

Esther 8:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And said, If it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which are in all the king's provinces:

Analysis

And said, If it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which are in all the king's provinces: Esther's carefully crafted appeal piles up conditions—"if it please the king," "if I have found favour," "if the thing seem right," "if I be pleasing"—demonstrating humble deference despite her established influence. She requests written reversal of Haman's letters "to destroy the Jews." The fourfold conditional phrases show strategic rhetoric: she doesn't presume on the king's favor but appeals to his judgment, affection, and sense of justice. Her specific request for written documentation matches the original decree's form (3:12-14), showing she understands Persian administrative and legal procedures.

Historical Context

Esther's understanding of Persian legal system shows sophistication: she knew reversing an immutable decree required counter-decree with equal authority and formality. Her multiple conditional phrases reflect ancient Near Eastern diplomatic

language used when making difficult requests of superiors. The phrase "which he wrote to destroy the Jews" explicitly identified the decree's genocidal nature and Haman's authorship, potentially allowing the king to distance himself from it (though he had authorized it, 3:10-11). Her diplomatic language provided the king face-saving opportunity to issue counter-decree without admitting error in approving the original. Ancient political wisdom recognized the importance of allowing superiors to change course while preserving dignity.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does Esther's diplomatic language model effective advocacy that achieves goals while preserving relationships and others' dignity?
2. What does her understanding of legal procedures teach about the importance of strategic knowledge in advocacy and reform?

Interlinear Text

וַ תֹּאמַר	אִם	עַל	הַמֶּלֶךְ:	וְטוֹב ה	וְאִם	מִצָּ אֶתִּי	חַ
And said	H518	H5921	the king	If it please	H518	and if I have found	favour
H559			H4428	H2896		H4672	H2580
לִפְנֵי י	וְכֵשׁ ר	הַדָּבָר	לִפְנֵי י	הַמֶּלֶךְ:	וְטוֹב ה	אֲנִי	
before	seem right	and the thing	before	the king	If it please	H589	
H6440	H3787	H1697	H6440	H4428	H2896		
בְּעֵינַי יו	כֶּתֶב	לְהִשָּׁב יב	אֶת	הַסֵּפֶר ים	מִחָשׁ בֶּת	הָמָן	
in his eyes	let it be written	to reverse	H853	the letters	devised	by Haman	
H5869	H3789	H7725		H5612	H4284	H2001	
בֶּן	הַמֶּדָּתָא	הָאֲגָגִי	אֶשׁ ר	כֶּתֶב	לְאַבֵּד	אֶת	
the son	of Hammedatha	the Agagite	H834	let it be written	to destroy	H853	
H1121	H4099	H91		H3789	H6		
הַיְּהוּדִים	אֶשׁ ר	בְּכָל	מְדִינֹת	הַמֶּלֶךְ:			
the Jews	H834	H3605	provinces	the king			
H3064			H4082	H4428			

Additional Cross-References

Esther 7:3 (Kingdom): Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request:

Esther 5:8 (Kingdom): If I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and I will do to morrow as the king hath said.