

# ESTHER

## Chapter 9

### *Triumph of the Jews*

On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, the edict commanded by the king was to be carried out. On this day the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, but now the tables were turned and the Jews got the upper hand over those who hated them.<sup>2</sup> The Jews assembled in their cities in all the provinces of King Xerxes to attack those seeking their destruction. No one could stand against them, because the people of all the other nationalities were afraid of them.<sup>3</sup> And all the nobles of the provinces, the satraps, the governors and the king's administrators helped the Jews, because fear of Mordecai had seized them.<sup>4</sup> Mordecai was prominent in the palace; his reputation spread throughout the provinces, and he became more and more powerful.<sup>5</sup> The Jews struck down all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying them, and they did what they pleased to those who hated them.<sup>6</sup> In the citadel of Susa, the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men.<sup>7</sup> They also killed Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha,<sup>8</sup> Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha,<sup>9</sup> Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai and Vaizatha,<sup>10</sup> the ten sons of Haman son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews. But they did not lay their hands on the plunder.<sup>11</sup> The number of those slain in the citadel of Susa was reported to the king that same day.<sup>12</sup> The king said to Queen Esther, "The Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men and the ten sons of Haman in the citadel of Susa. What have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? Now what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? It will also be granted."<sup>13</sup> "If it pleases the king," Esther answered, "give the Jews in Susa permission to carry out this day's edict tomorrow also, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged on gallows."<sup>14</sup> So the king commanded that this be done. An edict was issued in Susa, and they hanged the ten sons of Haman.<sup>15</sup> The Jews in Susa came together on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar, and they put to death in Susa three hundred men, but they did not lay their hands on the plunder.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, the remainder of the Jews who were in the king's provinces also assembled to protect themselves and get relief from their enemies. They killed seventy-five thousand of them but did not lay their hands on the plunder.<sup>17</sup> This happened on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar, and on the fourteenth they rested and made it a day of feasting and joy.

**9:1** See notes on 8:9–13. The Jews carry out the edict of Mordecai eight months and 20 days later. (CSB)

*month of Adar, on the thirteenth day.* Nine months have passed since Mordecai's edict was sent out. Both his edict (8:12) and that of Haman (3:13) were to be carried out

on the same day. Enemies of Judeans had the legal right to kill them. Judeans had the right to defend themselves and destroy their attackers. (TLSB)

*tables were turned.* The statement that the opposite happened points to the author's concern with literary symmetry: He balances most of the details from the first half of the story with their explicit reversal in the second half. (CSB)

*the Jews gained mastery over those who hated them.* The theme of Esther is summarized by this single phrase. Hatred of Judeans was obviously widespread, and many people in Persia hoped to annihilate this foreign race. Instead, the attackers found themselves overwhelmed. (TLSB)

**9:2–3** An illustration of Ge 12:3. Confronted with two conflicting edicts issued in the king's name—the edict of Haman and the edict of Mordecai—the governors follow the edict of the current regime. (CSB)

**9:2** *in their cities.* Some Persian cities no doubt had a greater population of Judeans. (TLSB)

*fear of them had fallen on all peoples.* People were afraid because Mordecai now wielded the power that Haman once had, and Judeans had been given power to defend themselves. (TLSB)

**9:3** *All the officials of the provinces ... helped the Jews.* It was to their political advantage to get on the good side of those who were now in power.

*fear of Mordecai had fallen on them.* The king's servants had once wondered if Mordecai's "words would stand" (3:4), and Haman was told by his wife that he would "surely fall before" Mordecai (6:13). What once seemed impossible had come to pass. (TLSB)

**9:4** *the man Mordecai.* Mordecai was no longer referred to as a Judean but as "the man," suggesting his importance. This expression is also applied to Moses (Nu 12:3). (TLSB)

**9:5–10** The Jews attend to the unfinished business of "blotting out the name of the Amalekites" (Ex 17:16; Dt 25:17–19; see notes on 3:1–6). This incident is presented as the antithesis of 1Sa 15: The narrator is emphatic that the Jews did not take plunder, in spite of the king's permission to do so (8:11). Seizing the plunder 500 years earlier in the battle against Amalek had cost Saul his kingship (1Sa 15:17–19); here, not taking the plunder brings royal power to Mordecai (vv. 20–23). See vv. 15–16; cf. Ge 14:22–24. (CSB)

**9:5** *did as they pleased.* Judeans were given a free hand to kill their enemies without interference from government officials. (tlsb)

**9:6 FIVE HUNDRED MEN** – There is no indication that they took advantage of the king’s permission to kill women and children. (PBC)

Likely that at least some of those killed in Susa were members of the royal court. (TLSB)

**9:7–10** *ten sons of Haman*. Killing Haman’s sons guaranteed that they would not seek to avenge their father’s death or regain his office. Esther later requested the king to hang their bodies on the gallows (v 13). *laid no hand on the plunder*. Judeans had been given permission to plunder the property of their enemies, but they refused to do so (repeated in vv 15, 16). In a culture where such action was expected, their upright behavior would be noticed and remembered. (TLSB)

**9:10** *sons of Haman*. The second reference to Haman’s sons (see 5:11; see also Introduction: Purpose, Themes and Literary Features). (CSB)

**9:11–12** *What then have they done*. Ahasuerus seemed appalled by what was happening in the land but made no move to stop the bloodshed. *Now what is your wish?* The king was ready to continue answering the requests of his queen. How completely Ahasuerus has changed since his dealings with Vashti (1:12–22). (TLSB)

**9:12** See 5:3, 6; 7:2. (CSB)

**9:13** The reference to hanging in this case is to the display of the corpses, not to the means of the execution (see vv. 7–10 and note on 2:23). (CSB)

*Susa ... this day’s edict*. Esther requested another day for the resistance to be wiped out in Susa, where enemies still remained. Condition that Judeans were to fight only in self-defense still applied. (TLSB)

**9:14** *ten sons of Haman were hanged*. The Philistines had hung the dead body of Saul on the wall of Beth-shan to mock Esther and Mordecai’s ancestors (1Sm 31:8–10). (TLSB)

**9:15–16** See note on vv. 5–10. (CSB)

**9:15** *fourteenth day ... killed 300 men in Susa*. Only in Susa was there a second day of killing, which resulted in feasting on the 15th day of Adar (v 18).

**9:16** Report of what happened in the 127 Persian provinces is brief. (TLSB)

*defend their lives*. Self-defense is again emphasized. (TLSB)

*got relief*. Hbr word means “quiet” or “rest.” (TLSB)

*killed 75,000*. An incredibly large number, but no more than that of people killed in other uprisings in history. Remember, the decree went throughout the vast Persian Empire. We need not assume that all Judeans acted from pure motives of self-defense; they may well have displayed a vengeful spirit. (TLSB)

**9:16, 22** *relief from their enemies.* Closely associated with the vengeance on their enemies is the rest promised to Israel (Dt 25:19). The defeat of Haman brings rest to the Jews. Cf. 1Ch 22:6–10; Ps 95:8–11; Isa 32:18; Heb 3:11–4:11. (CSB)

**9:17** *on the fourteenth day ... feasting and gladness.* Judeans in the provinces celebrated deliverance from their enemies with feasting and rejoicing on the 14th of Adar. (TLSB)

The purpose of the scriptural account is to show how God acted in history to preserve his chosen people, so that the promise of the Messiah could be fulfilled. (PBC)

### *Purim Celebrated*

**<sup>18</sup> The Jews in Susa, however, had assembled on the thirteenth and fourteenth, and then on the fifteenth they rested and made it a day of feasting and joy. <sup>19</sup> That is why rural Jews—those living in villages—observe the fourteenth of the month of Adar as a day of joy and feasting, a day for giving presents to each other. <sup>20</sup> Mordecai recorded these events, and he sent letters to all the Jews throughout the provinces of King Xerxes, near and far, <sup>21</sup> to have them celebrate annually the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar <sup>22</sup> as the time when the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month when their sorrow was turned into joy and their mourning into a day of celebration. He wrote them to observe the days as days of feasting and joy and giving presents of food to one another and gifts to the poor. <sup>23</sup> So the Jews agreed to continue the celebration they had begun, doing what Mordecai had written to them. <sup>24</sup> For Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them and had cast the *pur* (that is, the lot) for their ruin and destruction. <sup>25</sup> But when the plot came to the king's attention, <sup>a</sup> he issued written orders that the evil scheme Haman had devised against the Jews should come back onto his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. <sup>26</sup> (Therefore these days were called Purim, from the word *pur*.) Because of everything written in this letter and because of what they had seen and what had happened to them, <sup>27</sup> the Jews took it upon themselves to establish the custom that they and their descendants and all who join them should without fail observe these two days every year, in the way prescribed and at the time appointed. <sup>28</sup> These days should be remembered and observed in every generation by every family, and in every province and in every city. And these days of Purim should never cease to be celebrated by the Jews, nor should the memory of them die out among their descendants. <sup>29</sup> So Queen Esther, daughter of Abihail, along with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter concerning Purim. <sup>30</sup> And Mordecai sent letters to all the Jews in the 127 provinces of the kingdom of Xerxes—words of goodwill**

and assurance—<sup>31</sup> to establish these days of Purim at their designated times, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had decreed for them, and as they had established for themselves and their descendants in regard to their times of fasting and lamentation.<sup>32</sup> Esther’s decree confirmed these regulations about Purim, and it was written down in the records.

**9:18–19** The author accounts for the tradition of observing Purim on two different days: It is observed on the 14th in most towns, but the Jews of Susa observed it on the 15th. Today it is observed on the 14th except in Jerusalem, where it is observed on the 15th. – Purim usually occurs during our month of February. Its celebration is somewhat like a combination of our Halloween and New Year’s Eve. Children wear costumes and paint their faces. There is a great deal of merrymaking. A very important aspect of the holiday is the public reading of the book of Esther. This reading is interrupted with noisemakers at every mention of Haman’s name with festive songs. Gifts of food to friends and to the poor are another part of the holiday. One unique food of the festival is a cookie called “Haman’s ears.” The whole tone of the holiday is that of a victory celebration like V-E Day or V-J Day or Armistice Day in modern times. (PBC)

**9:18** *on the fifteenth day.* Festival in Susa was a day later because Judeans there had been fighting on the 13th and 14th. *feasting and gladness.* Tenth and final reference to feasting in Est.

**9:19** Holiday was observed annually in outlying areas on the 14th of Adar. (TLSB)

*gifts of food to one another.* Unlike the festivals commanded of God’s people in the Law of Moses, this festival did not include bringing sacrifices to the temple. Its emphasis was rather on communal celebrating, feasting, and giving gifts of food. (TLSB)

**9:1–19** When the 13th of Adar arrives, the Judeans ably defend themselves. They destroy those who hate them but take no plunder from their enemies. In this way, God preserves His OT people because from them would come the Savior of the world. God controls history to preserve His elect and fulfill His promises. That is still true today. The Church has been called to witness to the Gospel in a world that is often contemptuous and hostile. By God’s grace, we can be sure that no matter how “the nations rage and the peoples plot” (Ps 2:1), “the gates of hell shall not prevail” against the Church (Mt 16:18). God keeps us close to our Savior so that we might be His throughout all eternity. • Praise be to Your name, Lord God, for calling me to faith in Your Son and promising Your loving protection for me and all believers, now and forever. Amen. (TLSB)

**9:20** *Mordecai recorded these events.* Some take this as indicating that Mordecai wrote the book of Esther; however, the more natural understanding is that he recorded the events in the letters he sent. (CSB)

Mordecai’s letters reviewed how Judeans were saved from their enemies, an event to be celebrated annually at the Festival of Purim. Written documents carried special authority

throughout the Persian Empire, and Est frequently mentions them. Cf vv 23, 26, 27, 29, 30, 32. (TLSB)

**9:21** There had been feasting in the villages on the 14th of Adar and in Susa on the 15th (vv 17–18). Mordecai required Judeans to celebrate on both days. (TLSB)

**9:22** *sorrow into gladness*. Future generations of God’s people would recall the time when sorrow was turned into joy and mourning into celebration. (TLSB)

*presents of food*. See note on 2:9; cf. Ne 8:10, 12.

Part of the festivities, emphasizing community and compassion. (TLSB)

**9:23** The Judeans agreed to celebrate on an annual basis what they had initially done spontaneously.

**9:24–25** In explaining the reason for the holiday, credit is given to the king for hanging Haman and his sons. No mention is made of the contributions of Esther and Mordecai and the battles fought between the Judeans and their enemies. (TLSB)

*he gave orders in writing*. Refers to document Mordecai requested from Ahasuerus to counteract Haman’s decree. (TLSB)

**9:24, 26** *pur*. See note on 3:7. (CSB)

The word mean lots Haman had cast. (PBC)

**9:26a** *Purim*. Became a major holiday, along with the festivals commanded in Mosaic Law. Purim is not mentioned in the NT (nor is Est quoted), but shortly after the time of Christ, official Jewish worship regulations included a whole section devoted to its observance. Today, it is usually celebrated on only one day, the 14th of Adar (Feb/Mar). An important aspect is the public reading of the Book of Esther. During this reading, people use noisemakers, cheer at the mention of Mordecai’s name, and hiss when Haman’s name is mentioned. Children wear costumes and paint their faces for this victory celebration. (TLSB)

**9:26b–28** all who joined them. Some Gentiles become worshipers of the true God and join the Judeans in observing all the festivals. among their descendants. Judeans obligate themselves (v 21) to observe this festival throughout every generation. Like the other festivals, Purim keeps them separate from other nations and contributes to their survival as a people. (TLSB)

**9:27** *all who join them*. Some refer this phrase to a period of Jewish proselytism and regard it as important to dating the book. It is more likely that it refers to those mentioned in 8:17. (CSB)

**9:29** *Queen Esther ... gave full written authority.* She added the weight of her royal authority to Mordecai's letter instituting this new festival. (TLSB)

**9:30** Letters that went out to the provinces were worded in a friendly manner and stressed the facts of what had transpired. Some Judeans may have questioned celebrating Purim because it was not authorized in Mosaic Law. (TLSB)

**9:31** *obligated ... obligated themselves.* People had agreed to do what Mordecai and Esther required of them (vv 21, 27). (TLSB)

*fasting.* See notes on 4:3, 16. No date is assigned for this fast. Jews traditionally observe the 13th of Adar, Haman's propitious day (see 3:7, 13), as a fast ("the fast of Esther") before the celebration of Purim. These three days of victory celebration on the 13th–15th days of Adar rhetorically balance the three days of Esther's fasting prior to interceding with the king (4:16). (CSB)

Many later kept the 13th of Adar as a day of fasting. (TLSB)

**9:32** The authority of Esther, a secular ruler, is again cited as the reason to observe Purim. (TLSB)

**9:20–32** The Festival of Purim is established by Mordecai and Esther to celebrate the destruction of Haman and other Persian enemies. God works behind the scenes to bring about this victory. Later, God intervenes in a very public, yet mysterious, way to overcome the spiritual enemies of all people: sin, death, and the devil. We were helpless, but God rescued us by sending His Son, who took our sin, our punishment, and our death upon Himself, paying the price for our redemption. We have gotten relief from our enemies. Our sorrow has been turned to joy and our mourning into feasting because the Holy Spirit has worked faith in our hearts. We celebrate our victory at the festivals of Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. • Loving Father, You sent Jesus to rescue me from eternal death and the Spirit to create faith in my heart. My celebration of joy and gladness has begun, and I look forward to it continuing with You forever in heaven. Amen. (TLSB)