrations, we remind people everywhere — Jews and Christians alike — of the need to be ever vigilant against those who stand against God, His values, and His people.