

Esther Chapter 9

Verses 1-3: Although Haman's decree was written two months and 10 days before the decree written by Mordecai, both decrees went into effect on the same date: June 25, 474 B.C. In one day, everything that had been planned by the wicked Haman was totally reversed. Even the Gentile officials switched their loyalty to the Jews.

The fateful day was March 7, 473 B.C. "It was turned to the contrary" was an obvious reference to the providence of God, even though the name of God still does not appear!

Esther 9:1 "Now in the twelfth month, that [is], the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, (though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them;)"

"Twelfth month": During the period Feb./Mar. Here is a powerful statement with regard to God's providential preservation of the Jewish race in harmony with God's unconditional promise to Abraham (Gen. 17:1-8). This providential deliverance stands in contrast to God's miraculous deliverance of the Jews from Egypt; yet in both cases the same end had been accomplished by the supernatural power of God.

This was speaking of that specific day that Haman had set for them to kill all of the Jews. The Jews had permission, through Mordecai's edict, to fight and protect themselves.

Esther 9:2 "The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as sought their hurt: and no man could withstand them; for the fear of them fell upon all people."

Wherever they lived.

"To lay hand on such as sought their hurt": Who not only threatened them what they would do on this day, but were risen up in arms in quest of them.

"And no man could withstand them, for the fear of them fell upon all people": When they understood that Haman was hanged, and Mordecai the Jew advanced. And that the queen herself was a Jew and that the Jews had the royal grant to act both defensively and offensively. And no doubt but the panic was of God.

This was not speaking of just the Jewish cities, but all of the cities where there were groups of Jews living. This second edict had frightened the people, so that they could not withstand the Jews.

Esther 9:3 "And all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and officers of the king, helped the Jews; because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them."

"The fear of Mordecai": Pragmatically, the nation had a change of heart toward the Jews, knowing that the king, the queen, and Mordecai were the ranking royal officials of the land. To be pro-Jewish would put one in favor with the king and his court and put one on the side of God, the ultimate King (Rev. 19:16).

It was a fearful thing in all the provinces for the second in command to be a Jew himself. The lieutenants, deputies, and officers were afraid to fight against the Jews for fear of reprisal.

Esther 9:4 "For Mordecai [was] great in the king's house, and his fame went out throughout all the provinces: for this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater."

Not only over Esther's affairs, but was one of the king's counsellors, and was the chief minister of state.

"And his fame went out throughout all the provinces": What a favorite he was of the king, as well as a relation of the queen, and how wise and just his administrations were.

"For this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater": Was more and more in the king's favor. And had offices of honor and trust heaped upon him, and increased both in wealth and power.

It was almost as if Mordecai was leading the country himself. It appeared the king had turned much of his authority over to Mordecai. He was not only the second in command, but was the relative of the queen. He had power in Persia, as Joseph had in Egypt.

Verses 5-10: Nevertheless, many Persian citizens took full advantage of the first decree to attack their hated Jewish neighbors. The phrase "did what they would" (verse 5), indicates that the Jews were given a free hand without official interference.

"But on the spoil laid they not their hand" (verse 10; compare 3:13; 8:11; 9:15-16), indicates the purity of their motives, which thus is evident to all.

Esther 9:5 "Thus the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter, and destruction, and did what they would unto those that hated them."

Some with swords, and others with clubs, and staves; as the Targum. And such like slaughtering weapons of destruction.

"And did what they would unto those that hated them": Being then entirely at their will, and under their power.

Verses 6-7: Five hundred men died in Susa.

Esther 9:6 "And in Shushan the palace the Jews slew and destroyed five hundred men."

Not in the royal palace, where it cannot be thought the Jews had so many enemies, or such a bloody slaughter of them should be made there. But in the city, where the palace was. And this may seem somewhat wonderful, that there should so many rise there against the Jews, so near the court, now altogether in the interest of the Jews. But these were men no doubt of Haman's faction, and enraged at his disgrace and death, and headed by his ten sons, who took the advantage of the decree to avenge his death. The Targum says, these were princes of the house of Amalek.

It appears that the Jews were not just killing at random, but were actually killing those who wanted to kill them. The palace area was about 100 acres, and this was where the 500 were killed. These were homes of prominent Persians. They possibly did not like the idea of a Jew taking Haman's place.

Verses 7-10: "Haman" and his "ten sons" were descendants of the Amalekites, who had attacked and killed many Israelites as they came out of Egypt (Exodus 17:8-16). God had promised His people that He would "blot out" the Amalekites (Deut. 25:17-19).

Esther 9:7-10 "And Parshandatha, and Dalphon, and Aspatha," "And Poratha, and Adalia, and Aridatha," And Parmashta, and Arisai, and Aridai, and Vajezatha," "The ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews, slew they; but on the spoil laid they not their hand."

The Jews slew the 10 sons along with the five hundred men, of which they were the head of.

Although the decree from the king allowed them to do so, the Jews "on the spoil laid they not their hand" from the enemies they killed, a point reiterated (in verses 15-16; 8:11). This decision stands in sharp contrast to Saul's decision to plunder the Amalekites despite being instructed not to do so (1 Sam 15:17-19). Unlike Saul, the Jews focused only on the mission at hand, i.e., to preserve the Jewish race (compare verses 15 and 16). Even though the king's edict permitted this (8:11).

The ten sons of Haman were probably still a threat to Mordecai and the Jews. The fact that the Jews did not take spoil from them showed this was not done for self-gain, but to stop an enemy.

Esther 9:11 "On that day the number of those that were slain in Shushan the palace was brought before the king."

Either by order of the king that he might know how many enemies the Jews had in the city, and how many of his subjects had been slain. Or officiously by others, with an intention to irritate the king against the Jews.

Esther 9:12 "And the king said unto Esther the queen, The Jews have slain and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the palace, and the ten sons of Haman; what have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? now what [is] thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: or what [is] thy request further? and it shall be done."

“Thy request further?” Even this pagan king served the cause of utterly blotting out the Amalekites in accord with God’s original decree (Exodus 17:14), by allowing for a second day of killing in Susa to eliminate all Jewish enemies.

This just meant that the leaders of the armies reported to the king the number that had been killed. The king had offered Esther up to half of the kingdom, so he told her of this great loss at the palace, explaining to her that the numbers in all of the provinces must be tremendous. He asked Esther if she was satisfied with this number, or what else did she want to satisfy herself and the Jews.

Esther 9:13 "Then said Esther, If it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews which [are] in Shushan to do tomorrow also according unto this day's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows."

“Be hanged”: I.e., be publicly displayed.

This seems a little bloodthirsty from such a beautiful queen. Why she wanted so many killed, I do not know. I can understand the hanging of the ten sons of Haman however.

Esther 9:14 "And the king commanded it so to be done: and the decree was given at Shushan; and they hanged Haman's ten sons."

That the Jews might have leave to seek out and slay the rest of their enemies in Shushan, on the fourteenth day, in like manner as they had on the thirteenth.

"And they hanged Haman's ten sons": On the same gallows, very probably, their father was hanged.

Verses 15-16: Over 1,500 years earlier God had promised to curse those who curse Abraham’s descendants (Gen. 12:3).

Esther 9:15 "For the Jews that [were] in Shushan gathered themselves together on the fourteenth day also of the month Adar, and slew three hundred men at Shushan; but on the prey they laid not their hand."

"Fourteenth day": Another 300 men died the second day of killing in Susa, bringing the total dead in Susa to 810.

As they had on the thirteenth.

"And slew three hundred men at Shushan": The Targum adds, of the family of Amalek. But there is no reason to confine it to them; it respects all such as were the enemies of the Jews, and rose up against them. So that the whole number slain in Shushan were eight hundred persons, besides the sons of Haman.

"But on the prey they laid not their hand" (see Esther 9:7).

The Jews killed another 300 in Shushan, but they did not take their valuables. Again, this was the killing of the people who hated the Jews. The Jews were not killing them to get their possessions.

Esther 9:16 "But the other Jews that [were] in the king's provinces gathered themselves together, and stood for their lives, and had rest from their enemies, and slew of their foes seventy and five thousand, but they laid not their hands on the prey,"

"Slew": Outside of Susa, only one day of killing occurred in which 75,000 enemies died.

It appears that the war in the provinces lasted for just the one day. It was almost as if they were punishing those who had hated the Jews. The one day they killed 75,000, but they did not do it to get their possessions either. The Jews did not take their possessions.

Verses 17-19: Jews in the provinces celebrated their victory on the fourteenth day of Adar, while Jews in Susa waited until the fifteenth (because of the events of verse 15). Eventually Mordecai ordered that both days should be observed annually as the Feast of Purim (verses 26-28).

Esther 9:17 "On the thirteenth day of the month Adar; and on the fourteenth day of the same rested they, and made it a day of feasting and gladness."

This belongs to the preceding verse; and the meaning is, that on this day the Jews gathered together and slew so many thousands of their enemies as before related.

"And on the fourteenth day of the same rested they, and made it a feast of gladness": Rejoicing that they were delivered out of the hand of their enemies, who hoped and expected on that day to

have made an utter end of them. According to the Jewish canons, mourning and fasting on this day were forbidden, but feasting and gladness were to be multiplied.

Immediately after their great victory, there was a time of celebration. They rested and rejoiced in the fact that the LORD had delivered their enemies into their hands. It was obvious that this was not the work of man, but of God.

Verses 18-19: The final feast described in the book is that of Purim (sometimes called the Feast of Esther), and is still celebrated by Jews today to commemorate the deliverance of God's people at the hands of Esther and Mordecai. At last the Jews knew rest and gladness (Duet. 25:19).

This section recounted why Purim would be celebrated for two days rather than one.

Esther 9:18 "But the Jews that [were] at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth [day] thereof, and on the fourteenth thereof; and on the fifteenth [day] of the same they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness."

Of the month Adar; that is, they gathered together to defend themselves, and destroy their enemies, on both these days. Having the decree renewed for the fourteenth as they had for the thirteenth.

"And on the fifteenth day of the same they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness": As the Jews in the provinces did on the fourteenth.

The Jews in Shushan waited one more day to celebrate because the killing of their enemies had lasted one more day. The feasting and gladness was for the fact that those who hated the Jews were no more.

Esther 9:19 "Therefore the Jews of the villages, that dwelt in the unwalled towns, made the fourteenth day of the month Adar [a day of] gladness and feasting, and a good day, and of sending portions one to another."

Jarchi observes that those in the villages, they that do not dwell in walled towns, observed the fourteenth, and they in towns surrounded with walls the fifteenth, as Shushan. And this circumvallation, he says, must be what was from the days of Joshua. According to the Jewish canons, every place that was walled from the days of Joshua the son of Nun, whether in the land of Israel or out of it. Though not now walled they read (i.e. the book of Esther), on the fifteenth of Adar, and this is called a walled town. But a place which was not walled in the days of Joshua, though now walled, they read in the fourteenth. And this is called a city; but the city Shushan, though it was not walled in the days of Joshua, they read on the fifteenth. Because in it was done a miracle and each of these was kept as a day of public rejoicing for their great deliverance and freedom from their enemies.

"And a good day: as the Jews usually call the several days of the Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.

"And of sending portions one to another": Expressive of mutual joy, and congratulating one another upon the happiness they shared in (see Rev. 11:10). And particularly this may respect sending gifts to the poor, who had not that to rejoice and make merry with, others had (see Neh. 8:10). Though these seem to be distinct from them (Esther 9:22).

This time that was set aside for celebration from year to year is still recognized by the Jews today. The 14th day Adar is about the same as our March.

Verses 20-25: A brief summary of God's providential intervention on behalf of the Jews.

Esther 9:20 "And Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews that [were] in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, [both] nigh and far,"

The transactions of those two days, and the causes of them, as well as the following letter. Some conclude from hence that he was the penman of the book; and so he might be, but it does not necessarily follow from here.

"And sent letters unto all the Jews that were in all the provinces of the King Ahasuerus, both nigh and far": Such as were near the city Shushan, and those that were at the greatest distance from it. These were more especially the things he wrote.

Esther 9:21 "To stablish [this] among them, that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same, yearly,"

That it might be a settled thing, and annually observed in all future generations, what they had now done.

"That they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same, yearly": As the former had been observed by the Jews in the provinces, and both by those in Shushan (Esther 9:17), as festivals in commemoration of their great deliverance. Hence the fourteenth of Adar is called the day of Mordecai, being established by him. "And they ordained all with a common decree in no case to let that day pass without solemnity, but to celebrate the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which in the Syrian tongue is called Adar, the day before Mardocheus' day."

Esther 9:22 "As the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day: that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor."

Having slain all those that rose up against them, and assaulted them.

"And the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning unto a good day": For in this month Adar, on the thirteenth day of it, they expected to have been all destroyed, which had occasioned great sorrow and mourning in them. But beyond their expectation, in the same month, and on the selfsame day of the month, they had deliverance and freedom from their enemies. Which was matter of joy, and made this day a good day to them.

"That they should make them days of feasting and joy": Keep both the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month as festivals. Eating and drinking, and making all tokens of joy and gladness. Though not in the Bacchanalian way in which they now observe them. For they say, a man is bound at the feast of Purim to exhilarate or inebriate himself until he does not know the difference between "cursed be Haman" and "blessed be Mordecai".

"And of sending portions one to another; and these now consist of eatables and drinkables": And according to the Jewish canons, a man must send two gifts to his friend, at least; and they that multiply them are most commendable. And those are sent by men to men, and by women to women, and not the contrary.

"And gifts to the poor": Alms money, as the Targum, to purchase food and drink with. Nor may they use it to any other purpose, though some say they may do what they will with it. And a man must not give less than two gifts to the poor; these are called the monies of Purim.

These two days would be established as a day of festivity and giving of gifts to the poor forever. Mordecai sent letters to the Jews in all the provinces, so that they would keep these days each year in memory of this event. This would be a time set aside for unselfish giving to the poor, and a time of festivity throughout the land. God had seen their terrible plight, and turned their sorrow into joy. We must continue to remember, that the Jews had gone into sackcloth and ashes, and tore their clothes in mourning. They prayed and fasted. It was the answer to these prayers that brought all of this about.

Verses 23-28: These verses contain the third account of the institution of the feast and explain how it got its name, Purim.

Esther 9:23 "And the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto them;"

They engaged to keep these two days as festivals annually, as they had at this time done. Not in a religious but in a civil way, not as parts of religious worship, or as additions to and innovations of the law, but by way of commemoration of a civil benefit which they had received. And yet we find in later times that this was scrupled by some as an innovation. For we are told that there

were eighty five elders, and more than thirty of them prophets, who were distressed about this matter, fearing it was an innovation.

Esther 9:24 "Because Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that [is], the lot, to consume them, and to destroy them;"

Had formed a design to exterminate them from the whole Persian Empire in one day.

"And had cast Pur, (that is, the lot), to consume them, and to destroy them. Had cast lots to find out what would be the luckiest day in the year for him to do it on, and the most unlucky and unfortunate to the Jews. And, according to the lot, the thirteenth of Adar was pitched upon. This and the following verse give the reasons for observing the above two days as festivals.

"Pur" we remember was lots. This was established as a Jewish holiday forever. It was called Purim.

Esther 9:25 "But when [Esther] came before the king, he commanded by letters that his wicked device, which he devised against the Jews, should return upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows."

To request of him her life, and the life of her people.

"He commanded by letters, that his wicked device, which he devised against the Jews, should return upon his own head": That whereas his wicked scheme was to destroy all the Jews. The king, by his second letter, gave orders that the Jews should have liberty to defend themselves and destroy their enemies which rose up against them. And the friends and party of Haman were entirely cut off.

"And that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows": Which he had prepared for Mordecai. Not that they were ordered to be hanged together, nor were they. Haman was hanged before on the twenty third day of the month, but his sons not till the fourteenth day of the twelfth month (Esther 7:10).

This was speaking of Haman's wicked device. He and his ten sons were hanged for this evil they had tried to do.

Esther 9:26 "Wherefore they called these days Purim after the name of Pur. Therefore for all the words of this letter, and [of that] which they had seen concerning this matter, and which had come unto them,"

"Purim": The first and last biblically revealed, non-Mosaic festival with perpetual significance.

The Book of Esther (also called the *Megillah*), is still read aloud during “Purim”, and the congregation shouts and boos whenever Haman is mentioned in order to drown out his name. Feasting and gift-giving are part of the ceremony, as is dressing in masks or costumes. Purim is preceded by the fast of Esther, a one-day fast to commemorate the three-day fast (recorded in 4:16).

Pur is the Persian name of the lots Haman had used. It is interesting that a Jewish holiday would start with a Persian word. The "im" on the end of the word is a Hebrew ending. They did not want to forget the happenings here.

Esther 9:27 "The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them, so as it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to their writing, and according to their [appointed] time every year;"

Who became proselytes to their religion. That is, they appointed the above two days as festivals, and engaged for themselves, for their children, and all proselytes, to observe them as such. And one of their canons runs thus: "all are obliged to read the Megillah (the book of Esther, which they always read on those days), Priests, Levites, Nethinim, Israelites, men, women, and proselytes, and servants made free, and they train up little ones to read it:"

"So as it should not fail": Of being observed, so as no man should transgress it, or pass it over.

"That they should keep these two days": The fourteenth and fifteenth of the month Adar or February.

"According to their writing": In this book, the book of Esther. Which was to be read, as Aben Ezra; written in the Hebrew character, as the Targum; that is, in the Assyrian character, as Jarchi; the square character, as they call it.

"And according to their appointed time every year": Whether simple or intercalated, as Aben Ezra observes. In an intercalary year the Jews have two Adars. And, though they keep the feast of Purim on the fourteenth of the first Adar, yet not with so much mirth, and call it the lesser Purim. But in the second Adar they observe it with all its ceremonies. So, in their canon, they do not keep Purim but in Adar that is next to Nisan or March, that redemption might be near redemption. The redemption of Mordecai near the redemption of Moses.

Esther 9:28 "And [that] these days [should be] remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and [that] these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed."

And accordingly, these days are commemorated by them now, and by all their families, and all in their families capable of it. And these words, "every province", and "every city", are used, as Aben Ezra observes. Lest a man should think he was not bound to keep this feast where there were no Jews; for, let him be where he may, he is obliged to keep it.

"And that these days of Purim should not fail among the Jews": Or the observance of them be neglected and cease.

"Nor the memorial of them perish from their seed": Neither the memorial of them, nor of the reason of keeping them. Wherefore on those days they read the whole book of Esther, fairly written on a roll of parchment, and are careful that none omit the reading of it. Rather, they say, the reading and learning the law should be omitted, and all commands and service, than the reading this volume. That so all might be acquainted with this wonderful deliverance, and keep it in mind.

It appears that this was not an optional celebration. It was required of all Jews for all generations. The day before Purim was a day of fasting to celebrate the fact of Esther's fast. The book of Esther was read at these celebrations.

Verses 29-32: Even in their new position of authority, Esther and Mordecai continued to work together to bring "words of peace and truth" to the Jews. They never forgot where they came from or God's purpose in bringing them into power (Rom. 8:28).

Esther 9:29 "Then Esther the queen, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote with all authority, to confirm this second letter of Purim."

"Second letter": An additional letter (compare verse 20 for the first letter), which added "fasting" and "lamentations" to the prescribed activity of Purim.

Perhaps, the reason that Esther mentioned that she was the daughter of Abihail, was so that all of the people would realize that she was Hebrew also. She might be the queen of Persia, but she was Jew by birth. It was unusual for a queen to be involved in such a letter, but her authority as queen added to the authority of Mordecai as second in command.

Esther 9:30 "And he sent the letters unto all the Jews, to the hundred twenty and seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, [with] words of peace and truth,"

That is, Mordecai did, signed in the queen's name, and his own.

"To the hundred twenty and seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus": Among which was Judea that had become a province. First of the Chaldean, now of the Persian Empire (see Ezra 5:8). To whom also these letters were sent, directing and ordering the Jews there to observe these days, who were also concerned in the deliverance wrought.

"With words of peace and truth exhorting them to live in peace with one another, and their neighbors, and to constancy in the true religion": Or wishing them all peace and prosperity in the most loving and sincere manner.

The Jews were scattered in those days. They had not all come back to their homeland when they had been given that option. The fact that they were in a foreign land did not give them the right to overlook Purim. Mordecai and Esther wanted them to know there would be peace for them during the reign of Xerxes and Esther.

Esther 9:31 "To confirm these days of Purim in their times [appointed], according as Mordecai the Jew and Esther the queen had enjoined them, and as they had decreed for themselves and for their seed, the matters of the fastings and their cry."

The fourteenth and fifteenth of Adar.

"According as Mordecai the Jew and Esther the queen had enjoined them": In the letters written and signed by them both.

"And as they had decreed for themselves, and for their seed" (see Esther 9:27).

"The matters of their fastings and their cry": In commemoration of their deliverance from those distresses and calamities which occasioned fastings and prayers during the time of them. And to this sense is the former Targum. Though it is certain the Jews observe the thirteenth day, the day before the two days, as a fast, and which they call the fast of Esther, and have prayers on the festival days peculiar to them. But the sense Aben Ezra gives seems best, that as the Jews had decreed to keep the fasts, mentioned in (Zech. 7:5), so they now decreed to rejoice in the days of Purim.

Mordecai and Esther set the example by agreeing to keep the feast of Purim themselves and for their descendants.

Esther 9:32 "And the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim; and it was written in the book."

"Written in the book": This could be the chronicle referred to (in 10:3), or another archival type document. It certainly does not hint that Esther wrote this canonical book.

This was written in the record book to make sure that it would always be remembered. The book spoken of is the book of the chronicles.

Esther Chapter 9 Questions

1. What was their 12th month?
2. What did the Jews do on the day Haman had planned for the Jews to be killed?
3. How did the Jews get permission to protect themselves?

4. Why could the people not withstand the Jews?
5. Why did the officers help the Jews?
6. What happened to Mordecai, after he took office?
7. Mordecai's power in Persia was compared to Joseph's power in _____.
8. Who did the Jews kill?
9. How many were killed at Shushan?
10. How large was the palace area?
11. Who were the sons of Haman, who were killed?
12. Why do you suppose they did not take the spoil?
13. When the king heard the number killed at Shushan, what did he ask Esther?
14. What answer did she give the king?
15. How were Haman's sons killed?
16. How many more were killed in Shushan on the second day?
17. How many were killed in the provinces?
18. When did the Jews in the province begin to celebrate?
19. Who suggested this as a celebration for forever?
20. Who wrote letters to the provinces for this to be a celebration every year?
21. What does "Pur" mean?
22. What would the festival be named?
23. Who wrote with Mordecai to the provinces the second time?
24. Why did Esther speak of herself as the daughter of Abihail?
25. Where was all of this recorded?