

CHAPTER 9

INTRODUCTION TO ESTHER 9

In this chapter we have an account of the Jews gathering together, on the day fixed for their destruction, to defend themselves, which they did in all the provinces, and smote their enemies; (^{<T000>}Esther 9:1-5). In Shushan the palace they slew the ten sons of Haman and five hundred men on that day, (^{<T006>}Esther 9:6-11) and at the request of the queen they were allowed the next day to hang up his sons, when they slew three hundred men more, (^{<T012>}Esther 9:12-15), in the provinces they slew 75,000 and those in one day only, and the following days they kept as a festival, but they in Shushan kept the two days following, (^{<T016>}Esther 9:16-19), and which two days were established by Esther and Mordecai as festivals, to be observed as such in future ages, by the name of the days of Purim, (^{<T020>}Esther 9:20-32).

Ver. 1. *Now in the twelfth month, that is the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same*, etc.] Of which (see ^{<T013>}Esther 3:13),

when the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution; even both his commandments and decrees, the one empowering the enemies of the Jews on that day to destroy them, and the other empowering the Jews to act both defensively and offensively against their enemies:

in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them; by virtue of the first decree of the king; and notwithstanding the second, they might hope to have it because of their superior numbers:

though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them; it proved the reverse, partly through the second decree in favour of the Jews, and partly through the fear of them that fell upon their enemies; because the court was on their side, and the officers everywhere, and especially their God filled them with courage, and their enemies with terror.

Ver. 2. *The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities, throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus*, etc.] 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.

Ver. 3. *And all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and officers of the king, blessed the Jews*, etc.] Countenanced them and encouraged them, and gave them all assistance in their power; extolled them, as the word signifies, lifted them up, and spoke well of them, or praised them, as the Targum:

because the fear of Mordecai was upon them; he being now chief minister, they might fear, if they took part with the enemies of the Jews against them, they might be turned out of their places.

Ver. 4. *For Mordecai was great in the king's house*, etc.] 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 favourite 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 favour, and had offices of honour and trust heaped upon him, and increased both in wealth and power.

Ver. 5. *Thus the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter, and destruction*, etc.] 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.

Ver. 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.

Ver. 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,* etc.] Along with the five hundred men, at the head of which they were:

but on the spoil laid they not their hands; though they were allowed by the edict to do it, (^{<1781b>}Esther 8:11), but this they did not, that it might appear that they did not take away their lives from a covetous desire of their estates, but purely in self-defence; and they might do this, the more to ingratiate themselves to the king, to whom the goods and estates of those men would be confiscated.

Ver. 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 subjects had been slain; or officiously by others, with an intention to irritate the king against the Jews.

Ver. 12. *And the king said unto Esther the queen,* etc.] After the account had been brought in to him:

the Jews have slain and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the palace; the Targum adds, of the seed of Amalek:

and the ten sons of Haman: which very probably were all he had; though the Targum, in (^{<1794>}Esther 9:14), makes mention of seventy sons that Zeresh his wife fled with:

what have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? that could not be said; but it might be concluded, that if so many were slain in Shushan, the number must be great in all the provinces:

now what is thy petition and it shall be granted thee: or “what is thy request further? and it shall be done”; if this was not sufficient and satisfactory, whatever else she should ask for should be granted.

Ver. 13. *Then said Esther, if it please the king,* etc.] For she was all submission to his will:

let it be granted to the Jews which are in Shushan; for no further did she desire the grant to be extended:

to do tomorrow also according to this days decree; one Targum makes the request only that they might keep the morrow as a festival, but the other, more rightly, to do according to the decree of this day; which was, to slay as many of their enemies as rose up against them; and whereas many might flee and hide themselves, who were implacable enemies of the Jews, Esther moves for a grant that the decree might be continued for the next day, that these might be found out and slain; in which she sought the glory of divine justice, in their righteous destruction, and the peace of the people of God, and not private revenge, or to indulge malice:

and let Haman’s ten sons be hanged upon the gallows; on which their father was; this was deferred, though they were already slain, for their greater reproach, and for a terror to others not to injure the people of God; and it was usual with the Persians to hang persons on a gallows, or fix them to a cross, after they were dead; as Polycrates was by Oroites^{f172}, and Bagspates by Parysatis^{f173}.

Ver. 14. *And the king commanded it so to be done: and the decree was given at Shushan,* etc.] 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; the Targum gives us the distance between each person hanged thereon.

Ver. 15. *For the Jews that were in Shushan gathered themselves together on the fourteenth day also of the month Adar,* etc.] 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 Human:

but on the prey they laid not their hand; (see Gill on “~~1700~~ Esther 9:7”).

Ver. 16. *But the other Jews that were in the king’s provinces gathered themselves together,* etc.] In a body, in their respective provinces and cities:

and stood for their lives; defended themselves against those that attacked them:

and had rest from their enemies; that selfsame day; all being destroyed by them, and none daring to appear against them:

and slew of their foes 75,000 men; that is, in all the provinces put together:

but they laid not their hands on the prey; (see Gill on “~~1700~~ Esther 9:7”).

Ver. 17. *On the thirteenth day of the month Adar,* etc.] This belongs to the preceding verse; and the meaning is, that on this day the Jews gathered together and slew so many thousand 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^{f174}, mourning and fasting on this day were forbidden, but feasting and gladness were to be multiplied.

Ver. 18. *But the Jews that were at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth day thereof, and on the fourteenth day thereof,* etc.] 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.

Ver. 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,* etc.] Jarchi observes that those in the villages, who are 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^{f175} 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 ^{<6110>}Revelation 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 ^{<6180>}Nehemiah 8:10), though these seem to be distinct from them, (^{<6192>}Esther 9:22).

Ver. 20. *And Mordecai wrote these things*, etc.] 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 hence:

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.

Ver. 21. *To stablish this among them*, etc.] 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, (^{<6197>}Esther 9:17-19)

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 thirtieth day of the twelfth month, which in the Syrian tongue is called Adar, the day before Mardocheus’ day.” (2 Maccabees 15:36)

Ver. 22. *As the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies,* etc.] 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 ^{f176}, 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 ^{f177}, 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 on 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 ^{f178}; and a man must not give less than two gifts to the poor; these are called the monies of Purim ^{f179}.

Ver. 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, and 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 ^{f180} that there were

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

Ver. 24. *Because Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them,* etc.] 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 most lucky 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.

Ver. 25. *But when Esther came before the king,* etc.] 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~~ Esther 7:10 8:9 9:13,14).

Ver. 26. *Wherefore they called these days Purim, after the name of Pur,* etc.] The lot; because of the lots cast by Haman; (see ~~ESTHER~~ Esther 3:7),

therefore for all the words of this letter; in obedience to what Mordecai wrote in his letter to the Jews, and because of the things contained in it:

and of that which they had seen concerning this matter; with their own eyes, in the several provinces where their enemies rose up to assault them, but were destroyed by them:

and what had come unto them: by report; as the fall of Haman, and advancement of Mordecai, and the favours shown to Esther and her

people; all this belongs to the following verse, containing the reasons of the Jews' appointment and engagement to observe the days of Purim.

Ver. 27. *The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such that joined themselves unto them,* etc.] 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 ^{f181} runs thus,

“all are obliged to read the Megillah (the book of Esther, which they always read on those days), priests, Levites, Nethinims, 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 ^{f182}; 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 ^{f183}.

Ver. 28. *And that these days should be remembered, and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city,* etc.] 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^{f184}, 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.

Ver. 29. *Then Esther the queen, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote with all authority*, etc.] Strongly pressing the observance of this festival; before, Mordecai only recommended it, but now the queen gave a sanction to it, and laid her obligation on the Jews to observe it; perhaps some of the Jews were backward to it, or neglected to observe it, and therefore Esther and Mordecai joined in a letter to them, to press them to it; the Jewish chronologer^{f185} says, this was written the year following; the former Targum is, they wrote this whole volume, and the strength of the miracle, or set the miraculous deliverance in the strongest light, with this view,

to confirm this second letter of Purim; that it might have its weight and influence upon them, to engage them to keep it, as the latter Targum adds; that when it was an intercalary year, they might not read the Megillah (or book of Esther) in the first Adar, but in the second Adar.

Ver. 30. *And he sent letters unto all the Jews*, etc.] 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 was become a province, first of the Chaldean, now of the Persian empire, (see ^{<188>}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 neighbours, and to constancy in the true religion; or wishing them all peace and prosperity in the most loving and sincere manner.

Ver. 31. *To confirm these days of Purim in their times appointed, etc.]*

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 ^{<1007>}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 ^{f186}, 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 (^{<3075>}Zechariah 7:5), so they now decreed to rejoice in the days of Purim.

Ver. 32. *And the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim, etc.]*

As a festival to be observed by the Jews in future generations:

and it was written in the book; either in this book of Esther; or in the public acts and chronicles of the kings of Persia; or in a book by itself, now lost, as Aben Ezra thinks, as many others are we read of in Scripture, as the books of the chronicles of the kings of Israel and Judah, etc.