

The King Gave His Signet Ring to Mordecai

8: 1-2

DIG: Why did the king's fury subside? How did Haman's estate end up in the possession of Esther, and being managed by Mordecai? What was the importance of the signet ring? How is the fall of Haman pictured as being complete? As important as these developments were, what was Esther's bigger concern?

REFLECT: When was the last time your pride got you into trouble? If you can't remember, I guess that's a good thing! But if it did, what did you learn? Have you ever received money from a settlement or an inheritance? What did you do with it? Were you a good steward? Or a prodigal son or daughter? How do you use power? To benefit yourself, or to serve others? Aside from your faith, what cause are you involved in that's bigger than yourself?

Haman was gone, but the evil plan that he had set in motion was taking on a life of its own. The king's fury subsided after Haman was impaled (7:10). This implies that the ruthless king was not angry because Haman had plotted to wipe out an entire race of people from his kingdom, even if they were Esther's people, for that was still a reality. No, apparently the king's pride had been greatly hurt when Haman fell on the couch with her (7:8). Ironically, Haman's injured pride had driven him to plot the destruction and downfall of Mordecai and the Jews; whereas, the king's injured pride had driven him to impale Haman. The death of Haman set off a series of shocking reversals.⁸⁸

That same day King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther the estate of Haman, the enemy of the Jews (8:1a). Apparently Haman was considered a criminal, for his property was confiscated that very day. As Haman had offered the king ten thousand talents of silver (or about 375 tons or 340 metric tons equivalent to several tens of millions dollars today) as incentive to massacre the Jews of Persia (3:9), it obviously included great riches. According to Josephus (*Ant. 11.17*), and one narrative of Herodotus (3.12), the property of a condemned criminal reverted to the king.⁸⁹ This was assumed by the Phoenician Jezebel (*First Kings 21:7-16*), and shown operative in Persia in the reign of Darius by the Greek historian Herodotus. Orontes the Persian was killed for his betrayal of Polycrates, and his money confiscated and sent to the Persian capital of Susa for the king's pleasure.⁹⁰

And Mordecai came into the presence of the king, for Esther had told how he was related to her (8:1b). We don't know how much time elapsed between Mordecai being rewarded and Queen Esther revealing that she was related to him. There were two months and ten days between Haman's edict (3:7) and the new edict (8:9). This actually helped Mordecai's standing before the king.

In almost identical language, Mordecai receives the signet ring once given to Haman. It was the same signet ring that had been used to seal the edict against the Jews (3:10). The king took off his signet ring, which he had reclaimed from Haman, and presented it to Mordecai (8:2a). The signet ring was given to the prime minister (see my commentary on Genesis Jv - Joseph as Prime Minister). So yet another reversal of fortunes is seen, even after Haman's death. For one thing, Mordecai received the power previously given to Haman. For another, Haman, who had hoped to confiscate the property of the Jews (3:13), now had his own property confiscated and given to, of all people, Esther, who then appointed Mordecai to oversee it. Two Jews. Providence!

Esther needed an estate manager and she appointed Mordecai over Haman's fortune (8:2b). ADONAI's intervention becomes even clearer as Mordecai receives everything Haman wanted: property, power, and position. The fall of Haman was then complete and totally balanced by the rise of the one he had planned to overthrow and destroy. At that time Esther was the source and the means of wealth and empowerment for Mordecai.

If this were only a story about the conflict between Haman and Esther and Mordecai, this scene would have been the anticlimactic point where the righteous people are rewarded for their courage and loyalty. But the story is far more than that. Esther had requested to save the Jews, and that is what we see next.