

ESTHER

Chapter 8

The King's Edict in Behalf of the Jews

That same day King Xerxes gave Queen Esther the estate of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came into the presence of the king, for Esther had told how he was related to her. ² The king took off his signet ring, which he had reclaimed from Haman, and presented it to Mordecai. And Esther appointed him over Haman's estate. ³ Esther again pleaded with the king, falling at his feet and weeping. She begged him to put an end to the evil plan of Haman the Agagite, which he had devised against the Jews. ⁴ Then the king extended the gold scepter to Esther and she arose and stood before him. ⁵ "If it pleases the king," she said, "and if he regards me with favor and thinks it the right thing to do, and if he is pleased with me, let an order be written overruling the dispatches that Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, devised and wrote to destroy the Jews in all the king's provinces. ⁶ For how can I bear to see disaster fall on my people? How can I bear to see the destruction of my family?" ⁷ King Xerxes replied to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, "Because Haman attacked the Jews, I have given his estate to Esther, and they have hanged him on the gallows. ⁸ Now write another decree in the king's name in behalf of the Jews as seems best to you, and seal it with the king's signet ring—for no document written in the king's name and sealed with his ring can be revoked." ⁹ At once the royal secretaries were summoned—on the twenty-third day of the third month, the month of Sivan. They wrote out all Mordecai's orders to the Jews, and to the satraps, governors and nobles of the 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush. ^a These orders were written in the script of each province and the language of each people and also to the Jews in their own script and language. ¹⁰ Mordecai wrote in the name of King Xerxes, sealed the dispatches with the king's signet ring, and sent them by mounted couriers, who rode fast horses especially bred for the king. ¹¹ The king's edict granted the Jews in every city the right to assemble and protect themselves; to destroy, kill and annihilate any armed force of any nationality or province that might attack them and their women and children; and to plunder the property of their enemies. ¹² The day appointed for the Jews to do this in all the provinces of King Xerxes was the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar. ¹³ A copy of the text of the edict was to be issued as law in every province and made known to the people of every nationality so that the Jews would be ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies. ¹⁴ The couriers, riding the royal horses, raced out, spurred on by the king's command. And the edict was also issued in the citadel of Susa. ¹⁵ Mordecai left the king's presence wearing royal garments of blue and white, a large crown of gold and a

purple robe of fine linen. And the city of Susa held a joyous celebration.¹⁶ For the Jews it was a time of happiness and joy, gladness and honor.¹⁷ In every province and in every city, wherever the edict of the king went, there was joy and gladness among the Jews, with feasting and celebrating. And many people of other nationalities became Jews because fear of the Jews had seized them.

8:1–17 The author achieves considerable literary symmetry by recapitulating much of 3:1–4:3 in almost identical terms. (CSB)

8:1 gave Queen Esther the estate of Haman. Herodotus (3.128–129) and Josephus (*Antiquities*, 11.17) confirm that the property of a traitor reverted to the crown; Xerxes presents Haman's wealth (5:11) to Esther. (CSB)

Typical that the property of an executed criminal would be confiscated and awarded to someone else. (TLSB)

Esther had told what he was to her. Ahasuerus finally learned of the relationship between his queen and Mordecai. (TLSB)

8:2 Cf. 3:10, where the king's offer of his ring includes Haman's keeping the money; here Mordecai receives the office and the estate of Haman. (CSB)

signet ring. The king's signet ring authorized Mordecai to sign royal edicts, a power that had previously been granted to Haman. (TLSB)

over the house of Haman. Further evidence that Mordecai had replaced Haman. Ambr: "That commendable friendship which maintains virtue is to be preferred most certainly to wealth, or honours, or power. It is not wont to be preferred to virtue indeed, but to follow after it" (*NPNF 2* 10:87). (TLSB)

8:3–6 Esther and Mordecai are secure (7:4–5), but the irrevocable decree is still a threat to the rest of the Jews. (CSB)

8:3 *fell at his feet and wept and pleaded.* Esther's plea, accompanied by emotional gestures, was intended to move the king to be merciful to the Judeans. (TLSB)

pleaded. Same Hbr word was used in 4:8, when Mordecai asked Esther to approach the king on behalf of her people. (TLSB)

avert the evil plan of Haman. Haman was dead, but his edict lived on (3:12–15). (TLSB)

Agagite. See note on 3:1. (CSB)

8:5 *If it please the king.* Esther prefaced her previous request to the king with similar conditional phrases (7:3) but here adds two more. (TLSB)

Favor. See 4:11; 5:2. (CSB)

revoke the letters devised by Haman. Esther asked Ahasuerus to nullify Haman's decree, which had gone out in the king's name. (TLSB)

8:6 *calamity.* Lit, "evil." (TLSB)

my people?... my kindred? Esther unabashedly identified herself with the Judeans. (TLSB)

destruction. Lit, "perishing." (TLSB)

8:7 *Mordecai the Jew.* Mordecai's Judean heritage is emphasized emphasized (cf 5:13). (TLSB)

he intended to lay hands on the Jews. Actually, Ahasuerus had initially ordered Haman's execution because of his perceived attack on the queen (7:8–10). (TLSB)

8:8 See 1:19; see also Introduction: Purpose, Themes and Literary Features. The dilemma is the same as the one that confronted Darius the Mede in Daniel (Da 6:8, 12, 15). The solution is to issue another decree that in effect counters the original decree of Haman without formally revoking it (see note on 9:2–3). (CSB)

you may write as you please. Previously Haman had held that right (3:11). (TLSB)

edict ... cannot be revoked. Though it was impossible for the Persian king to rescind any decree that had gone out in his name, issuing a second decree countered the effects of the first. (TLSB)

8:9–13 The phraseology is taken from the parallel in 3:12–14. The extent of the destruction is the same as that earlier decreed against Amalek (see note on 3:13). (CSB)

8:9 *twenty-third day ... third month.* In Xerxes's 12th year, i.e., June 25, 474 B.C., two months and ten days after the proclamation of Haman's edict (see note on 3:13). (CSB)

Second decree was issued 70 days after the first (3:12). *each ... language.* Scribes had to translate the edict in the languages of the 127 provinces of the Persian Empire. *also to the Jews ... language.* Edict was translated in Hbr, indicating that the Judeans had retained their own language. (TLSB)

8:11 TO DESTROY AND KILL – The same words as in Haman’s decree: therefore the Jews had as much authority to slay their enemies, as their enemies had to slay them. – It is shocking to us that the decree authorized the killing of women and children. But this decree was merely following the basic principle of Near Eastern justice, which is also recognized in the Mosaic law, “an eye for an eye” (Deut 19:21). This decree authorized the Jews to use the exact measures which Haman’s decree, recorded in chapter 4, had granted to their enemies. Both sides in the conflict were now put on equal terms. (PBC)

Every element in Haman’s decree (3:13) had its counterpoint in the edict issued by Mordecai.(TLSB)

to gather and defend their lives. Haman’s decree had stated that the Persians were to attack the Judeans, who were now permitted to counterattack in defense. (TLSB)

destroy ... kill ... annihilate any armed force. Mordecai used Haman’s wording with one significant difference: the Judeans would be fighting in self-defense, not as aggressors determined to kill. (TL+SB)

children and women included. Judean women and children who might be attacked. (TLSB)

plunder their goods. Haman had authorized plunder of the condemned people, and Mordecai gave that same permission to his people. However, the Judeans did not plunder the possessions of their enemies. (TLSB)

8:12 Time limit was set so that the killing would not go on indefinitely. (TLSB)

thirteenth day ... twelfth month. Mar. 7, 473 B.C. (see 3:13). Some 15 years after this first Purim, Ezra would lead his expedition to Jerusalem (Ezr 7:9). (CSB)

The original day chosen by lot for the destruction of the Judeans (see notes, 3:7, 13). (TLSB)

8:13 *take vengeance on their enemies.* Concept of revenge was deeply rooted in the ancient biblical world and also recognized in Mosaic Law (Dt 19:21: “life for life, eye for eye”; cf 1Ki 2:31). Mordecai permitted the Judeans to retaliate against enemies who would seek to harm them. Remember that Esther and Mordecai’s first choice was simply to revoke Haman’s edict, which Ahasuerus could not do. (TLSB)

8:14–17 The phraseology is taken from 3:15–4:3. (CSB)

8:15 *royal garments.* Mordecai’s second investiture (see Introduction: Purpose, Themes and Literary Features; see also note on 6:10). (CSB)

After Haman's edict, Mordecai had "put on sackcloth and ashes" (4:1). Now, he dressed in royal clothing, because the previous situation was completely reversed. (TLSB)

great golden crown. Mordecai was second only to the king. (TLSB)

city of Susa shouted and rejoiced. Earlier, the inhabitants of Susa were "thrown into confusion" (3:15) by the edict against the Judeans. Now, they were exultant. (TLSB)

8:16 Mourning, fasting, weeping, and lamenting (4:3) were replaced by celebration among the Judeans. This verse is still recited in synagogue services to mark the end of the Sabbath. (TLSB)

8:17 *feast.* The eighth reference to a banquet or feast. (TLSB)

declared themselves Jews. People of the land identified with the Judeans, not by converting to faith in Yahweh, but by siding with the Judeans in an ethnic sense. (TLSB)

fear of the Jews had fallen on them. People were afraid to attack the Judeans because they knew the Judeans would fight back and defeat them. (TLSB)

Ch 8 King Ahasuerus gives Mordecai permission to issue a decree that countermands Haman's decree. The Judeans are given the right to defend themselves if attacked and so take vengeance on their enemies. Self-defense is not forbidden in Scripture, but Jesus has overturned the law of revenge for believers (cf Mt 5:38–39). Leave vengeance to the Lord and the governing officials, who are called to administer justice (Rm 12:19; 13:3–4). If God would deal with us as our sins deserve, we would all be destroyed in hell. But the holy God has reversed the decree of eternal death against us because of His Son's sacrifice on the cross. His love for us moves us to love even our enemies (Mt 5:44). • Lord God, You have issued a decree of deliverance for me. Cause the joy and gladness in my heart to shine forth every day in my words and actions as I share this good news with others. Amen. (TLSB)