

# Esther 8:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.

## Analysis

**And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.** The response to the counter-decree was universal celebration—feasting and joy in every Jewish community. The remarkable addition: "many of the people of the land became Jews." The verb mityahadim (מִתְיָהָדִים) means "became Jews" or "declared themselves Jews," suggesting genuine conversion or at least public identification with Jews. The motivation: "fear of the Jews fell upon them." This fear, like the fear on Canaan inhabitants at Israel's approach (Joshua 2:9-11), was supernatural awe recognizing divine favor. Some Gentiles joined themselves to God's people, seeing His evident protection and blessing. This foreshadows the gospel creating one people from Jews and Gentiles (Ephesians 2:11-22).

## Historical Context

Ancient proselytism to Judaism occurred when Gentiles recognized Israel's God through His mighty acts. The Exodus created "mixed multitude" joining Israel (Exodus 12:38). Ruth's famous declaration (Ruth 1:16) exemplifies genuine

conversion. Esther's account shows both genuine conversion (recognizing the true God) and pragmatic identification (seeing Jewish divine favor). The text's ambiguity about motives reflects historical reality—conversions mixed genuine conviction with practical considerations. Archaeological and textual evidence shows Judaism attracted Gentile converts throughout the ancient world. The "fear" that motivated some was starting point for many genuine conversions—recognition of God's power leading to worship of Him.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

## Study Questions

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1. How does Gentile conversion/identification with Jews demonstrate that God's deliverance of His people serves missional purposes, attracting others to Him?
2. What does the mix of fear-motivated and genuine conversion teach about how God uses even imperfect motivations as starting points toward genuine faith?

## Interlinear Text

## Additional Cross-References

**Esther 9:19** (Good): Therefore the Jews of the villages, that dwelt in the unwalled towns, made the fourteenth day of the month Adar a day of gladness and feasting, and a good day, and of sending portions one to another.

**Psalms 18:43** (Parallel theme): Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; and thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people whom I have not known shall serve me.

**Deuteronomy 11:25** (Parallel theme): There shall no man be able to stand before you: for the LORD your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that ye shall tread upon, as he hath said unto you.

**1 Samuel 25:8** (Good): Ask thy young men, and they will shew thee. Wherefore let the young men find favour in thine eyes: for we come in a good day: give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David.

**Exodus 15:16** (Parallel theme): Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased.

**Genesis 35:5** (Parallel theme): And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.

**Deuteronomy 2:25** (Parallel theme): This day will I begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations that are under the whole heaven, who shall hear report of thee, and shall tremble, and be in anguish because of thee.

**Esther 9:2** (Kingdom): The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as sought their hurt: and no man could withstand them; for the fear of them fell upon all people.

**Esther 9:22** (Good): As the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day: that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor.

**Esther 9:27** (Parallel theme): The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them, so as it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to their writing, and according to their appointed time every year;