

Esther 3:7-15

Esther 3:7-15 In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur (that is, the lot), before Haman to determine the day and the month, until it fell on the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar. (8) Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, “There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from all other people’s, and they do not keep the king’s laws. Therefore it is not fitting for the king to let them remain. (9) If it pleases the king, let a decree be written that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who do the work, to bring it into the king’s treasuries.” (10) So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. (11) And the king said to Haman, “The money and the people are given to you, to do with them as seems good to you.” (12) Then the king’s scribes were called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and a decree was written according to all that Haman commanded; to the king’s satraps, to the governors who were over each province, to the officials of all people, to every province according to its script, and to every people in their language. In the name of King Ahasuerus it was written, and sealed with the king’s signet ring. (13) And the letters were sent by couriers into all the king’s provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their possessions. (14) A copy of the document was to be issued as law in every province, being published for all people, that they should be ready for that day. (15) The couriers went out, hastened by the king’s command; and the decree was proclaimed in Shushan the citadel. So the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Shushan was perplexed.

Questions On The Text

How did Haman begin the new year?

Verse 7: At the beginning of the year, Haman had lots cast before him to determine the luckiest time of year to mount his attack against the Jews. Casting lots was a common method to settle issues in the ancient world. (See Jonah 1:7; Matthew 27:35.) The practice is supported by Scripture (see Numbers 26:55; Proverbs 16:33) and was resorted to by men of God including Joshua (Joshua 14:2) and the apostles (Acts 1:23-26). When Haman cast lots, it indicated the twelfth month, so he had to wait almost a year.

What did Haman propose?

Verses 8-9: Haman approached the king with a proposition for the extermination of the Jews in the Persian kingdom. Despite being scattered throughout an alien society, the Jews had maintained their own laws and consequently their national identity.

Haman accused them of disrespecting the king’s laws, and therefore worthy of annihilation. He then requested a decree authorising their destruction, and promised to pay 10,000 talents of silver – an extraordinary fortune – into the king’s treasuries to fund the campaign.

How did Ahasuerus respond?

Verses 10-11: Without questioning Haman as to his motives or making inquiries as to the truth of his accusations, Ahasuerus simply gave him the go-ahead. To ensure that there would be no hindrances to the plan, the king gave Haman his signet ring (or possibly the royal seal) with which he would be able to exercise all the power and authority of the king.

What was the purpose of the decree?

Verses 12-15: The purpose of the decree was to destroy all Jews in the Persian kingdom. To clarify that there should be no exceptions, the decree specifically spelled out that it included “young and old, little children and women.” The destruction was to be completed in one day on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month.

The date the edict was issued was significant because it happened to be the day before the Passover lamb was to be slain (see Exodus 12:1-6). The edict was issued in all the languages of the empire and taken quickly by couriers to all the provinces. Having despatched their death warrant, Ahasuerus and Haman drank together in smug satisfaction, but the city of Shushan was thrown into confusion.

Further Questions For Discussion:

Why did Haman cast lots in determining when to eradicate the Jews?

What was Haman’s proposition to the king?

What do you think was the king’s motive in letting Haman do what he wanted?

Having signed the death warrant for thousands of innocent people, Ahasuerus and Haman relaxed over wine. What does that tell you about them?