

She was a knock-out. He was a world ruler. Their lives were destined to intertwine in one of the most fascinating and exciting stories in the Bible, the book of Esther.

This story has it all: a beauty queen, a ruthless king, a good guy, a bad guy, court intrigue, envy, plot twists, and triumph in the end. What a great story! In fact, the renowned Christian writer, Tommy Tenney, has just authored his first work of fiction based upon this book, *Hadassah*. (Hadassah is Esther's Hebrew name.)

The Jewish feast of Purim commemorates the victory God gave the Jews over those that sought to commit genocide. It's a noisy, joyous celebration that is very child-centered. The entire scroll of Esther (called "the whole megillah") is read with cheering for the hero and heroine, and booing and hissing and the rattling of noise-makers at the mention of evil Haman, the villain.

What a memorable retelling of history. The story of how God delivered the Jews once again from those that hated them just for being Jews is ingrained into every Jewish child's memory.

But of course there is a most serious side to the story of Esther. This year the festival of Purim falls just before Easter, on Friday March 25<sup>th</sup>. What an interesting juxtaposition. Purim celebrates a woman who risked everything for her people; Easter commemorates a Man Who sacrificed everything for all people.

Why have the Jews been (and continue to be) hated through all these centuries? From a Christian perspective it's just part of the struggle of the ages between good and evil, between God and the enemy, Satan.

Throughout the Old Testament God chose to work through the family of Israel, to produce the messiah from the root of Jesse, in the tribe of Judah. In other words, God chose to send His Son to live on earth as a Jew.

In simple terms, if Satan could destroy the Jewish people, the plan of God would have been defeated. And since God's plan still includes the Jewish people (see Rom. 9, 10, and 11), Satan hasn't given up on attacking them. How he'd like to show God to be a liar!

So anti-Semitism still flourishes.

Perhaps more at this season of the year than any other Christians need to recognize the enormous gift of the Messiah given through the Jewish people, and stand against racism of any kind—but especially anti-Semitism.

After all, what would Jesus do? He, too, was a Jew.