

### The Jews Successfully Defend Themselves; The Feast of Purim

#### Esther 9

**Esther 9:1-19** - *“Now in the twelfth month, that is, the month of Adar, on the thirteenth day, the time came for the king’s command and his decree to be executed. On the day that the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, the opposite occurred, in that the Jews themselves overpowered those who hated them. <sup>2</sup> The Jews gathered together in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to lay hands on those who sought their harm. And no one could withstand them, because fear of them fell upon all people. <sup>3</sup> And all the officials of the provinces, the satraps, the governors, and all those doing the king’s work, helped the Jews, because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them. <sup>4</sup> For Mordecai was great in the king’s palace, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces; for this man Mordecai became increasingly prominent. <sup>5</sup> Thus the Jews defeated all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, with slaughter and destruction, and did what they pleased with those who hated them. <sup>6</sup> And in Shushan the citadel the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men. <sup>7</sup> Also Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, <sup>8</sup> Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, <sup>9</sup> Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vajezatha— <sup>10</sup> the ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews—they killed; but they did not lay a hand on the plunder. <sup>11</sup> On that day the number of those who were killed in Shushan the citadel was brought to the king. <sup>12</sup> And the king said to Queen Esther, “The Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the citadel, and the ten sons of Haman. What have they done in the rest of the king’s provinces? Now what is your petition? It shall be granted to you. Or what is your further request? It shall be done.” <sup>13</sup> Then Esther said, “If it pleases the king, let it be granted to the Jews who are in Shushan to do again tomorrow according to today’s decree, and let Haman’s ten sons be hanged on the gallows.” <sup>14</sup> So the king commanded this to be done; the decree was issued in Shushan, and they hanged Haman’s ten sons. <sup>15</sup> And the Jews who were in Shushan gathered together again on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and killed three hundred men at Shushan; but they did not lay a hand on the plunder. <sup>16</sup> The remainder of the Jews in the king’s provinces gathered together and protected their lives, had rest from their enemies, and killed seventy-five thousand of their enemies; but they did not lay a hand on the plunder. <sup>17</sup> This was on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar. And on the fourteenth of the month they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness. <sup>18</sup> But the Jews who were at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth day, as well as on the fourteenth; and on the fifteenth of the month they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. <sup>19</sup> Therefore the Jews of the villages who dwelt in the unwallied towns celebrated the fourteenth day of the month of Adar with gladness and feasting, as a holiday, and for sending presents to one another.”*

#### Background Notes

King Xerxes I of Persia allowed Queen Esther and Mordecai to write a decree that countered the edict Haman had sponsored to annihilate the Jews (Esther 8). The edict written by Esther and Mordecai allowed the Jews to defend themselves on the day that had been determined by Haman for their destruction.

In Esther 9, the dreaded day arrived. The anti-Semites hoped to do away with the Jews - but God overruled! On the day the enemies of the Jews had planned to annihilate them, the opposite occurred, and the Jews overpowered those who hated them.

God caused fear of the Jews to fall on their enemies, so that no one could stand against God's people. Furthermore, God had the fear of Mordecai, who was now second only to the king in authority in the Empire, fall on all those of lesser rank. Thus all the officials of the Empire assisted the Jews in their defense against the anti-Semitism of that day (v3).

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. There is a time to kill.

After reading that title, you may be thinking: "Wait a minute! I thought the Bible says, '*Thou shalt not kill.*' How can we have such a doctrinal point?" We can, because the Bible says there is a time to kill. I'm reading a well-known passage from the book of Ecclesiastes:

*"To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven:*

*<sup>2</sup> A time to be born, and a time to die;*

*A time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted;*

*<sup>3</sup> A time to kill, and a time to heal..."(Ecclesiastes 3:1-3).*

Is this a contradiction to the sixth commandment, "*Thou shalt not kill*"? No, the sixth commandment is actually saying, "*Thou shalt not murder.*" Murder is the *wrongful* taking of a life - but there is a time when it is right to take life. God has given mankind the right and responsibility to carry out capital punishment following a conviction of murder. The biblical basis for capital punishment is found in Genesis 9:6 - "*Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man.*" This statement is part of the Noahic Covenant that was given to mankind after the great Flood, in order for mankind to properly govern.

Some people feel that capital punishment is wrong - that the death penalty denotes a low view of the sanctity of life. However, just the opposite is true. Capital punishment is the result of God's **high view** of the sanctity of life: how dare someone take another person's life by murder? A murderer takes someone's life at the cost of his or her own life.

The Noahic Covenant was not given to Israel only, but to *all mankind* - and it has never been lifted or terminated. In fact, Romans 13 backs up the Noahic covenant and capital punishment when it says that God establishes the governing powers, and that they have the right to "bear the sword."

A logical extension of Romans 13 is the right to self-defense when someone is trying to kill you - as an individual or as a nation - and that's what was going on in Esther 9. The Jewish people were on the verge of being exterminated by an evil edict that allowed anti-Semitism to have its way, resulting in the annihilation of the Jews. So the Jewish people had the right to defend themselves against their would-be killers. There is a *time to kill*.

This same principle would apply today regarding known terrorists who are intent on killing innocent people. A preemptive strike has a biblical basis. There is a *time to kill*.

## **2. There is a time to celebrate.**

Esther 9:20-32 - *“And Mordecai wrote these things and sent letters to all the Jews, near and far, who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, <sup>21</sup> to establish among them that they should celebrate yearly the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar, <sup>22</sup> as the days on which the Jews had rest from their enemies, as the month which was turned from sorrow to joy for them, and from mourning to a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and joy, of sending presents to one another and gifts to the poor. <sup>23</sup> So the Jews accepted the custom which they had begun, as Mordecai had written to them, <sup>24</sup> because Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to annihilate them, and had cast Pur (that is, the lot), to consume them and destroy them; <sup>25</sup> but when Esther came before the king, he commanded by letter that this wicked plot which Haman had devised against the Jews should return on his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.*

<sup>26</sup> *So they called these days Purim, after the name Pur. Therefore, because of all the words of this letter, what they had seen concerning this matter, and what had happened to them, <sup>27</sup> the Jews established and imposed it upon themselves and their descendants and all who would join them, that without fail they should celebrate these two days every year, according to the written instructions and according to the prescribed time, <sup>28</sup> that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city, that these days of Purim should not fail to be observed among the Jews, and that the memory of them should not perish among their descendants.*

<sup>29</sup> *Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter about Purim. <sup>30</sup> And Mordecai sent letters to all the Jews, to the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, with words of peace and truth, <sup>31</sup> to confirm these days of Purim at their appointed time, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had prescribed for them, and as they had decreed for themselves and their descendants concerning matters of their fasting and lamenting. <sup>32</sup> So the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim, and it was written in the book.”*

Ecclesiastes 3:4 says, *“There is a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance.”* In Esther 9, after the Jews successfully defended themselves and God gave them the victory, it was a time for celebration! Notice that Mordecai said that they were obliged to celebrate this event. It was not an option. There is a *time to celebrate*.

The annual celebration of this great event became an official feast day in the religious calendar of the Jewish people, and it is still celebrated today. It is known as the Feast of Purim, after the word “*pur*,” meaning “lot.” “*Purim*” refers to Haman “casting lots” to determine the date for annihilating the Jews. God caused the lot to fall on the twelfth month, which gave the Jewish people time to prepare for their defense. The twelfth month in the Hebrew religious calendar comes in February or March of our civil calendar.

Based on Mordecai’s declaration, the Feast of Purim was to be celebrated for two days – one for victory in Susa the capital, and one day for victory in the provinces. The Feast of Purim is a two-day celebration even to this day, and it includes feasting and joy, the exchange of presents, and sending gifts to the poor. *There is a time to celebrate!*

Romans 12:15 says, “*Rejoice with those who rejoice*” – so there is a proper time for celebrations! When the Lord blesses us with answered prayer about a financial need, or healing from sickness, or deliverance from some problem, or opening some door for service, we should rejoice together. *There is a time to celebrate!*

## **Practical Application**

### **Watch out for a “looting mentality.”**

Notice that the Jews restrained themselves on the day that they defended themselves. Verses 15 & 16 say, “*but they did not lay a hand on the plunder.*” The edict gave them the right to take the spoils, but the Jewish people rightly kept their fleshly desires under control.

One of the big problems in our society today is looting. When people have to leave their homes because of a natural disaster such as a flood, or hurricane, or earthquake, they also have to worry about looters entering and stealing from their unprotected homes.

Do we keep our desires for gain under control? Sadly, Christians are not immune to a “looting mentality.” We would probably never become “looters” of empty homes, but we need to watch out for a “looting mentality.”

Let’s be very careful not to “take” things that are not rightly ours because we have the advantage - whether in business, or handling finances, or dividing up the family’s inheritance. Be careful! Watch out for a “looting mentality.”