

Esther 08 - Ahasuerus Gives Haman's Estate to Esther; Esther Sets Mordecai Over Haman's Estate; Ahasuerus Issues Decree Protecting the Jews; The Decree is Disseminated Throughout the Kingdom

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Esther 8

(3) Ahasuerus' edict protecting the Jews (Esther 8:1-17)

Even though Haman was dead, the Jews were not yet safe. This section of the text records what Esther and Mordecai did to ensure the preservation of the Jews who lived throughout the vast Persian Empire. The death of Haman is not the major climax of the book; the deliverance of the Jews is.

(A) Ahasuerus gives Esther Haman's house (8:1)

1 On that day King Ahasuerus gave the **house of Haman**, the enemy of the Jews, to Queen Esther; and Mordecai came before the king, because Esther had disclosed **what he was to her**.

1 On that day King Ahasuerus gave the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews, to Queen Esther; and Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had disclosed what he was to her.

1 That day King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther the property of Haman, the enemy of the Jewish people, and Mordecai came into the king's presence because Esther had told him how Mordecai was related to her.

1 On that day did the king Ahasuerus give the house of Haman the Jews' enemy unto Esther the queen. And Mordecai came before the king; for Esther had told what he was unto her.

- "...house of Haman" - his entire estate, which must have been enormous. Persian law put the estate of a traitor in the custody of the king. The king, in turn, gave it to Esther.

- The king gave it to Esther either as sign of favor and compensation for revealing the king's enemy (Cf. 7:3-4) and for her suffering

- "...what he was to her" - Ahasuerus knew that both Esther and Mordecai were Jews, but now he learned that they were also cousins (2:7): Ahasuerus and Mordecai were relatives by marriage!

- The king also gave Mordecai Haman's position in the government, which was second in authority (10:3; Cf. Joseph, Gen 41:42; Nehemiah, Neh 1:11—2:8; Dan 5:7,29; 6:3)

(B) Esther sets Mordecai over Haman's house (8:2)

2 Then the king took off **his signet ring**, which he had taken away from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.

2 The king took off his signet ring which he had taken away from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.

2 The king took off his signet ring that he had taken from Haman and gave it to Mordecai. Esther then put Mordecai in charge of Haman's property.

2 And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.

- "...his signet ring" - the king's signet ring, which had been given to Haman to authorize the edict against the Jews (Cf. 3:10), was now given to Mordecai

- Haman's office having been vacated, Mordecai acceded to his high office as vizier, in constant attendance on the king (10:3)

- Again the tables were turned against Haman, even after his death: Mordecai now had the power and position that Haman previously had been given

- Haman, who had hoped to confiscate the Jews' property (Cf. 3:13), now had his own property removed and given to Esther, who appointed Mordecai to oversee it

(C) Ahasuerus issues a decree protecting the Jews (8:3-17)

(a) Esther petitions Ahasuerus for the decree (8:3-6)

3 Then Esther spoke again to the king, fell at his feet, wept, and pleaded for his compassion to avert the evil *scheme* of Haman the Agagite and his plot which he had devised against the Jews.

3 Then Esther spoke again to the king, fell at his feet, wept and implored him to avert the evil *scheme* of Haman the Agagite and his plot which he had devised against the Jews.

3 Then Esther spoke to the king again and fell at his feet. She wept and pleaded with him for mercy to overturn the evil plan devised by Haman the Agagite and his plot against the Jewish people.

3 And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews.

– Since the edict to exterminate the Jews (3:13) was still in effect, something had to be done. So Esther appeared before the king a second time without an invitation (Cf. 5:1-2). This time she begged him to put an end to the evil plan which was in effect because of Haman.

— Since her request to save the Jews involved expense to the king, Esther was not sure he would grant it. Ahasuerus could've spared the lives of Esther and Mordecai and allow the rest of the Jews to perish.

— Esther's commitment and love for her people, which put her own safety in great jeopardy, was selfless and accounts for the high honor that Jews have given her since these events transpired.

At the beginning of this story, Esther and Mordecai were hardly exemplary in the way they practiced their religious faith; but now we get the impression that things have changed. Both of them have affirmed their Jewish nationality and both were the means of calling all the Jews in the empire to prayer and fasting. In one sense, they spearheaded a Jewish 'revival' and made being Jewish a more honorable thing in the empire. [Wiersbe]

4 And the king extended the golden scepter to Esther. So Esther got up and stood before the king.

4 The king extended the golden scepter to Esther. So Esther arose and stood before the king.

4 The king extended the golden scepter to Esther, and she got up and stood before the king.

4 Then the king held out the golden sceptre toward Esther. So Esther arose, and stood before the king,

5 Then she said, "If it pleases the king and if I have found favor before him, and the matter *seems* proper to the king and I am pleasing in his sight, let it be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to eliminate the Jews who are in all the king's provinces.

5 Then she said, "If it pleases the king and if I have found favor before him and the matter *seems* proper to the king and I am pleasing in his sight, let it be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews who are in all the king's provinces.

5 She said, "If it pleases the king, and if I've found favor with him, and if the matter is proper in the king's opinion, and if I'm pleasing to the king, let an order be issued revoking the letters devised by Hammedatha the Agagite's son Haman, which ordered the destruction of the Jewish people throughout the king's provinces.

5 And said, If it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which are in all the king's provinces:

- Esther's request was simple: she wanted a second decree written and sent out which would override the first decree. She cleverly ascribes the first decree to Haman, attempting to avoid a royal recant. Strangely, a simple reversing was not permissible under Persian law (v8).

6 For how can I endure to see the disaster which will happen to **my people**, and how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?"

6 For how can I endure to see the calamity which will befall my people, and how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?"

6 Indeed, how can I bear to see this disaster happen to my people? How can I bear to see the destruction of my kinsmen?"

6 For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?

- "...my people" - her identity with her people as a Jewess is key: she spoke of "my people" and "my family" (Cf. 7:3)

— It is inspiring to see the extent to which Esther, a young woman who has everything money can buy, identifies herself with her own kin and was prepared to risk everything, including her own life, in an attempt to prevent the disaster that threatened them.

(b) Ahasuerus authorizes the decree (8:7-8)

7 So King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, "Behold, I have given the house of Haman to Esther, and they have hanged him on the wooden *gallows* because

he had reached out with his hand against the Jews.

7 So King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, "Behold, I have given the house of Haman to Esther, and him they have hanged on the gallows because he had stretched out his hands against the Jews.

7 King Ahasuerus told Queen Esther and Mordecai the Jew, "Look, I've given Haman's property to Esther, and they have hanged him on the pole because he tried to harm the Jewish people.

7 Then the king Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand upon the Jews.

- The king noted that Esther and Mordecai now had the power and resources that previously belonged to Haman and therefore they should use that power to their advantage

8 Now you write to the Jews as you see fit, in the king's name, and seal *it* with the king's signet ring; for a decree which is written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's signet ring **may not be revoked.**"

8 Now you write to the Jews as you see fit, in the king's name, and seal *it* with the king's signet ring; for a decree which is written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's signet ring may not be revoked."

8 Now, in the name of the king, you write what seems good to you concerning the Jewish people, and seal it with the king's signet ring, for a document written in the king's name and sealed with the king's signet ring cannot be revoked."

8 Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring: for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse.

- Ahasuerus even gave Esther and Mordecai the authority and privilege to write the decree to explain what they should do in view of the king's previous edict (Cf. 3:10-11).

- "...may not be revoked" - kings in the Persian Empire did not have the authority to cancel their own decrees (1:19; Cf. Dan 6:17). This awkward policy tended to lend weight to the king's official pronouncements.

(c) Ahasuerus' scribes compose the decree (8:9)

9 So the king's scribes were summoned at that time in **the third month (that is, the month Sivan), on the twenty-third day**; and it was written in accordance with everything that Mordecai commanded the Jews, the satraps, the governors, and the officials of the provinces which *extended* from India to Cush, 127 provinces, to every province according to its script, and to every people according to their language, as well as to the Jews according to their script and their language.

9 So the king's scribes were called at that time in the third month (that is, the month Sivan), on the twenty-third day; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded to the Jews, the satraps, the governors and the princes of the provinces which *extended* from India to Ethiopia, 127 provinces, to every province according to its script, and to every people according to their language as well as to the Jews according to their script and their language.

9 The king's scribes were summoned at that time, on the twenty-third day of the third month, which is the month Sivan, and everything that Mordecai commanded the Jewish people, the regional authorities, the governors, and the provincial officials of the 127 provinces from India to Cush was written down for each province according to its script, for each people according to their language, and for the Jewish people according to their script and language.

9 Then were the king's scribes called at that time in the third month, that is, the month Sivan, on the three and twentieth day thereof; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded unto the Jews, and to the lieutenants, and the deputies and rulers of the provinces which are from India unto Ethiopia, an hundred twenty and seven provinces, unto every province according to the writing thereof, and unto every people after their language, and to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language.

- This is the longest verse in the English Bible; Rev 20:4 is the longest verse in the original language (Greek)

- "...the third month (that is, the month Sivan), on the twenty-third day" - Mordecai's decree allowing the Jews to defend themselves against the attacks authorized by Haman (3:12) was sent out on June 25, 474 BC.

Key Dates in Esther

- Haman's decree to destroy the Jews: April 17, 474 BC (3:12)
- Mordecai's decree allowing the Jews to defend themselves: June 25, 474 BC (8:9)
- Date Haman's edict allowed the Jews' enemies to attack: March 7, 473 BC (9:1)

(d) Decree disseminated throughout the kingdom (8:10-14)

10 He wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus, and sealed it with the king's signet ring, and sent letters by couriers on horses, riding on royal relay horses, offspring of racing mares.

10 He wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus, and sealed it with the king's signet ring, and sent letters by couriers on horses, riding on steeds sired by the royal stud.

10 He wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed it with the king's signet ring. He sent the letters by couriers on horseback, riding steeds especially bred for the king.

10 And he wrote in the king Ahasuerus' name, and sealed it with the king's ring, and sent letters by posts on horseback, and riders on mules, camels, and young dromedaries:

- As was the case with the previous decree, this one was dispatched by horsemen throughout the whole empire from India to Cush (1:22; 3:15) and was written in the appropriate languages for each province (Cf. 1:1)

11 In the letters the king granted the Jews who were in each and every city *the right* to assemble and to defend their lives, to destroy, kill, and eliminate the entire army of *any* people or province which was going to attack them, **including children and women**, and **to plunder their spoils**,

11 In them the king granted the Jews who were in each and every city *the right* to assemble and to defend their lives, to destroy, to kill and to annihilate the entire army of any people or province which might attack them, including children and women, and to plunder their spoil,

11 What the king granted the Jewish people in every town was the right to assemble and defend themselves, to annihilate, kill, and destroy every armed force of a people or a province that was hostile to them, including children and women, and to plunder their property.

11 Wherein the king granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, both little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey,

- "...to plunder their spoils" - the Jews could take away the property of their enemies as Mordecai had "taken away" the property of Haman

- "...including children and women" - it is debatable about whose children and women this verse is referring to:

- The KJV gives the impression that the edict allowed the Jews to destroy the wives and children of their attackers and plunder their spoil. The NASB seems to agree with this interpretation.
- The NIV connects "women and children" with the Jews being attacked and doesn't suggest that the Jews killed the women and children of their attackers

— It's likely that the children and women referred to here are those of the enemies, assuming they were included in the attacking army. This would "level the playing field" for the Jews against Haman's original edict (Cf. 3:13).

— It is clear in the Hebrew text that this new edict gave the Jews exactly the same power as the former edict gave their enemies

12 on one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth month (that is, the month Adar).

12 on one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth month (that is, the month Adar).

12 Throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, the one day for the Jewish people to do this was the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar.

12 Upon one day in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, namely, upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar.

- The edict gave the Jews the right to protect themselves and the right to annihilate and plunder any group that fought against them (Cf. Esther 3:13; 7:4)

The Jew has attended the funeral of every one of the nations that tried to exterminate him.
[J. Vernon McGee]

13 A copy of the edict to be issued as law in each and every province was published to all the peoples, so that the Jews would be ready for this day to avenge themselves on their enemies.

13 A copy of the edict to be issued as law in each and every province was published to all the peoples, so that the Jews would be ready for this day to avenge themselves on their enemies.

13 A copy of the document was to be issued as law in each and every province and published for all people, indicating that the Jewish people were to be ready to take vengeance on their enemies on that day.

13 The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, and that the Jews should be ready against that day to avenge themselves on their enemies.

14 The couriers, hurrying and speeded by the king's command, left, riding on the royal relay horses; and the decree was issued at the citadel in Susa.

14 The couriers, hastened and impelled by the king's command, went out, riding on the royal steeds; and the decree was given out at the citadel in Susa.

14 The couriers, mounted on the royal steeds, left quickly, urged on by the king's command. The edict was also issued in Susa the capital.

14 So the posts that rode upon mules and camels went out, being hastened and pressed on by the king's commandment. And the decree was given at Shushan the palace.

(e) Rejoicing (8:15-17)

(i) Among those in Susa (8:15)

15 Then Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in a royal robe of violet and white, with a large **crown** of gold and a garment of fine linen and purple; and the city of Susa **shouted and rejoiced**.

15 Then Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal robes of blue and white, with a large crown of gold and a garment of fine linen and purple; and the city of Susa shouted and rejoiced.

15 Mordecai left the king's presence in royal robes of blue and white, wearing a large golden crown and a purple robe made of fine linen; and the city of Susa shouted with joy.

15 And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad.

- "...crown" - turban (Cf. 6:8); Mordecai's clothing reflected his important government position

- "...shouted and rejoiced" - the entire city of Susa rejoiced over Mordecai's promotion. Previously, under Haman's edict, the city of Susa had been "agitated" (3:15). Now under the edict of Mordecai the Susa held a joyous celebration. And obviously the Jews were elated.

— Evidently Mordecai read the second decree at a public meeting in Susa

(ii) Among the Jews (8:16-17)

16 For the Jews there was light, joy, jubilation, and honor.

16 For the Jews there was light and gladness and joy and honor.

16 For the Jewish people, there was light and joy, gladness and honor.

16 The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour.

17 In each and every province and in each and every city, wherever the king's commandment and his decree arrived, there was joy and jubilation for the Jews, a feast and a **holiday**. And **many among the peoples of the land became Jews**, because the dread of the Jews had fallen on them.

17 In each and every province and in each and every city, wherever the king's commandment and his decree arrived, there was gladness and joy for the Jews, a feast and a holiday. And many among the peoples of the land became Jews, for the dread of the Jews had fallen on them.

17 In each and every province, and in each and every city, in the places where the king's order and edict reached, there was gladness and joy among the Jewish people, along with a festival and a holiday. Many of the people of the land became Jews, because they had come to fear the Jewish people.

17 And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.

- "...holiday" - literally, "good day" (Cf. 9:19,22); it refers to a religious festival. This was not the Feast of Purim, but a celebration in anticipation of Purim.
- "...many among the peoples of the land became Jews" - the Jews' rise to power caused many Gentiles to become Jewish proselytes. God's good hand was becoming obvious to the world at large.
- This is the only mention in the OT about Gentiles becoming Jews (proselytes).
- This testimony to the fact that Gentiles recognized God's blessing on the Jews would have been a great encouragement to the Jews in the post-exilic period