

Esther 8:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

So the posts that rode upon mules and camels went out, being hastened and pressed on by the king's commandment. And the decree was given at Shushan the palace.

Analysis

So the posts that rode upon mules and camels went out, being hastened and pressed on by the king's commandment. And the decree was given at Shushan the palace. The phrase "posts that rode upon mules and camels" (haratzim rokhevei harekesh ha'achashteranim, הַרְצִיִּים רֹכְבֵי הָרֶכֶשׁ הָאֲחַשְׁתֵּרָנִים) describes the Persian imperial postal system using swift riding animals. The term achashteranim (אֲחַשְׁתֵּרָנִים) is a Persian loanword referring to royal post-horses or swift camels bred for speed. These weren't ordinary pack animals but specialized mounts for rapid communication across the empire's vast distances.

The verbs "hastened and pressed on" (bedohalim ve'dochuphim, בְּדוֹהָלִים וְדוֹחֻפִּים) convey urgent speed and royal pressure. The dual emphasis suggests both the couriers' eagerness and the king's insistence on rapid delivery. The word dochuphim (דּוֹחֻפִּים) means "urged on" or "pressed," indicating the king's command created urgency matching or exceeding the earlier dispatch of Haman's decree (3:15). Time mattered—every day's delay left Jewish communities vulnerable and uncertain.

The note that "the decree was given at Shushan the palace" (vehadat nit'nah b'Shushan habirah, וְהָדַת נִתְּנָה בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה) parallels the earlier decree (3:15), creating symmetry between Haman's plot and its reversal. Both decrees originated from the same administrative center, both received royal seal, both went out with imperial authority. Yet their purposes opposed: one intended destruction, the other

enabled deliverance. God's providence redirected Persian imperial power from instrument of genocide to means of salvation.

Historical Context

The Persian postal system (chapar khana) was one of the ancient world's most sophisticated communication networks. Herodotus described it admiringly, noting that "neither snow nor rain nor heat nor darkness of night" prevented Persian couriers from completing their appointed rounds—a description later adopted as the unofficial motto of modern postal services. The system used relay stations approximately 15-20 miles apart where fresh horses awaited, enabling messages to cross the empire in days rather than months.

Archaeological evidence confirms multiple types of riding animals in Persian royal service. While horses predominated for short distances, camels and mules served for desert regions and mountainous terrain. The use of specialized breeding for speed and endurance reflects Persian administrative sophistication. The Behistun Inscription describes how Darius used this postal system to coordinate responses to rebellions across the empire, demonstrating its military and administrative importance.

The phrase "hastened and pressed on by the king's commandment" reflects actual Persian practice. Royal decrees designated as urgent received priority routing with instructions to relay commanders to provide fresh mounts immediately and delay for nothing. This urgency differentiated critical imperial business from routine administrative correspondence.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does the urgency of spreading good news in Esther challenge Christian urgency (or lack thereof) in spreading the Gospel?
2. What does God's use of existing infrastructure (Persian postal system) teach about His ability to work through available means rather than requiring miraculous intervention?

Interlinear Text

מְבִהֵל יִם	וְצָא וְ	הָאֲחֻשְׁתָּרְנָה יִם	הָרָכָשׁ	לְרִכְבּוֹ י	הָרָצָה יִם
being hastened	went out	and camels	upon mules	that rode	So the posts
H926	H3318	H327	H7409	H7392	H7323
בְּשׁוּשַׁן	נָתַן ה	וְהָדָת	הַמֶּלֶךְ	בְּדִבְרֵי ר	וּדְחוּפֵי יִם
at Shushan	was given	And the decree	by the king's	commandment	and pressed on
H7800	H5414	H1881	H4428	H1697	H1765
הַבֵּיתָה:					
the palace					
H1002					

Additional Cross-References

Daniel 8:2 (Parallel theme): And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I was at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai.

Esther 3:15 (Kingdom): The posts went out, being hastened by the king's commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace. And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed.