

# Basic Training Bible Ministries

## The Book of Esther



### **The Hidden Hand of God** *God Standing in the Shadows*

*“... if I perish, I perish.”* Est 4:16b

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## The Hidden Hand of God *God Standing in the Shadows*

### Introduction

The story of Esther takes place in the period between the first return after the exile under Zerubbabel and the time of Ezra. It tells of Jews who chose to remain in Persia rather than return to Jerusalem.

The chief character of the book is Esther, whose Hebrew name, “Hadassah,” means “myrtle.” This holds our interest for four reasons:

1. The myrtle tree became a symbol of Israel in exile (Isa 41:19–20, 55:11–13). It was central to Zechariah’s first vision (Zec 1:7–11).
2. The myrtle tree was not native to Israel, but was most likely brought back from Babylon, and planted in Israel (G. Campbell Morgan, *Exposition of the Whole Bible*).
3. The myrtle tree had a blossom with a star-shaped appearance. “*Esther*” is the Persian name for “star.”
4. She may have been given the name “myrtle,” or Hadassah, as a symbol of the hopes of her parents for the survival of the nation.

The book is unique among the books of Scripture:

- It is one of only two named for women—the other being Ruth.
- It is one of only two that never mentions the name of God—the other is the Song of Solomon.

The theme is easily understood as that of the providence of God. Esther is a story that illustrates the truth of this priceless doctrine. Providence has been called “the hand of God in the glove of history.” It is the heavenly Father watching over and caring for His people. The idea of “God standing in the shadows” is well illustrated by James Russell Lowell (1919–1891) in the following poem:

### Once to Every Man and Nation

Once to every man and nation, comes the moment to decide,  
In the strife of truth with falsehood, for the good or evil side;  
Some great cause, some great decision, offering each the bloom or blight,  
And the choice goes by forever, ‘twixt that darkness and that light.

Then to side with truth is noble, when we share her wretched crust,  
Ere her cause bring fame and profit, and ‘tis prosperous to be just;  
Then it is the brave man chooses while the coward stands aside,  
Till the multitude make virtue of the faith they had denied.

By the light of burning martyrs, Christ, Thy bleeding feet we track,  
Toiling up new Calv'ries ever with the cross that turns not back;  
New occasions teach new duties, time makes ancient good uncouth,  
They must upward still and onward, who would keep abreast of truth.

Though the cause of evil prosper, yet the truth alone is strong;  
Though her portion be the scaffold, and upon the throne be wrong;  
Yet that scaffold sways the future, and behind the dim unknown,  
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above His own.

It is impossible to study the providence of God without also delving into the essence of God. His acts are based on His nature. This book, which does not mention the name of God, is a study in the character and personality of God. In the course of this study, three Psalms dealing with God's providence will be viewed (Psalms 11, 27, and 139).

Finally, the book of Esther is a story within a story, within a story. It tells the story of Mordecai and Esther, whose lives echo the story of the Jewish nation, which is part of the greater story of the redemption of mankind through the cross of Jesus Christ.

It is my earnest prayer that those who remain without faith in Christ may be challenged to hear the Gospel themes of this book, and that those who are children of God might find hope and strength, courage and assurance of the watch-care of our heavenly Father.

## **Chapter One: Decisions, Decisions, Decisions! (God's Omniscience)**

The word "providence" comes from the Latin *pro/video* which first means "to foresee," and then "to provide." God's providence works through the decisions of men, because He knows their decisions beforehand. This is the divine quality we call **omniscience**.

### **I. The Story/Illustration—Esther 1**

See how the omniscience of God anticipates and utilizes the decisions and actions of men.

#### **A. "Now it came to pass" (Est 1:1)—**circumstance****

This phrase is like our "it just so happened," but is actually a clue to providence at work. Nothing in life "just so happens"!

#### **B. The royal party (Est 1:1–8)—**arrogance****

The kingdom of Persia was a vast empire (covered the area from present-day India to Ethiopia), probably only surpassed in size by that of the Mongolian ruler Genghis Khan (c. 1162–1227). This great feast was, in fact, preparation for the military campaign of Xerxes (Ahasuerus) against the Greeks (see historical note).

C. Vashti's honor (Est 1:9–12)—**conviction**

It is common to bash Queen Vashti for this act, but as women in that time never went unveiled in public, I believe her stand was one of principle and character.

D. Foolish ruler, futile laws (Est 1:13–22)—**tyranny**

The “*wise men*” here are far from wise. No law can make a male into a man. God's plan is that husband and wife be the king and queen of their domain. If a man fails to be manly, no law can make him that way. However, this begins the search for a new queen. God is at work preparing the way for Esther.

**II. Explanation—the Omniscience of God**  
(Psa 139:1–4)

By omniscience, we mean that there is nothing unknown to God. He is “all-knowing” and, in fact, knows the end from the beginning (Isa 46:10; Act 15:18).

**III. Application**

What might God be preparing for you?

And are you preparing for what He has in the works for you (Eph 2:10)?

*“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.” Joh 15:16*

- A. God uses prepared people. If you want to be mightily used, then be diligent to prepare yourself for His work (2Ti 2:15).
- B. Ahasuerus ruled over a vast domain, but God rules over a kingdom that encompasses Heaven and Earth and beyond.
- C. Wealth and power seldom come with wisdom. We seldom see the reins of power exercised by the hand of prudence.
- D. Marriage without faith often becomes an uneasy relationship of two individuals, each seeking their own fulfillment from the other.
- E. Those in power often resort to laws imposed on others to accomplish what they themselves do not or cannot do.

**Historical Note**

Between Chapters 1 and 2, in the spring of 480 B.C., Ahasuerus (Xerxes) conducted a military campaign against the Greeks. He had over 100,000 men, and hundreds of warships. This campaign was to vindicate his father, Darius, who ten years earlier had been defeated by the Greek army, under General Miltiades, at the battle of Marathon.

As Xerxes looked on his magnificent army, he is said to have wept. When asked why, he said, “Because I know all this military glory is but for a moment ... one hundred years from now every man present here today will have died, myself included.”

The campaign faced disaster from the beginning. First, a ferocious storm at sea wrecked 400 ships. Then, upon landing in Greece, his entire army was stalled by 300 Spartans at Thermopylae for 24 hours. This sacrifice by the Spartans made it possible for the much smaller Greek army to retreat to the island of Salamis. Here, the small but agile warships of the Greek navy destroyed his fleet. He left Greece a defeated and dispirited man. Herodotus records that, after this defeat, Xerxes “sought the comfort of his harem.” This leads us to Esther 2.

## **Chapter Two: The Election of Esther to be Queen**

The idea of election means the same as selection or choice. Though often abused, this biblical teaching brings to our study **the sovereign hand of God** over world events and lives.

God has been preparing Esther in secret. Now she will step onto the world stage for a vital role at a crucial time for Israel.

### **I. The Story/Illustration—Esther 2**

- A. (Series of events) Note the phrase “*After these things*” (Est 2:1). This, like “*it came to pass*” (Est 1:1) is code for “God brought it to pass.” This reminds us that “[God works] *all things ... together for good to those who love God ...*” (Rom 8:28, emphasis added).
- B. Mordecai, the wise counselor (Est 2:1–7)—**faith and wisdom**
- C. Esther, obedient and faithful child (Est 2:7–18)—**humility**
- D. God uses “coincidence” to set the stage (Est 2:19–23)—**timing and placement**

### **II. Explanation—the Sovereignty of God**

(Psa 139:13–16; Isa 45:22–23; Dan 4:3–4)

God in His sovereign rule of the universe chooses certain people to play their part, using their volitional decisions and actions to fulfill His will (Cyrus, Isa 45:1; Pharaoh, Rom 9:17).

The Word of God tells us that election is based on foreknowledge (1Pe 1:2). Furthermore, election is to service—not salvation (see Joh 15:16). Also, Judas was “chosen” (elect) for a purpose, but was never saved (Joh 6:70–71).

### III. The Applications

*“Jesus answered him [Peter], ‘Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times. Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.’” Joh 13:38–14:1*

- A. Jesus knew what Peter would do, how he would fail. Yet this did not change His plan for Peter (see Joh 21:15–19).
- B. God is able to use both good and evil for His ultimate glory (Gen 50:20; Psa 76:10).
- C. Without violating human volition, freedom, or responsibility, He works all things together for the good of those who love Him (Rom 8:28).
- D. God has placed each of us in His perfect time and place, in order to use our character and personality for His plan and purpose (Ecc 3:1–8; Job 5:17–27; Jer 1:4–5; Eph 1:3–5).
- E. God rewards and blesses wise decisions and actions, and judges those that are evil (Job 5:12; Deu 11:26–28; Heb 6:7–8; 1Pe 5:5).

### Chapter Three: Haman’s Conspiracy to Destroy Israel

In this chapter, we see **the immutable hand of God**. God never changes, and His Word—both in promised blessing or cursing—will also stand.

*“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.” Mat 24:35*

*“The word of the Lord endures forever.” 1Pe 1:25*

#### I. The Story/Illustration—Esther 3

In Gen 12:3, God made a promise to Abraham, *“I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you ...”* Because God is immutable, His Word stands forever!

- A. Haman, the enemy of the Jews (Est 3:1–6)—**satanic evil**  
Six times in the book, Haman is identified as *“the enemy of the Jews”* (Est 3:10, 7:4, 6, 8:1, 9:10, 24). As an Amalekite, he is by nature their enemy.

In the very introduction to this vile character, we see the roots of his malice. He is an “Agagite,” descendant of King Agag, whom Saul failed to execute according to God’s command (1Sa 15:8, 17–19). In Num 24:17–20, Balaam, under God’s control, prophesied that the war between the Redeemer and Amalek (the tribe of Agag) would run all through the centuries.

And now Amalek's great descendant—the antichrist—is about to make his appearance on the earth!

B. Haman casts the dice (Est 3:7–11)—**superstition**

The sovereign working of God in this regard is explained in Pro 16:33, "*The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.*" Be very careful not to misinterpret this verse! God deals with men according to the condition of their hearts (2Sa 22:27; Psa 18:26).

C. The decree of desolation (Est 3:12–15)—**foolish legislation**

The foolish king does not even inquire as to the people who are to be exterminated. In the world today, there are those who vehemently hate Israel and work for their destruction. However, there are many others who join with them by their apathy and indifference!

## II. The Explanation—the Immutability of God

(Psa 139:11–12; Isa 55:11; Mal 3:6)

God does not change due to conditions or circumstances. Times, people, and events change, but He remains the same.

## III. The Applications

*"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever."* Heb 13:8

- A. Because Jesus Christ is God, He is immutable. His finished work on the cross remains, and our salvation is secure.
- B. Every person who chooses to be an enemy of God, His Word, and His plan, will ultimately become an enemy of those who trust and follow Him.
- C. The schemes and machinations of evil men will ultimately be used by God to bring on them just retribution, and to work for the good of His people.
- D. No evil device of Satan or of men can ultimately harm those who choose to live by faith, says Isa 54:17:

*"No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is from Me," says the LORD.*"

- E. Because God is immutable, His presence and power are always with those who choose to live by faith (Heb 10:38, 13:5–6, 8).

## **Chapter Four: The Wise Counsel of Mordecai**

Mordecai has been raising the orphan Esther from childhood (Est 2:7), gave her wise counsel (Est 2:10), and watched over her in every way (Est 2:11). Now, his counsel is needed more than ever, and leads Esther to a brave decision by which she becomes an “overcomer by faith” (1Jo 5:4–5). Here we see **the hand of the love of God** at work.

### **I. The Story/Illustration—Esther 4**

A. The grief of Mordecai (Est 4:1–9)—**repentance and prayer**

B. The counsel of Mordecai (Est 4:10–14)—**Scripture knowledge**

Here Mordecai declares that deliverance is certain (so his faith informs him), but if Esther fails to play the role God has given, she and her Father’s house will perish.

Yes, decisions have consequences!

C. The courage and faith of Esther (Est 4:15–17)—**obedience**

### **II. The Explanation—the Infinite Love of God**

(Psa 139:17–18; Isa 47:4; Jer 31:3)

God is ever watching over His own. No harm can touch them, but by God’s permission, and for their ultimate good. This conviction leads us to “rejoice in trials” (Rom 5:1–5; Jam 1:2, 12)

### **III. The Applications**

*“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you;  
abide in My love.” Joh 15:9*

A. The love of God is clearly seen in and through those who love Him (Mordecai and Esther here).

B. It is the infinite love of God for Israel that assures Mordecai that God will ultimately deliver Israel by some means.

C. Esther illustrates God’s love in her willingness to perish, if need be, for her people (Joh 15:13).

D. Our love for Jesus Christ is demonstrated by obedience to His Word (Joh 14:15, 15:10).

## **Chapter Five: The Ancient War of Good and Evil**

The Bible says that the conflict between good and evil began before human history, in the revolt of Lucifer—the mightiest of angels (Isa 14:9–17; Eze 28:11–19). Here, we see seemingly unrelated events, all working in concert toward the fulfillment of God’s plan for His people. In this we see **the omnipotent hand of God**.

### **I. The Story/Illustration—Esther 5**

- A. Esther finds favor, makes her request (Est 5:1–8)—**apparent weakness**
- B. Haman’s self-exaltation and murderous plan (Est 5:9–14)—**assumed strength**  
According to Psa 7:15–16, those who plot evil will not escape its consequences. Evil, by its very nature, is twisted. Like a boomerang, it will always come back on those who send it forth. More on this in chapter seven.

### **II. The Explanation—the Omnipotence of God**

(Psa 139:5–6; Psa 91:1; Isa 9:6)

God exercises His power on behalf of His people, and in particular, those who are faithful and obedient. See Eph 1:18–23, where Paul prays that we might come to know the extent of God’s power exerted on our behalf.

### **III. The Applications**

*“And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” 2Co 12:9*

- A. The Bible declares that the power of God is available to each and every believer in Jesus Christ. However, God only empowers us to do His will!
- B. God will empower our witness to the truth of the Gospel message (Rom 1:16–17; 1Co 1:18).
- C. God will empower us for righteousness and sanctification (1Co 1:24, 30).
- D. We also have divine enablement to truly know Christ and the power of His resurrection (Phi 3:10).
- E. Far too many believers lose heart because they want God’s power to live life their way, and it will not be given to them.

## **Chapter Six: The Beginning of the End for Haman**

Evil can never provide what it promises. Those who barter their souls to evil (Psa 16:4) will always see their plans unravel, and their schemes will be their own undoing. In this, we see **the righteous hand of God** revealed.

### **I. The Story/Illustration—Esther 6**

- A. The sleepless king and his forgotten debt (Est 6:1–3)—**timing**
- B. The humiliation of arrogant Haman (Est 6:4–9)—**opportunity**  
This was Haman’s last chance to repent. He knew the history of the Jews, and had been warned not to oppose them (Est 6:13). He had been humiliated before Mordecai, and by the decision of the King. Yet his arrogance blinded him to the judgment that was coming.
- C. Mordecai is promoted again (Est 6:10–14)—**faithfulness**  
The way up in God’s kingdom is always down. Those who humble themselves will be exalted, and those who exalt themselves will be brought down (1Pe 5:5–6).

### **II. The Explanation—the Righteousness of God**

(Psa 139:19, 23–24; Psa 45:6–7, with Jer 23:5–6; Psa 97:2)

God gives either blessing or cursing based on the condition of the hearts of men. Those who adjust to His righteousness by faith are blessed, and those who resist it receive the just consequences.

### **III. Applications**

*“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ ... for in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’” Rom 1:16–17*

- A. The only righteousness possessed by any believer is that which was imputed to them in Jesus Christ (2Co 5:21; 1Co 1:30).
- B. In order for us to be given His righteousness, He had to be willing to bear our sins (Isa 53:4–6; 2Co 5:21; Rom 5:17).
- C. His righteousness is found, not by effort, nor merit, but by simple faith in the offer of free and full forgiveness and justification (Rom 3:21–26, 4:23–25).

## **Chapter Seven: The Boomerang Effects of Evil Intent**

The decree of God is that good begets good, and evil begets evil. Those who harbor evil intent toward others in their hearts will reap the fruit of that malice. Hateful people are always, always unhappy and bitter people. In this we see **the hidden hand of God's justice**.

### **I. The Story/Illustration—Esther 7**

- A. The evil of Haman exposed (Est 7:1–6)—**enemy of God**  
Evil cannot be hidden (Mat 10:26; 1Ti 5:24–25).
- B. The poetic justice in Haman's end (Est 7:7–10)—**retribution of God**  
Here we see the return-in-kind spoken of in Mat 7:7; Luk 6:38.

### **II. The Explanation—the Inescapable Justice of God**

(Psa 139:19–22, 89:14, 97:2)

What God's righteousness demands, His justice will supply. Because His righteousness demanded payment for the penalty of sin, His justice provided Christ as Savior. On the cross, the righteousness of God and the peace of mankind "*kissed*" (Psa 85:10).

### **III. The Applications**

*".. we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law ..."* Gal 2:16

*"Who shall bring a charge against God's elect?  
It is God who justifies."* Rom 8:33

- A. What God's righteousness approves, His justice must bless. Where do you stand in regard to the righteousness of God?
- B. Having been imputed with the righteousness of Christ, we are justified by God. This justification is to be seen in our daily lives (Tit 2:11–14).
- C. Living out the justice of God not only involves obedience to His Word, but the showing of mercy toward sinners (Mic 6:8; Jam 2:10–13).
- D. Those who foment cursing and evil upon others will in the end receive the full, just retribution for their deeds (Mat 7:1–6; Jam 4:11–12).

## **Chapter Eight: The Methods and Means of God's Deliverance**

God is able to turn the instruments of men's malice into the means of judgment on the perpetrators and of deliverance for those who trust in Him. This is because God is working not just for time, but for eternity. Here we see **the hand of God's eternal life** at work.

### **I. The Story/Illustration—Esther 8**

- A. The counter decree, the second amendment in Persia! (Est 8:1–8)—**godly influence**  
Please note that God's deliverance comes from the Jewish people being willing to defend themselves.
- B. God working toward eternity (Est 8:9–17)—**godly action**  
Consider the strategy of Satan in this story. If he can destroy the Jews, there can be no Savior. Then God's Word cannot be fulfilled, and he makes God out to be a liar. This same strategy is at work today, in anti-Semitism around the world. If the Jews can be destroyed, there can be no kingdom, no throne in Jerusalem, and God's Word has been nullified.

### **II. The Explanation—Eternal Life, the Free Gift of God**

(Psa 139:24b; Gen 15:6, 21:33; Psa 103:2–5, 17; Joe 2:32)

God's plan always has eternity in view. He works from the ultimate goal down to the minutiae of the means. It is always the big picture that gives meaning to small events. Every event in time has meaning only in light of eternity.

### **III. The Applications**

*“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” Joh 17:3*

- A. Eternal life is found only in Jesus Christ (Joh 1:4).
- B. Eternal life is a gift to all who believe (Joh 3:16; Rom 6:23).
- C. Faith comes from giving a hearing to the Word of God, with a true heart, by which faith is born (Joh 5:24; Rom 10:17).
- D. In Christ Jesus, we find *“the way, the truth, and the life”* (Joh 14:6). Eternal life can be found nowhere else.

## **Chapter Nine: The Feast of Purim, Memorial to Providence**

Paul declares, “*Let God be true but every man a liar*” (Rom 3:4). If God is perfect, then His Word must be also. For even the smallest part of His Word to fail, the very nature of God would be called into question. His truth cannot fail, for He cannot be untrue. Thus we see **the hand of God’s veracity**.

### **I. The Story/Illustration—Esther 9**

#### **A. D-day for Israel (Est 9:1–17)—the test of truth**

God allows His people to play a role in vindicating His truth. His power is perfected through our weakness (2Co 12:9–10).

#### **B. The Feast of Purim (Est 9:18–32)—the triumph of truth**

Remember that “*Pur*” meant the “lot” cast by Haman (Est 3:7). They are celebrating the truth of Pro 16:33, and the sovereignty of God.

### **II. The Explanation—the Veracity of God**

**(Psa 139:23 w/ Psa 51:6)**

God works on behalf of those who trust in His veracity (Nah 1:7). God blesses His truth wherever it is found. When the soul is saturated with the truth of God’s Word and the life conforms to it, that person cannot fail to be blessed.

### **III. The Applications**

*“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth.” Joh 16:13*

A. The truth of God’s Word sanctifies us in accordance with the character of Christ (Joh 17:16–17). Are you living in light of God’s veracity?

B. The very essence of God is truth (Joh 14:6, 17; 1 John).

C. Also, the Spirit of God who indwells believers is the essence of truth (Joh 14:17, 15:26; 1Jo 5:7).

D. All of God’s promises are true and sure to be fulfilled.

E. May your life be a monument to the faithfulness of God to you through His Word!

## **Chapter Ten: The Final Promotion and Greatness of Mordecai**

Through this story, we have seen that God is with His people, even when it seems He is absent. Mordecai and Esther chose to live in the light of His presence, trusting in dark times that He was near. In their decisions and actions we see **the hand of God's omnipresence**.

### **I. The Story/Illustration—Esther 10**

Take a look at the various promotions of Mordecai:

- A. First, he is made an official in the kingdom (Est 2:19). To “[sit] *within the king's gate*” indicates official status.
- B. Then, he is honored, to Haman's shame (Est 6:10).
- C. Next, he is made steward of Haman's house (Est 8:2).
- D. Finally, he becomes the equivalent of “prime minister” over the Persian Empire (Est 10:3).

Principle: To have all this power and praise, and yet remain humble, a true statesman to his people, is to pass one of life's greatest tests. God's tests fall into two major areas: adversity and prosperity. Many who pass the adversity test, fail the prosperity test. Mordecai did not!

### **II. The Explanation—the Omnipresence of God**

(Psa 139:7–10; Isa 41:10, 43:1–3a; Rom 8:31–39)

Nothing can come between the believer and the loving presence of the heavenly Father. Learning to live in the presence of God will transform our lives.

### **III. The Applications**

*“I am with you always ... I will never leave you nor forsake you ...”* Mat 28:20; Heb 13:5

- A. Do you live with the conviction of the presence of God?
- B. Are you conscious of the Lord as the Shepherd of your life (Psa 23:1)?
- C. Jesus Christ has promised to be with us, but that promise is tied to our doing His will (Mat 28:20b).
- D. He has promised never to leave us (Heb 13:5–6); however, when we leave Him and His will, we will lose the conscious sense and security of His presence.
- E. Mordecai is an example of God's honor to one who honors Him (1Sa 2:30b).

## **Conclusion: Psalm 11**

In this Psalm of David, we see how consciousness of God's essence and faithfulness can embolden our lives. The world screams at us, "*flee as a bird to your mountain,*" and "*what can the righteous do?*" because "*the foundations are destroyed!*"

The soul steeped in sound doctrine calmly responds, "*In the LORD I put my trust ... the LORD is in His holy temple.*" Such calm and conviction is greatly needed in these times. May this study contribute to us living lives—not in light of circumstances—but rather in the assurance that "[God] is, and that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb 11:6).

## **Historical Epilogue**

On March 1, 1953, just eight years after the Holocaust took six million Jewish lives, Joseph Stalin unveiled a plan to the Politburo to liquidate all the Jews in the Soviet Union. The gathering was stunned. The plan was to be implemented on March 9, but the day after his announcement to his leaders, a Sunday, Stalin had a stroke!

From March 2–5, he lay in a semi-coma, while his senior leaders gathered around him. On March 5, his daughter, Svetlana Alliluyeva, just five years old at the time, was present. Years later she described the scene:

*"Father's death was slow and difficult ... His face became dark and different ... his features were becoming unrecognizable ... The death agony was terrible. It choked him slowly as we watched ... At the last moment he suddenly opened his eyes. It was a horrible look—either mad, or angry and full of fear of death ... Suddenly he raised his left hand and sort of either pointed up somewhere, or shook his finger at us all ... The next moment his soul, after one last effort, broke away from his body."*

Stalin's body lay in state for several days. He was buried on March 9, as Jews across the Soviet Union were celebrating the feast of Purim!

Psalm 27  
A psalm of David

*The LORD is my light and salvation;  
Whom shall I fear?  
The LORD is the strength of my life;  
Of whom shall I be afraid?  
When the wicked came against me  
To eat up my flesh,  
My enemies and foes,  
They stumbled and fell.  
Though an army may encamp against me,  
My heart shall not fear;  
Though war may rise against me,  
In this I will be confident.*

*One thing I have desired of the LORD,  
That I will seek:  
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD  
All the days of my life,  
To behold the beauty of the LORD,  
And to inquire in His temple.  
For in the time of trouble  
He shall hide me in His pavilion;  
In the secret place of His tabernacle  
He shall hide me;  
He shall set me high upon a rock.  
And now my head shall be lifted up above  
My enemies all around me;  
Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His  
tabernacle;  
I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the  
LORD.*

*Hear, O, LORD, when I cry with my voice!  
Have mercy also upon me, and answer me.  
When You said, "Seek My face,"  
My heart said to You, "Your face, LORD,  
I will seek."  
Do not hide Your face from me;  
Do not turn Your servant away in anger;  
You have been my help;  
Do not leave me or forsake me,  
O God of my salvation.  
When my father and my mother forsake me,  
Then the LORD will take care of me.*

*Teach me Your way, O LORD,  
And lead me in a smooth path, because  
of my enemies.  
Do not deliver me to the will of my  
adversaries;  
For false witnesses have risen against me,  
And such as breathe out violence.  
I would have lost heart, unless I had  
believed  
That I would see the goodness of the LORD  
In the land of the living.*

*Wait on the LORD;  
Be of good courage,  
And He shall strengthen your heart;  
Wait, I say, on the LORD!*