

Esther

Chapter 8

Note from Kathy

Some of the most popular movies are those where the underdog looks defeated; all hope is lost but then something changes. Often just the slightest shift in trajectory can dramatically change a person's destiny. Keep this in mind when life seems to be spiraling out of control. When you are beginning to feel nothing good will ever happen again, let's ask God to step in and make a divine shift. Then let's choose to believe God is faithful even when the battle is not over.

Observation



Shushan the palace. Susa is the Greek translation of the Hebrew name Shushan.

1. Haman was gone -- that was one part of the problem out of the way. But the Jews still had a huge problem. What was it?
2. King Xerxes gave Queen Esther the estate of Haman. All those material things he loved so much are of no use to him now. What did Esther do with the estate?
3. The king gave Mordecai his signet ring. This was a wise choice. How had Mordecai already demonstrated his allegiance to the king? Refer to Esther 2:21-23 and 6:1-3 in your Bible.

Proverbs 25:15

*"Through patience a ruler
can be persuaded."*

4. Queen Esther begged King Xerxes to save her people. Once again, Esther chose each word with care and humility. Read Proverbs 25:15. Finish the statements below from Esther's plea?
 - a. if _____
 - b. if _____
 - c. if _____
 - d. if _____
 - e. let _____
5. Esther realized that she may be in a position of safety. It was unlikely that anyone would try to attack the queen. Who was she concerned about?

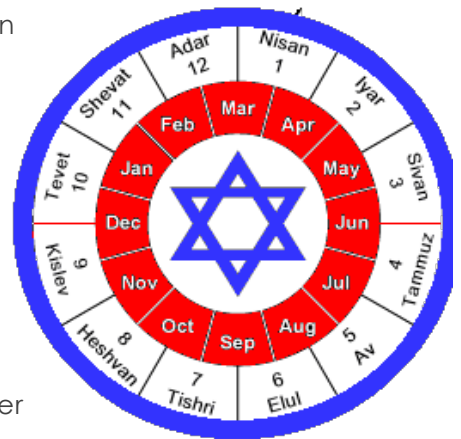
Esther 3:7

"In the twelfth year of King Xerxes, in the first month, the month of Nisan, the pur (that is, the lot) was cast in the presence of Haman to select a day and month. And the lot fell on the twelfth month, the month of Adar."

Esther 8:9

"At once the royal secretaries were summoned—on the twenty third day of the third month, the month of Sivan."

6. Because a law written by a Persian king could not be revoked, King Xerxes instructed Mordecai to come up with a new decree to send out to all the provinces. This is a matter of grave importance. Ester 3:7 stated it was the month of Nisan when the edict was written and sent out by Haman. It was to be carried out in the last month, the month of Adar. According to Esther 8:9, what month was it?



7. Mordecai wrote with the king's authority. It was as if the king himself penned this new decree. Then he sealed it with the king's signet ring as proof positive that it had the king's approval. How much difference would it make to have the king's signet ring stamped into the wax seal?

I admit I often look at the return address before taking my time to read the mail. Letters from the IRS, our attorney, or our accountant get my immediate and undivided attention.
8. The same care was given to delivering this decree as it was with Haman's. Could anyone of any of the various nationalities living in Persia say they did not understand the decree? What was done to ensure this did not happen?

Esther 3:13

"Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with the order to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews—young and old, women and children—on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods."

Esther 8:11

"The king's edict granted the Jews in every city the right to assemble and protect themselves; to destroy, kill and annihilate the armed men of any nationality or provide who might attack them and their women and children, and to plunder the property of their enemies."

9. What did the previous decree state was to happen on the 13th day of Adar? Read Esther 3:13.
 - a.
 - b.
10. What were the specific points of the new decree written by Mordecai in Esther 8:11?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
11. The Jewish people had done nothing wrong. These were peaceful people simply raising a family and living their lives the best they knew how. The original decree called for total annihilation of young and old. What would motivate these neighbors to raise their hand with such cruelty? What was in it for them?
12. The new decree did not stop those who were set on trying to kill and steal from the Jews living in Persia, but it gave the Jewish men permission to fight to protect their hearth and home. What kind of difference would it make when those who wanted to harm them heard the Jews had permission to fight back and to plunder their enemies?
13. List below how Mordecai was dressed as he walked out of the palace that day? What do these clothes say about him?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
14. How was the new decree received by the Jewish people in Persia?
15. God had performed an amazing and extraordinary miracle for the Jews. Haman, their enemy was dead. Many other people who were previously idol worshippers made a change. What was that change?

Application

1. One problem had been handled—Haman the enemy of the Jews was dead. But there was still the problem of the decree. Sometimes it seems hard to rejoice over a great deliverance, because there are still so many difficulties brewing. Have you ever been in a situation and you see God move on your behalf, but there are still so many major issues it is difficult to rejoice?

Your problem may not have been someone trying to kill you but it could be something that feels just as overwhelming. Perhaps, you received a report from the doctor that seems like a death sentence. Maybe it is the death of a dream. You had great hopes and expectations for your career but now all that has changed. Or you experience an issue that looks like it might be the end of your happy home. Perhaps your child has made the kind of bad choices that cannot be fixed with "I'm sorry." Is God able to see you through this valley, or will you be annihilated and all you have plundered? What do you do? Where do you turn?



Esther 8:3-5

"If it pleases the king, she said, and if he regards me with favor and thinks it the right thing to do, and if he is pleased with me..."

2. Do your prayers sound similar to Esther's plea to the king? Do you come to your heavenly Father with a humble heart? Let's use Esther's request to ask ourselves a few questions.

Is our God pleased to help us?

Does our God regard us with favor?

Does God view helping his children as the right thing to do?

Is it pleasing to him to help his child?

3. Esther might not need to worry about the edict since she is the queen. She might even be able to keep her uncle safe from harm because of her royal position. But what of her other relatives and her people, the Jews? How do you respond to a problem when it may not necessarily affect you?

Are you concerned enough to become part of the solution?

4. The laws of a Persian king could not be revoked. But another law could be decreed that would allow them to fight back with no fear of recourse from the king. How do you go about solving problems that seem to have no way to change?

Do you turn to God in prayer and ask him for his plan?

5. Things had changed for Mordecai. What has changed? What has not changed?

How do you handle change?

What is an all-too-common reaction to a newly elevated position?

What will keep this from happening?

6. As the edict was read, what was the response of the people in Susa?

Sometimes just one event can change our blanket of despair into a feeling of hope. You may have been in a dark place for quite a while with no hope in sight. Perhaps your chosen field of employment has gone through a difficult downturn. A feeling of anxiousness and fear has become your companion. Look up my friend; God is about to do something amazing!!

What does the Lord command captive Israel in Jeremiah 29:11-14 and Jeremiah 33:2-3?

What will it require of them?

What does God require of you today?

Choose to thank him now for his marvelous work. Look for his hand of mercy.

7. Has studying the book of Esther given you a feeling of hope? If you still need another example of one who believed God was able to fulfill his promises, let's look at Romans 4:17-25 and see Abraham's walk of faith and obedience. Spend some time thinking about the promises God has given you.

Highlight anything in these verses you need to do as well.

Romans 4:17-25 *"As it is written: 'I have made you a father of many nations.' He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not. ¹⁸Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.' ¹⁹Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was also dead. ²⁰Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, ²¹being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. ²²This is why 'it was credited to him as righteousness.' ²³The words 'it was credited to him' were written not for him alone, ²⁴but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification."*

Jeremiah 29:11-14

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you."

Jeremiah 33:2-3

"This is what the LORD says, he who made the earth, the LORD who formed it and established it—the LORD is his name: 'Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.'"



Hebrews 11:1

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

8. Hebrews 11:1 always serves as a great reminder of what faith really means. How do you respond when you see God moving on your behalf? Do you wait until everything is over and resolved, or do you look for his mercy and rejoice when you see his hand of care?

9. Why not take a moment to thank God for his word? Is there someone you know who would benefit from a word of encouragement today? Why not reach out to them and share a word of praise.