

Read Esther 8:1-17 New Revised Standard Version

Esther Saves the Jews

8 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 told what he was to her. ² Then the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. So Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.

³ 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. ⁴ The king held out the golden scepter to Esther, ⁵ and Esther rose and stood before the king. She said, “If it pleases the king, and if I have won his favor, and if the thing seems right before the king, and I have his approval, let an order 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. ⁶ 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?” ⁷ Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and to the Jew Mordecai, “See, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows, because he plotted to lay hands on the Jews. ⁸ 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.”

⁹ 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,^a one hundred twenty-

^a Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*

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. ¹⁰ He wrote letters in the name of King Ahasuerus, sealed them with the king's ring, and sent them by mounted couriers riding on fast steeds bred from the royal herd. ^b ¹¹ 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 ¹² 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. ¹³ A copy of the writ was to be issued as a decree in every province and published to all peoples, and the Jews were to be ready on that day to take revenge on their enemies. ¹⁴ So the couriers, mounted on their swift royal steeds, hurried out, urged by the king's command. The decree was issued in the citadel of Susa.

¹⁵ Then Mordecai went out from the presence of the king, wearing royal robes of blue and white, with a great golden crown and a mantle of fine linen and purple, while the city of Susa shouted and rejoiced. ¹⁶ For the Jews there was light and gladness, joy and honor. ¹⁷ In every province and in every city, wherever the king's command and his edict came, there was gladness and joy among the Jews, a festival and a holiday. Furthermore, many of the peoples of the country professed to be Jews, because the fear of the Jews had fallen upon them.

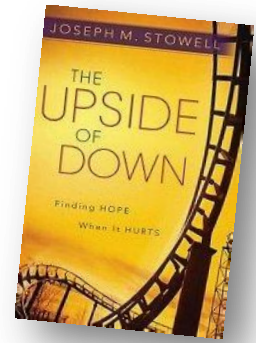
Then explore the Scripture reading by discussing these questions:

- 1) What did Esther ask the king to do?
- 2) What was the king's response to Esther's pleading?
- 3) Mordecai now enjoyed great benefits. What were they?
- 4) What did King Ahasuerus' new orders allow the Jewish people to do?
- 5) What was the Jewish people's response to the new orders?
- 6) In what ways is God's hand seen throughout this passage? The story?
- 7) In what ways did Mordecai experience justice?

^b Meaning of Heb uncertain

"God's justice guarantees that ultimately all that is unfair will be dealt with. We are naive to assume that all of life in its fallen condition is fair and just. It is only safe to realize that God is just and that in His time and in His own way He will deal with both the injustice and those who have been unjust.

(From *The Upside of Down* by Joseph Stowell) Discovery House Publishers (Dec. 1, 2006)



- 8) When have you personally seen God turn an unjust situation into good?
- 9) Why is it difficult to trust God when we are treated unjustly?
- 10) How can we remind ourselves of God's justice in those times when we are surrounded by injustice?

Special Study: Esther and the Jewish Customs and Observance of Purim

Purim is celebrated on the 14th day of Adar, which is usually in March. The 13th of Adar is the day that Haman chose for the extermination of the Jews, and the day that the Jews battled their enemies for their lives. On the day afterwards, the 14th, they celebrated their survival.

The word "Purim" means "lots" and refers to the lottery that Haman used to choose the date for the massacre.

The Purim holiday is preceded by a minor fast, the Fast of Esther, which commemorates Esther's three days of fasting in preparation for her meeting with the king.

The primary commandment related to Purim is to hear the reading of the book of **Esther**. The book of Esther is commonly known as the Megillah, which means scroll. Although there are five books of Jewish scripture that are properly referred to as megillahs (Esther, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and Lamentations), this is the one Jewish people usually mean when they speak of The Megillah.

Interestingly, it is customary to boo, hiss, stamp feet and use a rattle (noisemakers; see illustration) whenever the name of Haman is mentioned in the Purim service. The purpose of this custom is to "blot out the evil name of Haman."

The four main mitzvot (*commandments*) of the day are:

1. Listening to the public reading, usually in synagogue, of the Book of Esther in the evening and again in the following morning (*k'riat megillah*)
2. Sending food gifts to friends (*mishloach manot*)
3. Giving charity to the poor (*matanot la'evyonim*)
4. Eating a festive meal (se`udah)



Next Week [8-01-2010] on Route 66:

The Book of Job "Got Comfort?"