

# **Esther: Deliverance of the Jews (Ch. 9)**

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June 2010

## **Verses 1-4**

The day had arrived for the enemies of the Jews to attack, and likewise the Jews to defend themselves. Though many were converted to Judaism as a result of the decree of Mordecai and Esther, many still were determined to annihilate the Jews. Naturally, the opposite occurred and the enemies of the Jews all over the empire who dared go against them were overpowered.

It is interesting that the text states no one could withstand them because fear of them fell upon all people. It appears that even though some who hated them still decided to attack, it was with far less confidence that they would actually prevail. Strength plays a factor, but confidence is the key to success in any arena.

Though not necessary, it's a good thing when the government is favorable to your cause. This seems to be becoming less and less the case in this country at present, but we shouldn't lose heart even if our rulers are hostile toward Christianity. All things work together for good to those who love God, who are Christians, not those who oppose Christianity (Rom. 8:28).

The reason for regional and local government assistance was due to Mordecai. Whatever he was doing in his new office (10:2), it was having a great impact on the empire, and appears to be the key to the Jewish success in defending themselves (with God working behind the scenes of course). It would do us well to look back and see God working through both Esther and Mordecai, weaving together their separate and joint decisions over the last six years to culminate in a great deliverance of the Jewish people, and advocates for their race on either side of the king, Mordecai as second in command (10:3), and Esther as queen.

## **Verses 5-10**

The Jews killed 500 men in Shushan on the thirteenth day, including the ten sons of Haman, who apparently did not learn from the demise of their father and were trying to avenge him. Interestingly, though the decree said to plunder the possessions of their enemies (in essence mirroring Haman's first decree; 3:13), they chose not to do so. They desired their lives and nothing more.

Parshandatha (given by prayer), Dalphon (swift), Aspatha, Poratha, Adalia (a fire-god), Aridatha, Parmashta (superior), Arisai (lion-like), Aridai (the strong), Vajezatha (strong as the wind)

## **Verses 11-14**

The king receives the news of the success of the Jews and asks Esther if she has any further request. Esther wisely asks for the same to be granted to the Jews tomorrow so as to weed out any enemies that had escaped or who had decided to wait a day for their attack.

It appears that Haman's sons were already dead (v. 10), so perhaps the hanging was a public display for purposes of deterring any lurking attackers.

## **Verses 15-19**

According to the king's command, the Jews in Shushan gathered again on the fourteenth day and this time killed 300 men. It's amazing that these men were so bent on destroying the Jews that they didn't understand there was no chance of victory even after seeing the "signs" of all who had fallen the day before, the prominence of Mordecai, and the demise the Haman's family.

The Jews throughout the rest of the empire killed 75,000 enemies (approx. 590 per province). For whatever reason, these Jews only fought on day thirteen, and rested on day fourteen, while the Jews in Shushan, because of the king's command to continue fighting another day, rested on day fifteen. It is not known why a continued threat was detected in Shushan but not in the rest of the provinces.

### **Verses 20-25**

Some might say that the mention that "Mordecai wrote these things" is an indication of his authorship. Whether "these things" refers to the whole of the book up to this point or merely the information that follows is not known, though his authorship of the entire book is possible.

Mordecai sends letters establishing these days of rest, the fourteenth and fifteenth of Adar (February - March) as national holiday. The description sounds very much like they way many celebrate Christmas, feasting, sending presents to one another, and helping the poor.

The summary of what took place, like Esther's revelation, places all the blame for these things squarely on Haman, and attributes the decree devised by Mordecai and Esther to the king. Though it was the king's carelessness in part that caused this mess, he does deserve some credit for helping to make it right, even though it was God, working through Mordecai and Esther, who really did the work.

### **Verses 26-28**

This newly established holiday is named after the Pur that was originally cast by Haman to determine the day the Jews would be annihilated (3:7). Purim is merely the plural form of the word, "either because the Persian method of casting involved several lots, or because Haman cast Pur several times." (Coffman) Haman had cast the lot for great evil, not understanding that God was working through that same lot to accomplish a greater good (Pr. 16:33).

In order that "the memory of them should not perish" the Book of Esther (called the Megillah) is read:

The primary commandment related to Purim is to hear the reading of the book of Esther. The book of Esther is commonly known as the Megillah, which means scroll. Although there are five books of Jewish scripture that are properly referred to as megillahs (Esther, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and Lamentations), this is the one people usually mean when they speak of The Megillah. It is customary to boo, hiss, stamp feet and rattle gragers (noisemakers; see illustration) whenever the name of Haman is mentioned in the service. The purpose of this custom is to "blot out the name of Haman." (<http://www.jewfaq.org/holiday9.htm>)

In addition to the feasting, gift giving, and charity, other activities have been included in Purim such a carnivals, plays, masquerading, and burning Haman in effigy.

### **Verses 29-32**

Esther and Mordecai confirm the holidays established by Mordecai's first letter officially as the days of Purim, which are still observed even today, over 2400 years later.

The fasting and lamenting refers to a fast on the thirteenth day to commemorate the Esther's fasting (4:16) and potential suffering, then followed on the fourteenth and fifteenth with feasting. It is noteworthy that it was a feast that initiated this chain of events, a feast that allowed the evil plot to be revealed, and a feast to celebrate the deliverance from that evil.