

Esther Chapter 8

Verses 1-2

According to the historians Herodotus and Josephus, the property of a traitor in Persia was confiscated by the state.

In this case, Xerxes gave it “(the house of Haman”), to the queen, and passed on his royal “signet ring” to Mordecai as a gesture of favor and trust.

Xerxes’ gift officially signaled that Mordecai had replaced Haman’s position in the kingdom.

Now that she had revealed her nationality to Xerxes (7:4), Esther was happy to present Mordecai to the king as her guardian and cousin.

The word “house” refers to “all that he had” (as in Genesis 39:4), thus his total estate.

Mordecai was given his “ring” (3:10; 8:8), and was appointed chief minister of the empire (as was Joseph in Genesis 41:42).

Esther 8:1 "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."

“The house of Haman”:

Property of a traitor by Persian custom returned to the king.

In this case, he gave it to his queen, Esther, who put Mordecai over it (8:2).

The outcome for Haman’s wife Zeresh and his wise men is unknown (5:14; 6:12-13).

Haman’s 10 sons later died (9:7-10).

The wicked Haman was dead.

In Persia, when a man did what Haman had done, and was executed for his crimes, everything he possessed became property of the government.

In this case, the king was the recipient.

This day spoken of here, then, was the day of his execution.

The king was very sorry for the trouble Haman had caused Esther, and he gave Haman's property to the queen.

When Esther admitted that she was a Jew, she also revealed to the king that Mordecai had raised her as if he were her father.

Mordecai had been greatly honored recently for saving the life of the king.

It was a logical conclusion, that he would take Haman's place as number two man in the country.

Esther 8:2 "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."

Which, with the Persians, was a token of the strongest affection and strictest friendship.

The Targum calls it his signatory ring, that with which he signed laws, edicts, letter, patents, etc. And so hereby made him keeper of the seals.

“And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman”:

Appointed him her steward of the estate of Haman, the king had given her.

We have discussed how the signet ring was a sign of authority.

The king took it from the finger of Haman, before he executed him.

The king wore it himself, until he put it on the finger of Mordecai.

This ring gave Mordecai the right to speak for the king.

Mordecai was like a chief of staff.

Esther did not give the house to Mordecai, because it was a gift to her from Ahasuerus.

She let Mordecai live in the house.

Verses 3-6

In spite of Haman's death and Mordecai's exaltation, the Jews were still doomed to destruction by an irreversible decree.

Esther 8:3 "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."

Went into his presence, without being called for as before, with a new petition.

“And fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears”:

The more to work upon his affections, and move him to grant her request.

Which she might be the more encouraged to hope for, through the success she already had.

“To put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews”:

To revoke, abolish, and make void a mischievous scheme Haman had devised against the Jews, to root out the whole nation of them in the Persian Empire.

Haman was dead, but his wicked edict was still in place.

The terrible thing was it was sealed with the signet of the king.

Esther went again without permission, to speak to the king.

He held his scepter out to her again, and she fell at her king's feet.

She was so troubled for her people that there were tears in her eyes.

She did not blame the king, but knew that he was the only chance to save her people aside from God.

Esther 8:4 "Then the king held out the golden scepter toward Esther. So Esther arose, and stood before the king,"

As a token that she had not incurred his displeasure by coming into his presence without leave, and that she was admitted to speak and make her request (see Esther 5:3).

“So Esther arose, and stood before the king”:

She rose from the ground on which she lay prostrate, and stood upon her feet, in a humble manner, to make her speech, and present her petition to the king.

The king loved Esther so much that he did not like to see her cry.

He, also, did not like to see his queen face first before him.

He raised his scepter for her to stand.

Esther 8:5 "And said, If it please the king, and if I have found favor 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:"

“To reverse”:

This proved to be impossible in light of the inflexible nature of the king’s edicts (1:19).

However, a counter-decree was possible (compare 8:8; 11-12).

Notice, she mentioned twice, "if she had found favor in his eyes".

What she was asking was impossible, because once the seal of the king was on the letters, they were law.

She blamed the whole thing on Haman, and somehow believed the king could rescind the orders because they were given by Haman.

Esther 8:6 "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?"

I cannot bear it; it will break my heart.

I shall die to see all my people massacred throughout the realm.

The thought of it is shocking and shuddering; to see it, intolerable.

“Or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?”

The same thing in different words, and somewhat more expressive and explanative.

She explains the evil coming upon her people of the utter destruction of them, not barely an oppression, but an extermination of them.

And she makes use of a word expressive of their relation to her, as more endearing, being her kindred.

She and they being, as it were, of the same family, and with whom she could not but sympathize in distress.

Nothing would please the king more than to reverse the letters, if it were possible.

Because Esther was a Jew, it would be difficult for her to see her people die, even if the king could save her.

Esther 8:7 "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."

Who was present at the same time, either at the desire of Esther, or by virtue of his office, being now one of those that saw the king's face (Esther 8:1).

“Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman”:

See Esther 8:1.

“And him they have hanged upon the gallows”:

Which he had prepared for Mordecai (Esther 7:10).

“Because he laid his hand upon the Jews”:

Intended to do so, and had prepared for it, and wrote letters, ordering their destruction on such a day.

Now as the king had shown favor to Esther and Mordecai, and had punished Haman for contriving mischief against them and the Jews.

Which was publicly known, the people would be fearful of doing anything against them, lest they should incur the king's displeasure.

And therefore might make themselves easy about this matter; but, however, to give them all the satisfaction he could, he directs them to do as follows in 8:8.

Now we find the true reason for the king killing Haman.

The king did not want the Jews killed either.

Esther 8:8 "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."

Whatever may be thought fit and proper for their safety and security.

“In the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring”:

As the former letters were.

“For the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse”:

Which is a reason both for the writing and sealing of the present letters in this manner, and why the former could not be reversed.

Nor does it appear that they were, but that, in virtue of them, the people had power to rise and kill the Jews on the day appointed, if they dared, or were so disposed.

And these empowered the Jews to rise in their own defense, and kill all that made any attempts upon them, for which they had the royal authority.

And these letters coming after the other, though they did not formally reverse them, which might not be done, yet rendered them ineffectual.

The king could do nothing about the edict that went forth to kill the Jews, because it had the king's seal upon it.

He was now telling Mordecai to do whatever he thought would help in this situation and put the seal of the king upon it.

The king had no idea how to help the situation that Haman created, but gave Mordecai permission to do whatever he could.

Verses 9-13

Mordecai's counter decree was issued in June of 474 B.C., a little over two months after the first decree was issued, allowing more than eight months for the Jews to prepare their defenses (See verse 9).

Esther 8:9 "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, a 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."

“Sivan”:

Refers to the period of May / June.

It had been two months and 10 days since Haman's decree (3:12); 8 months and 20 days remained until both decrees became simultaneously effective (3:13).

We can see from this that Haman wanted to annihilate the Jews.

His hate for them was so great, he did not want any to live, even in Judah.

The third month would be the same as our June.

Sivan is a Babylonian name having to do with a false god, it is not Hebrew.

Mordecai gathered the scribes and sent letters to each of the 127 provinces in their own language, a letter sealed with the king's signet.

It was just as much law as the one Haman had sent.

Verses 10-17

In this time of rejoicing, many people of the land “became Jews”.

The Jews were also given permission to “gather ... and protect” themselves against attack.

The response?

“Joy and stand ... in every province” (Psalms 97:11; 122:4).

Esther 8:10 "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:"

Which gave the letters authority, and made them irreversible, and for this Mordecai had the king's order (Esther 8:8).

“And sent letters by post”:

By runners or couriers.

“On horseback”:

That rode on horses that were racers that ran swiftly.

“And riders on mules, camels, and young dromedaries”:

Which were all different creatures, and swift ones, according to our version, especially the latter (see Jer. 2:23), which were a kind of camels, but swifter, and would go more than one hundred miles a day.

We spoke earlier of how their mail system was very similar to our pony express.

Esther 8:11 "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,"

“The king granted”:

Just as the king had permitted Haman, so he allowed the Jews to defend themselves and to plunder their spoil (9:10; 15-16).

All of the people of the provinces were actually controlled by the king of Persia.

They did not have a right to bear arms.

This edict would give them permission to fight back on the day that all the Jews were to be killed.

They were to kill the ones who had intended to kill them in the same manner the first edict had prescribed.

They could also take spoil of those they killed.

This was now a law giving them the right to defend themselves.

Esther 8:12 "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 day appointed and fixed in the former letters for the destruction of the Jews (Esther 3:13).

The first edict had set this day as the day to kill the Jews.

Now, the second edict gave the Jews permission to fight back.

This would be a one day war, and then both edicts would not be the law any longer.

Esther 8:13 "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."

A copy of the letters sent to the governors of provinces.

The sum and substance of them was published by a herald, or fixed in public places, that all might know the contents thereof.

And take care not to assault the Jews, as it would be to their peril.

“And that the Jews should be ready against that day to avenge themselves on their enemies”.

Abendana thinks this is to be restraining to those that were of the seed of Amalek, who were their principal enemies.

But no doubt it includes all that should rise up against them.

Mordecai had it distributed locally as well.

Anywhere there were Jews, there was also permission given for them to defend themselves.

Verses 14-17

The “post” were the couriers riding the mules and camels.

“And many of the people of the land became Jews” is the only Old Testament reference to people of other races becoming Jews, though the New Testament bears ample witness to the process in the first century A.D. (Matt. 23:15; Acts 2:10; 6:5; 13:43).

Esther 8:14 "[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."

Or on the mules, which in the Persian language were called “ahashteranim” (see note on Esther 8:10).

“Being hastened and pressed on by the king’s commandment”:

Who gave them a special order to make what haste they could, that the Jews might have time to prepare for their defense, and their enemies be the more intimidated.

“And the decree was given at Shushan the palace”:

The king’s counsellors agreeing to it, and perhaps signing it, as they did the former (see note on Esther 3:15).

These letters were sent early, so there would be time for other communications, if necessary.

These letters were even distributed in the palace.

Esther 8:15 "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."

“Mordecai went out”:

This second reward exceeded the first (6:6-9).

Blue and white were the royal colors of the Persian Empire.

This was a robe of royalty.

It was interesting that the colors would be blue and white.

White speaks of righteousness, and blue speaks of the heavenly.

Purple speaks of royalty.

The king was not aware of these meanings, but the LORD was.

This just meant that he had on his robes of the second in command in the country.

This great crown of gold was just a little shorter than the king's.

This reminds me of the robes that Joseph was given, when he became second in command in Egypt.

The people rejoiced.

This was the answer the LORD gave to the prayers and fasting the people had done.

Esther 8:16 "The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honor."

Prosperity, as opposed to the darkness of adversity in which they had been (see Isaiah 8:22).

Or lightsomeness and cheerfulness of spirit, as explained by the next words.

“And gladness, and joy”:

At the good news of their deliverance, so unexpected by them.

Thus light is explained by gladness (Psalm 97:11).

“And honor”:

Among men.

From their neighbors, who before had held them in contempt, as a people doomed to destruction.

The Jews were no longer sad and living in the shadow of the death that Haman intended to bring.

They had the light, and life of God renewed within them.

This would bring joy unspeakable.

Esther 8:17 "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."

“Many ... people ... Jews”:

The population realized that the God of the Jews greatly exceeded anything that the pantheon of Persian deities could offer (Exodus 15:14-16; Psalm 105:38; Acts 5:11), especially in contrast to their recent defeat by the Greeks.

It was very obvious that God was with them.

Some of the Persians feared when that day came, that some of the Jews would kill them.

They converted and became Jews themselves, to keep that from happening.

Esther Chapter 8 Questions

1. Who did the king give Haman's house to?
2. What day was spoken of in verse 1?
3. When did Esther reveal to the king that she was related to Mordecai?
4. Who would take Haman's place as number two under the king?
5. Who did the king give his signet ring to?
6. Esther set _____ over the house of Haman.
7. The signet ring was a sign of _____.
8. Mordecai was like a _____ of _____.
9. Haman was dead, but his wicked _____ was in place.
10. When Esther went to the king unannounced, what did she do?
11. Who was she blaming for the edict?
12. How did the king show he accepted her?
13. Why did the king want her to stand?
14. What did Esther say twice in verse 5?

15. Why was what she was asking impossible?
16. What questions did she ask the king in verse 6?
17. What reason did the king give for having executed Haman?
18. Who could reverse an edict with the seal of the king on it?
19. What did the king give Mordecai permission to do?
20. Why had Haman sent this edict to all of the provinces?
21. How many provinces were there?
22. What did Mordecai do to stop the slaughter of the Jews?
23. Why could the Jews not fight back, before the letter Mordecai sent?
24. What did the new edict say?
25. How long would the war last?
26. How were the edicts sent to the provinces?
27. How was Mordecai dressed now?
28. How did the Jews celebrate?
29. Who became Jews, because of the second edict?
30. Where was all of this recorded?