

Esther 9:11-10:3

Esther 9:16-10:3 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. (17) This was on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar. And on the fourteenth day of the month they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness. (18) 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. (19) Therefore the Jews of the villages who dwelt in the unwalled towns celebrated the fourteenth day of the month of Adar with gladness and feasting, as a holiday, and for sending presents to one another. (20) And Mordecai wrote these things and sent letters to all the Jews, near and far, who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, (21) to establish among them that they should celebrate yearly the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar, (22) 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. (23) So the Jews accepted the custom which they had begun, as Mordecai had written to them, (24) 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; (25) 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. (26) 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, (27) 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, (28) 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. (29) Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter about Purim. (30) 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, (31) 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. (32) So the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim, and it was written in the book. (10:1) And King Ahasuerus imposed tribute on the land and on the islands of the sea. (2) Now all the acts of his power and his might, and the account of the greatness of Mordecai, to which the king advanced him, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia? (3) For Mordecai the Jew was second to King Ahasuerus, and was great among the Jews and well received by the multitude of his brethren, seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all his countrymen.

Questions On The Text

What happened in the rest of the kingdom?

Verse 16: Throughout the empire, the Jews were organised in a decisive action of self-defence. Again, they did not touch the plunder, but 75,000 of their enemies were killed.

What was the response to Jewish victory?

Verses 17-19: Two different dates were marked out in the Jewish calendar for celebration. In Shushan the capital, the Jews fought their enemies on the thirteenth and fourteenth of the month and so celebrated their deliverance on the fifteenth. But in the rest of the empire, they only fought their enemies on the thirteenth. Therefore, they celebrated on the fourteenth. Celebration was expressed through feasting and gladness and the giving of presents.

What did Mordecai recommend?

Verses 20-25: Mordecai wrote to all the Jews throughout the kingdom that there should be an annual celebration of their deliverance. As this had already occurred spontaneously, Mordecai's recommendation reflects his concern that the Jewish people should never forget how their circumstances had so quickly changed from sorrow to joy.

Thus on the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the twelfth month they were to declare a holiday accompanied by feasting and joy and the giving of gifts, not only to one another, but also to the poor. It was necessary to translate the word "Pur" was translated (9:24) because it was not a Hebrew word.

What was the celebration called?

Verses 26-28: The celebration was called Purim, the plural of the word Pur which means "lot" and refers back to 3:7 where they cast lots to determine the day that Haman would seek his revenge on Mordecai and the Jews. The Jews were happy to accept the celebration as an annual feast, binding on themselves and future generations, as a perpetual reminder of the about-face in their circumstances. Even Gentiles who might in the future wish to join them were invited to be a part of the celebration (see 9:27).

What was Esther's role in Purim?

Verses 29-32: It was Esther, as queen of the empire, who confirmed the instituting of the feast of Purim. Its establishment as a memorial of good over evil, was essential, not only as a reminder for the current eye-witness generation, but also for future generations.

What happened after these events?

Verses 1-3: After the events outlined in the Book of Esther, King Ahasuerus imposed tribute on his empire. This is an indication that things had returned to normal. Elsewhere in the Old Testament, "tribute" refers to forced labour (see 1 Kings 5:13), but it is thought that at this time in history it could also refer to taxation.

Not only was a record made in the chronicles of the kings of the Medes and Persians of the greatness of Ahasuerus and his achievements, but also a similar record was kept there of Mordecai. The story ends with the empire's Jews being looked after and represented by Mordecai who was second only to the king.

Further Questions For Discussion:

Explain why there are two days celebrated at Purim?

Why would Mordecai have felt it necessary to continue to celebrate their victory throughout future generations?

Where did the word "Purim" come from?

What lessons did you learn from the Book of Esther?