

**THE KING TAKES STEPS  
TO PROTECT THE JEWS**

**ESTHER 8:1-12**

***+ ADDITION E : HIS LETTER***  
***[Vulgate 16:1-24]***

Esther pleads for her people

<sup>1</sup>On that day King Ahasuerus gave to Queen Esther the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews; and Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had disclosed to him their relationship.

<sup>2</sup>Then the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and presented it to Mordecai. So Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.

<sup>3</sup>Then Esther spoke again to the king; she fell at his feet, weeping and pleading with him to avert the evil design of Haman the Agagite and the plot that he had devised against the Jews. <sup>4</sup>The king held out the golden sceptre to Esther, <sup>5</sup>and Esther rose and stood before the king. She said, "If it pleases the king, and if I have won his favour, and if the thing seems right before the king, and I have his approval, let a decree be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote giving orders to destroy the Jews who are in all the provinces of the king. <sup>6</sup>For how can I bear to see the calamity that is coming on my people? Or how can I bear to see the destruction of my kindred?"

<sup>7</sup>Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and to the Jew Mordecai, "See, I have given Esther the entire estate of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows, because he plotted to lay hands on the Jews. <sup>8</sup>You may write as you please with regard to the Jews, in the name of the king, and seal it with the king's ring; (for an edict written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's ring cannot be revoked)."

Mordecai is invested with the powers which Xerxes had formerly bestowed on Haman (see 3:10).

Esther asks Xerxes to revoke his earlier edict.

We learn again that an edict from the king cannot be revoked (see 1:19). This means, of course, that the king cannot revoke his earlier edict (3:12) as Esther had requested. This is an important element in the plot. What the next edict does is allow the Jews to defend themselves against anyone who would take advantage of the earlier edict to attack them.

This second edict goes out two months and ten days after the earlier one (3:12).

If Haman's supporters act on the earlier edict they are to be punished with the punishments they sought to inflict on their victims (compare 3:13). This is a principle of retributive justice found throughout the Older Testament (see Exodus 21:23-25).

**<sup>9</sup>The king's secretaries were summoned at that time, in the third month, which is the month of Sivan, on the twenty-third day; and an edict was written, according to all that Mordecai commanded, to the Jews and to the satraps and the governors and the officials of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, one hundred twenty-seven provinces, to every province in its own script and to every people in its own language, and also to the Jews in their script and their language.**

**<sup>10</sup>He wrote letters in the name of King Ahasuerus, sealed them with the royal signet, and sent them by mounted couriers riding on fast steeds bred from the royal herd.**

**<sup>11</sup>By these letters the king allowed the Jews who were in every city to assemble and defend their lives, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate any armed force of any people or province that might attack them, with their children and women, and to plunder their goods <sup>12</sup>on a single day throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar.**

*<sup>1</sup>The following is a copy of this letter: "The Great King, Artaxerxes, to the governors of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, one hundred twenty-seven provinces, and to our loyal subjects, greetings.*

*<sup>2</sup>Many people, the more they are honoured with the most generous kindness of their benefactors, the more proud do they become.*

*<sup>3</sup>They not only seek to injure our subjects, but in their inability to stand prosperity, they even undertake to scheme against their own benefactors. <sup>4</sup>They not only take away thankfulness from others, but, carried away by the boasts of those who know nothing of goodness, they even assume that they will escape the evil-hating justice of God, who always sees everything. <sup>5</sup>And often many of those who are set in places of authority have been made in part responsible for the shedding of innocent blood, and have been involved in irremediable calamities, by the persuasion of friends who have been entrusted with the administration of public affairs, <sup>6</sup>when these persons by the false trickery of their evil natures beguile the sincere goodwill of their sovereigns.*

*<sup>7</sup>What has been wickedly accomplished through the pestilent behavior of those who exercise authority unworthily can be seen, not so much from the more ancient records that we hand on, as from investigation of matters close at hand. <sup>8</sup>In the future we will take care to render our kingdom quiet and peaceable for all, <sup>9</sup>by changing our methods and always judging what comes before our eyes with more equitable consideration.*

*<sup>10</sup>For Haman son of Hammedatha, a Macedonian (really an alien to the Persian blood, and quite devoid of our kindness), having <sup>11</sup>enjoyed so fully the goodwill that we have for every nation that he was called our father and was continually bowed down to by all as the person second to the royal throne.*

This Greek Addition E parallels the earlier Addition B.

Verse 3 hearkens back to Xerxes' suspicion that Haman was making advances to his queen (see 7:8). Does he also suspect that Haman was behind the attempt to assassinate him (see 2:21-23)?

This is the period of the Persian wars against Greece. To accuse Haman of being 'a Macedonian' is sure to arouse the Persians against him and anyone who appears to follow him. It also suggests that the composition of this Letter was after the conquest of Judah by Alexander the Great of Macedonia.

It was Alexander of Macedonia who conquered the Persian Empire.

Verse 16 is an expression of Jewish faith in their God and in themselves as God's chosen people (see also verse 21).

Verse 17 is phrased as it is because the king cannot just rescind the earlier edict.

Verse 18 contradicts the story as told in the Hebrew Version, according to which Haman was hanged on the gallows he constructed at his own home (see 7:9), and his sons were killed at the uprising on the thirteenth of Adar (see 9:12-14).

*<sup>12</sup>But, unable to restrain his arrogance, he undertook to deprive us of our kingdom and our life, <sup>13</sup>and with intricate craft and deceit asked for the destruction of Mordecai, our saviour and constant benefactor, and of Esther, the blameless partner of our kingdom, together with their whole nation. <sup>14</sup>He thought that by these methods he would catch us undefended and would transfer the kingdom of the Persians to the Macedonians.*

*<sup>15</sup>“But we find that the Jews, who were consigned to annihilation by this thrice-cursed man, are not evildoers, but are governed by most righteous laws <sup>16</sup>and are children of the living God, most high, most mighty, who has directed the kingdom both for us and for our ancestors in the most excellent order. <sup>17</sup>“You will therefore do well not to put in execution the letters sent by Haman son of Hammedatha, <sup>18</sup>since he, the one who did these things, has been hanged at the gate of Susa with all his household—for God, who rules over all things, has speedily inflicted on him the punishment that he deserved.*

*<sup>19</sup>“Therefore post a copy of this letter publicly in every place, and permit the Jews to live under their own laws. <sup>20</sup>And give them reinforcements, so that on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, Adar, on that very day, they may defend themselves against those who attack them at the time of oppression. <sup>21</sup>For God, who rules over all things, has made this day to be a joy for his chosen people instead of a day of destruction for them. <sup>22</sup>“Therefore you shall observe this with all good cheer as a notable day among your commemorative festivals, <sup>23</sup>so that both now and hereafter it may represent deliverance for you and the loyal Persians, but that it may be a reminder of destruction for those who plot against us. <sup>24</sup>“Every city and country, without exception, that does not act accordingly shall be destroyed in wrath with spear and fire. It shall be made not only inaccessible to human beings, but also most hateful to wild animals and birds for all time.*

