

Esther 9:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then said Esther, If it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews which are in Shushan to do to morrow also according unto this day's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows.

Analysis

Then said Esther, If it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews which are in Shushan to do to morrow also according unto this day's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows. Esther's request involves two elements: extending defensive authorization for an additional day in Shushan and publicly displaying Haman's executed sons. The phrase "if it please the king" (im-al hamelekh tov, אִם-עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב) demonstrates continued respectful deference despite Esther's established influence. She doesn't presume but requests, maintaining proper protocol even when the king has promised to grant her petition.

The request "to do tomorrow also according unto this day's decree" (la'asot gam-machar k'dat hayom, לַעֲשׂוֹת גַּם-מָחָר כְּדַת הַיּוֹם) asks for another day of authorized self-defense specifically in Shushan. The word dat (דָּת, "decree" or "law") emphasizes legal authorization—not vigilante violence but legitimate defense under royal decree. Why the additional day? Verse 12 reveals that 500 enemies had been killed in the citadel alone; substantial opposition remained in the broader city, requiring continued defensive action.

The request regarding Haman's ten sons—"let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows" (ve'et-aseret b'nei-Haman yitlu al-ha'etz, וְאֶת-עֶשְׂרֵת בְּנֵי-חָמָן יִתְּלוּ עַל-הָעֵץ) —involves public display of already-executed bodies. This wasn't execution but

rather shameful exposure, a common ancient practice to warn against similar crimes. The use of the gallows Haman had prepared for Mordecai (5:14, 7:9-10) completes the reversal: the device intended for Jewish destruction becomes the instrument of displaying the enemies' defeat. The bodies hanging on "the tree" (etz, עץ) served as visible testimony to what befell those who sought Jewish destruction.

Historical Context

Public display of executed criminals' bodies was standard practice in the ancient Near East, serving both as punishment beyond death (dishonoring the deceased) and as deterrent to others. Persian practice, documented in classical sources, included impaling or hanging traitors and rebels, sometimes leaving bodies displayed for extended periods. This harsh treatment reflected the severity of crimes against the king or state.

Esther's request for an additional day of defense in Shushan suggests organized opposition remained after the first day's conflict. The capital city, with its diverse population and concentration of Haman's associates and supporters, apparently harbored more extensive anti-Jewish sentiment than other regions. The 800 total killed in Shushan (500 + 300) versus 75,000 in all other provinces (v. 16) shows intense but localized conflict in the capital.

The hanging of Haman's sons on the same gallows their father had prepared connects to the theme of reversal that permeates Esther. Haman built the 75-foot gallows for Mordecai (5:14); instead, it held Haman himself (7:10) and now his sons (9:13-14). The physical structure becomes a monument to divine justice and poetic reversal.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How should Christians understand requests for justice and judgment that seem harsh by modern standards?
2. What does the reversal of Haman's gallows teach about the principle that evil eventually turns back on those who devise it (Psalm 7:15-16)?

Interlinear Text

וַתֹּאמֶר	אֶסְתֵּר	אִם	עַל	הֶמָּלֶךְ	ט וּב	יִנָּתֵן	גַּם
Then said	Esther	H518	H5921	the king	If it please	let it be granted	H1571
H4279	H635			H4428	H2896	H5414	
מָחָר	לַיהוּדִים	אֲשֶׁר	בְּשׁוּשַׁן	לַעֲשׂוֹת	כָּדָת		
to morrow	to the Jews	H834	which are in Shushan	to do	decree		
H4279	H3064		H7800	H6213	H1881		
וְכֵן	הֵי יוֹם	עַשְׂרֵת יָמִים	בְּנֵי	הֶמָּלֶךְ	וְיִתְּלוּ		
also according unto this day's	H3117	H853	ten	sons	and let Haman's	be hanged	
			H6235	H1121	H2001	H8518	
עַל	הָעֵצָה						
H5921	upon the gallows						
	H6086						

Additional Cross-References

Esther 8:11 (Kingdom): 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,

Deuteronomy 21:23 (Parallel theme): His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

