

# So the Jews Agreed to Continue the Celebration They Had Begun

## 9: 23-25

**DIG:** What was the controversy Mordecai was trying to clear up? What was his conclusion and command? How is this story telescoped here? Why? What is the *pur*? Why do you think the author chose to summarize here? How did the king act when the plot against the Jews was brought to his attention?

**REFLECT:** What does this section say about how the Jewish people viewed Mordecai? How do you react when spiritual matters are brought to your attention? Do you lead? Do you follow? Do you get out of the way? Is it sometimes wise to get out of the way? When? Why? Aside from the manner in which they were executed, how do you feel about Haman and his ten sons dying? Do you think they were executed because of human revenge or Godly justice? How can you tell the difference?

It is hardly necessary to record Jewish agreement to **Mordecai's** instructions about Purim unless they reconcile different established customs. **So the Jews agreed to continue the celebration they had begun.** The first observance was a spontaneous one. But **they** were obedient to continue to observe the feast on a yearly basis, **doing what Mordecai had written to them (9:23).** They **agreed Soto continue both what they had begun themselves** (which was for those in unwalled cities to celebrate Purim on **the fourteenth day (9:21)**, and for those living in walled cities to celebrate the feast on **the fifteenth day of the month of Adar**), and **what Mordecai had written to them** (namely, that **they** should celebrate the feast on both days).<sup>118</sup> The next two verses provide the historical background, beginning with the plot of **Haman**.

The author summarizes for the reader the events that led to the establishment of the celebration of **Purim**. It was necessary for **the Jews** throughout the empire to appreciate the full significance of the festival. In the provinces, all they knew was that there had been a decree permitting them to defend themselves against their enemies. They had defended themselves successfully and were, quite naturally, determined to celebrate the occasion. What they do not know, and therefore, what **Mordecai** must tell **them**, is of the events in Susa that lay behind the fateful thirteenth of Adar.<sup>119</sup> Consequently, the story is telescoped.

Though the author missed the opportunity to mention **Haman's** ancestry on the previous occasion, he referred to **him** here, for his final appearance in the book, and **Haman** bears the full brunt of his symbolic name. For **Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite** - and now for the first time - **the enemy of all the Jews** (previously he had merely been called **the enemy of the Jews**). Haman had plotted against the Jews to destroy them and had cast the *pur*, that is, the lot (see **Av - The Lot Fell on the Twelfth Month, the Month of Adar, in the Presence of Haman**), to crush and destroy them (9:24). There seems to be a play on words by similarity in sound of **Haman** (*haman*) and to crush them (*hummam*).

But when the plot came to the king's attention (9:25a). The word **plot** is not in the Hebrew. The Hebrew verb **came** has a feminine pronoun that could be translated either **she** (**Esther**), or **it** (**plot**). Therefore, some translate it: **When Esther came before the king**. But on contextual grounds it is preferable to consider the feminine pronoun to refer to **the plot**, which is understood in the previous part of the verse (9:25a), and maintain the NIV translation.<sup>120</sup>

When the plot came to the king's attention, he issued written orders that the evil scheme Haman had devised against the Jews should come back onto his own head, and that he and his sons should be impaled on poles (9:25b). Here, the king is credited with carrying out the just punishment on the evil Haman and his sons, without anyone's intervention. The fact that **Esther** had given **him** the idea was a detail that did not need to be dwelt upon in this summary. **The words here are not to be taken to mean that Haman and his sons were impaled at the same time**. Since this is a brief summary, it does not mention the time difference between his death and that of his sons.