

The Jews Rejoiced

8: 15-17

DIG: This starts a new song for the Jews? What is it? What is the principle for evangelism that is seen here? What is the scriptural evidence that the LORD is a Warrior (see Genesis 19:24; Exodus 12:29; Numbers 21:3; Joshua 5:13-15; Isaiah 42:13, 63:1-6; Revelation 14:14-20)?

REFLECT: Do you honor ADONAI with the way you react to the good things in your life? Why or why not? How do you feel about the concept of God as Warrior? Does it make you feel uncomfortable? Why? Or does it make you feel safe? Why?

The first observance of the Feast of Purim was purely spontaneous as a sign of relief because they had rest from their enemies. Every time there is **feasting**, there is a reversal of roles. So here, in the past **the Jews** were **afraid of the Persians (4:3)**, but then **the tables were turned** so that the **Persians** were **afraid of the God of the Jews (8:17, 9:1-2)**. It was the religious awe that fell upon the Canaanites (**Joshua 2:9**), the Edomites and Moabites (**Exodus 15:16**), and the Egyptians (**Psalms 105:38**). This would have been extremely encouraging to the Jews after the Babylonian exile, either in the Land or in the Diaspora.

Mordecai going out from **the king's presence (8:15a)** signaled the intimacy that **he** had established with **Ahasuerus**, and **he** enjoyed it in **Haman's place (3:1)**. **He** was also **wearing** clothes that pointed to his royal position - **royal garments of blue and white** (the Persian royal colors), **a large turban**, ornamented with **a gold band and jewels**, and **a purple robe of fine white linen (8:15b)**. Joseph had also been clothed in **fine white linen and a gold chain around his neck** when he became the prime minister of Egypt (**Genesis 41:42**). Needless to say, **Mordecai** was no longer wearing **sackcloth (4:1)**.

The final verses of this chapter are the exact opposite of the earlier scene where **the city of Susa was bewildered (3:15b)**, where the order to annihilate **the Jews** had been given. But after the edict of **Mordecai** **the city of Susa**, not merely **the Jews** living there, **held a joyous celebration (8:15c)**. They welcomed **Mordecai** as the prime minister, probably because he was so very popular with the citizens of **Susa**. Far from resenting a member of a foreign minority being appointed to such a lofty position, **they** cheered and rejoiced in full support. The author wanted to show that the welfare of **the Jews** meant the good of the whole society.⁹⁶

The **Jews** realized the importance of the decree, and the contrast between the reception of this decree opposed to Haman's was very obvious. In place of **mourning, fasting, weeping and wailing (4:3)** there was **happiness, joy, gladness and honor (8:16)**. Whereas **Chapter 3** had recorded the rise of Haman, this chapter has shown how **Mordecai** not only stepped into Haman's honored role as **the king's** prime minister but also used his power in similar ways. The difference was the **he** worked more successfully and won popularity with **Jews** and **Gentiles** alike, and brought gladness instead of gloom.⁹⁷

In every province and in every city to which the edict of the king came, there was joy and gladness, literally *shouting and rejoicing*, among the **Jews**, with feasting and celebrating. The vast majority of the citizens, who were not anti-Semitic, had nothing to fear. And many people of other nationalities, literally *Gentile peoples of the land*, became **Jews (8:17)**. **Leviticus 19:33-34** made provision for foreigners who wanted to embrace the Torah to become proselytes. The verb **became Jews**, only used here means *they Judaized themselves*. In general, the **Jews** were to be a light to the **Gentiles (Isaiah 42:6)**. But there are specific examples in the TaNaKh where that actually happened, and probably many more that were not recorded. First, there was a **mixed multitude** that left Egypt with the **Jews** in the exodus (see my commentary on **Exodus Ca - At the End of the 430 Years to the Very Day**); secondly, a careful study of the genealogical lists suggests that later in Canaan some local clans (of Canaanites or other people groups) were assimilated into the various tribes of Israel.

The famous German messianic **Jew**, Carl Friedrich Keil (1807 to 1888), says that most of those who became **Jews** must have done it out of conversion of the truth of Judaism. The Jewish trust in ADONAI "contrasted with the vanity and misery of polytheism," and the evident providential turn of events confirmed this conviction. We know this was the case several centuries later when Paul was preaching the Gospel throughout the Hellenistic world. Many of the converts to Christ were **Greek men who were "God-fearers" (Acts 17:4)** who had become disillusioned with the pagan religions and were attracted by the **Jew's** faith in one God, and their high ethical principles.⁹⁸ The goodness of God was becoming obvious to the citizens of **Persia**. No longer were these events being viewed as coincidence; now people were beginning to realize that the God of the **Jews** was protecting them.⁹⁹

If Haman's plot had succeeded and the Jewish nation had been annihilated during the reign of **Ahasuerus**, obviously Yeshua would not have been born and it would put an end to God's plan of redemption (see my commentary on **Exodus Bz - Redemption**). The promises of ADONAI are one with His covenant people. He set aside a place for them to live in peace and security, but it was a land already filled with wicked and sinful people. Making a place for

them meant destroying the wicked people already there. In other words, salvation inherently demands destruction. **Who is the King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle (Psalm 24:8)**. To be saved implies you have to be saved *from* something. That something is evil, and a holy **God** cannot tolerate evil.

Make no mistake about it, **the LORD is a Warrior; the LORD is His name (Exodus 15:3)**. These words are sung in an ancient hymn in which the Israelites celebrated their **exodus** from Egypt (see my commentary on **Exodus Ck - Then Moses and the Israelites Sang This Song**). After **the Jews** had passed safely through the Sea of Reeds, their Egyptian pursuers were drowned. Although in a strict sense the events associated with **the Exodus** cannot be described as a battle, for the Israelites didn't actually fight, it was nonetheless celebrated as a mighty victory in war. Like Armageddon (see my commentary on **Revelation Ex - The Eight Stage Campaign of Armageddon**), it was more of an execution than a battle. **ADONAI** had defeated the elite forces of Pharaoh, who was believed in ancient Egypt to be the divine son of the Great Deity. **God** was a **Warrior**, the Hebrews believed, who was more powerful in battle than the greatest world power of that time.¹⁰⁰

For us today, the TaNaKh looks forward and the New Covenant looks back. **The LORD's** irrevocable decree of death had been countered by His decree that all who believe in Jesus Christ should not perish under His wrath, but be delivered into eternal life. In other words, the full extent of **God's** love for all of us can only be fully appreciated until we realize the extent of His wrath poured out on His Son for the sins of the world (**Second Cor 5:21**). It is on the cross, that the love of **ADONAI** and His justice are reconciled.¹⁰¹