

THE GARMENT OF A JEW

A Special Devotional Meditation for Purim from

Zechariah 8:18-23; Esther 8:15-17; Isaiah 61:1-3; Jeremiah 9:23-24;
Matthew 20:16, 27:35-54; Romans 3:1-2; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

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The human story is one of paradox: filled with seemingly contradictory qualities in which the improbable often turns out to be the truth, and the most unlikely people often come out on top. This is a fundamental principle written into our spiritual DNA by the Creator Who made us for His pleasure. It makes sense when we think of it in the way Paul explains:

Yet God chose the foolish things of the world so He might put to shame the wise;
and God chose the weak things of the world so He might put to shame the strong;
and God chose the lowly and despised things of the world, the things that are as nothing, so He might bring to nothing the things that are—so that no human might boast before God.

1 Corinthians 1:27-28 TLV

It's difficult enough for us to understand that our Creator really is in control of everything, but it's even more difficult to accept the truth that our Creator's universe operates in a way that only He gets the credit in the end. He has been calling this to our attention from the beginning. When our Messiah says, "So the last will be first, and the first last," (Matthew 20:16), He refers to the pattern our Heavenly Father established long ago and wove throughout His word in statements like this one from the psalms:

ADONAI upholds the humble.
He brings the wicked to the ground.

Psalms 147:6 TLV

Yet this truth is still hard to grasp and accept. That's why our Father presents it in ways that soak into our consciousness without us even being aware, such as in role reversal stories, where the underdog comes out on top.

People like to cheer for the underdog. We are glad when the weak, small, outcast, and poor finally get justice. Of course, we never consider ourselves as the ones who are keeping them from justice. We prefer to identify with the downcast because we want someone to right the wrongs done to us, but we seldom consider how others might be longing for someone to right the wrongs we have done to them.

And that brings us back to the theme of role reversal. However we look at it, the best outcomes in our Creator's estimation are those that involve taking the low road of humility and trusting Him to bring justice and restitution in the way and at the time He deems best.



The Garments Divided by Cast Lots, James Tissot, 1886-1894, [The Brooklyn Museum](https://www.brooklynmuseum.org).

But that doesn't mean we are passive and fatalistic. We have responsibilities in this process, as demonstrated in the story of Esther. When the Persian Empire was about to engage in the genocidal destruction of the Jewish people, Mordechai and Esther humbled themselves to seek God's guidance and appeal to the king to act as God's instrument of salvation. The result was a series of role reversals in which the oppressors became the victims, the victims triumphed, the humble were exalted, and justice prevailed. In practical terms, it meant the Jews of Persia were transformed in an instant from being the most despised people in the empire to the most favored and feared people, as the book of Esther relates:

Throughout every province and throughout every city, wherever the king's edict and his law went, the Jews had gladness and joy, banquets and holidays. Many peoples of the land became Jews, because the fear of the Jews had overcome them.

Esther 8:17 TLV

That's what happened at Purim, the festival Jews celebrate marking their deliverance from the destruction planned by Haman, chief advisor to Persia's king. The events in Esther happened two generations after the prophet Zechariah gave this promise to the Jewish exiles returning to Israel from Babylon:

Thus says *ADONAI-Tzva'ot* [the LORD of hosts], "In those days it will come to pass that ten men from every language of the nations will grasp the corner of the garment of a Jew saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'"

Zechariah 8:23 TLV

It's reasonable to suppose that some in Esther's generation saw people from the nations attaching themselves to the Jewish people and concluded that God was fulfilling the promise He spoke through Zechariah. If so, then they may have looked expectantly for fulfillment of another promise Zechariah recorded in that same passage:

Thus says the LORD of hosts: The fast of the fourth month and the fast of the fifth and the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth shall be to the house of Judah seasons of joy and gladness and cheerful feasts. Therefore love truth and peace.

Zechariah 8:19 NASB1995

Christians tend to overlook this prophecy about the Jewish fast days becoming days of joy. That's probably because we think this prophecy applies only to the Jewish people. What we don't realize is that Christians have much to do with the reasons Jews fast on these four days of mourning. This is especially true for the fast of the fifth month: the 9th day of Av (the fifth month on the Hebrew calendar). Much disaster has come on the Jewish people on or around that day, including destruction of both Temples in Jerusalem, and countless acts of violence done in the name of Christ. That is a history we do not know well enough. Jews know it only too well, and look forward to the time when there is no need of fasting and mourning on those days.

There is a growing awareness of this history moving through the Christian world in this generation. It's the logical progression of the Torah Awakening that has brought to our attention the fact that our Savior Jesus Christ is a Jew known in His native language as

Yeshua. With that in mind, the actions and words of the Roman soldiers who executed Yeshua stand out in a new light:

And when they had crucified Him, they divided His clothing among themselves by casting lots. . . And *Yeshua* cried out again with a loud voice and gave up His spirit. And behold, the curtain of the Temple was split in two, from top to bottom. And the earth quaked and rocks were split apart. . . Now the centurion, and those with him keeping guard over *Yeshua*, when they saw the earthquake and what was happening, they became terribly frightened and said, "This really was the Son of God!"

Matthew 27:35, 50-51, 54 TLV

That's a profound declaration by these men from the nations, spoken as they grasped the garments of this crucified Jew. For nearly 2,000 years, Christians from every nation have followed their example. Thus, we can conclude that Yeshua's crucifixion and resurrection speak to another fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy. Yet it remains only a partial fulfillment until God's whole promise comes to pass. The Jewish people are still looking for the time that these four days of fasting and mourning become days of feasting and rejoicing.

Maybe we should consider our history since the cross as a prelude to the ultimate fulfillment of the word given to Zechariah. Rejoicing comes to the Jewish people and to all Israel when they cease being the pariahs of humanity, and finally receive recognition as those entrusted with the oracles of God (Romans 3:1-2). That doesn't mean the nations of the earth become Jewish, but that the nations recognize God has shepherded the visible remnant of His people Israel through the ages so He may bring salvation to the world through their testimony.

In other words, we from the nations need not put on the garment of a Jew, but we do need to recognize the garments of praise given by our Creator Who works through paradox to magnify His glory.