

Esther 9:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews, slew they; but on the spoil laid they not their hand.

Analysis

The ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews, slew they; but on the spoil laid they not their hand. This verse marks the complete reversal of Haman's genocidal plot against the Jews. The execution of Haman's ten sons eliminates the possibility of blood vengeance continuing across generations—a common ancient Near Eastern practice. The repetition of "the enemy of the Jews" (tsorar ha-Yehudim, צֹרֵר הַיְּהוּדִים) emphasizes that this was not random violence but just judgment against those who sought Israel's destruction.

The phrase "but on the spoil laid they not their hand" appears three times in Esther 9 (verses 10, 15, 16), creating emphatic repetition that demands attention. While King Ahasuerus's decree permitted the Jews to "take the spoil" (Esther 8:11), they deliberately refused. This restraint demonstrates several crucial truths:

1. their motive was self-defense, not enrichment
2. they sought justice, not plunder
3. they distinguished themselves from their enemies' greed
4. they avoided even the appearance of fighting for material gain.

This restraint recalls King Saul's failure with the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15), where taking spoil led to his rejection as king.

The Jews in Esther learned from Israel's past failures. Their refusal of plunder also parallels Abraham's refusal of spoils from the King of Sodom (Genesis 14:22-23),

demonstrating that God's deliverance, not material wealth, was their true prize. This establishes Purim as a celebration of divine salvation, not military conquest.

Historical Context

Esther 9 describes events occurring in the twelfth month (Adar) of the Persian King Ahasuerus's reign, likely Xerxes I (486-465 BCE). The execution of Haman's sons took place in Shushan (Susa), the Persian winter capital, whose ruins have been excavated in modern-day Iran. Persian legal custom, reflected in the immutability of royal decrees (Esther 1:19, 8:8), meant that Haman's edict could not be revoked, necessitating a counter-decree allowing Jewish self-defense.

Ancient Near Eastern warfare typically included plundering as a primary motive and reward for soldiers. The Code of Hammurabi and other ancient legal texts assumed that victors would seize enemy property. The Persian Empire's vast wealth made Shushan particularly lucrative for plundering. The Jews' restraint would have been culturally shocking and noteworthy, marking their actions as distinctly motivated by survival rather than greed.

The hanging of Haman's sons' bodies (Esther 9:13-14) served as public warning, a common Persian practice. Herodotus and other ancient historians describe Persian methods of public execution and display. The establishment of Purim as an annual festival (Esther 9:20-32) created a perpetual memorial to God's deliverance. Jewish communities worldwide still celebrate Purim, reading the Megillah (Esther scroll) and commemorating how sorrow turned to joy, mourning to celebration. The refusal of spoils became central to Purim's meaning—celebrating deliverance, not conquest.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What does the Jews' refusal to take plunder reveal about the purity of their motives and their desire to honor God even in victory?
2. How does the execution of Haman's sons, though seemingly harsh, reflect both divine justice and the prevention of ongoing cycles of vengeance?
3. In what ways can we demonstrate, like the Jews in Esther, that our actions are motivated by principle rather than personal gain?
4. How does God's deliverance of the Jews in Esther foreshadow His ultimate deliverance through Christ from spiritual enemies?
5. What lessons about restraint in victory and avoiding the appearance of improper motives can we apply to conflicts and victories in our own lives?

Interlinear Text

עֶשְׂרֵת	בָּנֵי	הָמֶלֶךְ	בָּנֵי	הַמֶּלֶךְ	צֵר	יְהוּדִים
The ten	sons	of Haman	sons	of Hammedatha	the enemy	of the Jews
H6235	H1121	H2001	H1121	H4099	H6887	H3064
הָרָגוּ	וְכִבְּדוּ	אֶת	שְׁלַח וְ	לֹא	יָדָם:	
slew	they but on the spoil		laid		they not their hand	
H2026	H961	H3808	H7971	H853	H3027	

Additional Cross-References

Esther 8:11 (Parallel theme): Wherein the king granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, both little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey,

Esther 5:11 (Parallel theme): And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king.

Genesis 14:23 (Parallel theme): That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich:

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