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Now Write a Counter-Decree in the King's Name on Behalf of the Jews 8: 3-14

Now write a counter-decree in the king's name on behalf of the Jews DIG: Before Haman's estate is settled, what must be done first? Why the anguish for Esther, who is now quite secure in the king's favor? What is the problem with getting the king to reverse the death sentence on the Jews (see **1:19, 3:1** to **4:3, 6:10**)**? What does the counter-decree do for the Jews? For others? What is particularly symmetrical about its timing** (see **8:12**, **3:7** and **13**)**? What counter-decree has Messiah written?**

REFLECT: The Jews had nine months to prepare their defense. What could you accomplish in the next nine months to put your life in better order? What part of that reorganizing will you do this month? If you were in a position to destroy your enemy without fear of the consequences to you, would you take advantage of the situation? Why or why not?

Since **the decree** to exterminate **the Jews (3:13)** was still in effect, something had to be done. So **Esther** appeared a second time without an invitation **(5:2)**. **Esther again pleaded with the king, falling at his feet and weeping. She begged him to put an end**, literally, *to cause to pass over* **the evil plan of Haman the Agagite, which he had devised against the Jews (8:3). Esther** did not stop with **her** personal deliverance, **she** was also concerned about **her** people – the entire **Jewish** community. **She** pled for **the king's** mercy.

Some assume that **Esther** risked **her** life a second time to come uninvited into **the king's** presence because **he** again extended **his** scepter to **her (4:11, 5:1-2)**. However, **the scepter** was extended only after **her** emotional plea and not at the moment of **her** entrance before **the king**. Therefore, **his** gesture was intended to encourage **her** to rise from **her** prostrate position before continuing to speak.[91] **Again, the king** was favorably disposed and **extended his gold scepter to Esther, she** touched it, **arose and stood before him (8:4). Esther's** request was simple. **She** wanted **a counter-decree** written that would cancel out the first

one with equal force.

Esther used great wisdom in presenting **her** request. **Ahasuerus** was already furious that **Haman** had tricked **him** into making the first **decree**. Was **he** to embarrass **himself** further? Never! **She** pressed gently: **If it pleases the king, and if he regards me with favor and thinks it the right thing to do** (the word *kasher* or *kosher*, meaning *fit, proper* or ***right*** is found only in the book of **Esther** and nowhere else in the TaNaKh)**, and if he is pleased with me, let a counter-decree be written overruling the dispatches that Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, devised and wrote to destroy the Jews in all the king's provinces (8:5). Esther** avoids the word "law," for **she** knew that the **Persian** laws could not be repealed. **She** wisely put all the blame on **Haman** and avoided **the king's** involvement altogether. Yes, technically, the first **decree** had gone out in **the king's** name, but **he** had no knowledge of the plot.

Again **she** was willing to be known as a **Jewess** for **she** spoke of **my people** and **my family**. **For how can I bear to see disaster fall on my people? How can I bear to see the destruction of my family (8:6)?** The repetition of the verb, **how can I bear**, points to **Esther's** empathy with the suffering of others. It is heartwarming to see the extent to which this young girl, who had everything money could buy, identifying **herself** with **her** own **people**, and was ready to risk everything in an attempt to prevent the disaster that threatened **them**.[92]

King Ahasuerus replied to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, "Because Haman attacked the Jews, I have given his estate to Esther, and they have impaled him on the pole he set up (8:7). The author was making it clear that whoever attacks **the Jews** would fall. We are reminded of ADONAI's call to Abram emphasizing that God **will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse (Genesis 12:3a).** Here **the king** reminded both **Esther**

and **Mordecai** of all **he** had already done, to show that **he** favored **the Jews**. But it was **Queen Esther**, not **King Ahasuerus**, who took the initiative in counteracting **Haman's decree** of death to **her** fellow countrymen.

Dear Heavenly Father, Praise you for your great love for the Jews ***(Jeremiah 31:35-37).*** *No one can touch the apple of your eye without causing the fury of God Almighty- El Shaddai****. For this is what the Lord Almighty*** *says:* ***After the Glorious One has sent me against the nations that have plundered you – for whoever touches you touches the apple of his eye (Zechariah 2:8$_{NIV}$).***

Your power is supreme over every nation and over every ruler. Whoever attacks God's chosen people absolutely will lose. During the painful seven years of Tribulation ***(Dani'el 9:24-27)*** *the Antichrist, the Beast, will rule-but only by Your permission and to accomplish your goal of bringing Your Jewish people back to loving You.* ***The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. It was given power to wage war against God's holy people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation (Revelation 13:5-7).***

Though the Beast may appear to win as he makes war against God's people, you will use his rule of three and one half years during the last half of the Tribulation to serve Your purpose to bring the Jews, back into a loving relationship with You and to open their eyes to worship Yeshua as their Lord and Savior whom ***they pierced****. When the Jews mourn for Yeshua whom they pierce, You will come to destroy their enemies.* ***On that day I will set out to destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem. "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son (Zechariah 12:9-10).***

Praise You that we don't have to worry, no matter who is ruling, for You set the time limits for all rulers. ***But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever (Dani'el 7:26).*** *What a great comfort it is to know that You are all powerful and You will reign forever!* ***Then the sovereignty,***

power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him (Dani'el 7:27). *We bow in love and worship. In Yeshua's holy name and power of His resurrection. Amen*

Chapter 8, verses 8 to **17** are parallel in language to **3:9** to **4:4**, but here the whole situation is reversed. If God's **people** were to pass from death to life, **a counter-decree** was necessary to cancel out the first one. Now **the Jews** could destroy **their** enemies instead of being destroyed.

Now write, literally *you write* (the pronoun did not need to be expressed in the Hebrew). The word *you* is in the emphatic first place in the sentence and, because it is plural, includes both **Esther** and **Mordecai**. *Both of you* **write a counter-decree in the king's name on behalf of the Jews as seems best to you, and seal it with the king's signet ring – for no document written in the king's name and sealed with his ring can be revoked (8:8). The Jews**, who were once a helpless target of evil, were then empowered.

The practice of making decrees of the king irrevocable is unknown in any of the extrabiblical texts during the reign of Ahasuerus; therefore, some say this was not plausible. But **the Persian king's decrees** could not **be revoked** because **he** was believed to be a god whose plans couldn't be changed **(Daniel 6:9, 13, 16)**. A change would suggest a correction for a mistake. And their **king** making a mistake was against the **Persian** belief system. The Bible, however, declares that ADONAI is immutable and His plans are indeed unchangeable. But the LORD always reaches out with his mercy, so people will turn from their sin and seek forgiveness.[93]

This verse illustrates the author's tendency of repeating his previous wording in another context, creating reversals of situations. **At once the royal secretaries were summoned – on the twenty-third day of the third month, the month of Sivan** (May-June) 474 BC**.** The date was two months and ten days since **Haman's** original decree had been written. The seventy days between the threatened annihilation of **the Jews** and **their** release from danger would have struck a chord with every attentive post-exilic reader of the book: the seventy days would remind them of the seventy years of exile.[94]

Thus, **the Jews** had about nine months to prepare themselves for the conflict. **They wrote out all Mordecai's orders to the Jews, and to the satraps, governors and nobles of the 127 provinces stretching from India to the Upper Nile region of Egypt. These orders were written in the script of each province and the language of each people.** This time, however, Hebrew was **also** added to the copies sent **to the Jews in their own script and language (8:9).** This is the longest verse in the third part of the TaNaKh, the Writings (or *the Hagiographa*). In Hebrew it contains 43 words and 192 letters, and in English (depending on the translation) it contains from 80 to 90 words.[95]

As **he** had done with **Haman**, t**he king** gave **Mordecai** the authority to write the **edict** any way **he** wanted and to stamp it with **the king's signet ring**. **Mordecai wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus, sealed the dispatches with the king's signet ring, and** like **Haman's** first edict, **sent them by mounted couriers, who rode fast horses especially bred for the king.** It seems that **Mordecai** went to extreme measures to ensure the swift delivery of **his** new edict. *Ahashteranim,* which is the **Persian** word for **mounted couriers** or **the king's servants (8:10** and **14)**, is found only in the book of **Esther** and nowhere else in the TaNaKh.

The king's edict granted the Jews in every city the right to assemble and protect themselves; to destroy, kill and annihilate the armed men of any nationality or province who might attack them and their women and children, and to plunder the property of their enemies (8:11). They would not be the aggressors, but **they** could **protect themselves** if attacked. **The decree** of **Mordecai** mirrors the words of **Haman's decree** and is one of the great reversals in the book of **Esther**. A pagan **king** granted **the Jews the right** to defend themselves. **Providence!**

The reversals in Esther:

3:10 the king gives Haman his ring and in **8:2 the king gives Mordecai the same ring**

3:12 Haman summons the king's scribes and in **8:9 Mordecai summons the king's scribes**

3:12 letters written, sealed and in **8:10 letter written, sealed with same ring**

3:13 the Jews to be killed in one day and in **8:11 their enemies to be killed in one day**

3:14 Haman's decree displayed as law and in **8:13 Mordecai's decree displayed as law**

3:15 couriers go out in haste and in **8:14 couriers go out in haste**

3:15 the city of Susa is bewildered and in **8:15 the city of Susa rejoices**

4:1 Mordecai goes thru city crying and in **6:11 Mordecai led thru city in honor**

5:14 Zeresh advises Mordecai's death and in **6:13 Zeresh predicts Haman's ruin**

The day appointed for the Jews to do this in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus was the same **day Haman's edict** had set for plundering **the Jews**, **the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar (8:12).** The obvious reason for the same date was so that **the Jews** could defend **themselves**. **A copy of the text of the edict was to be issued as law in every province and made known to the people of every nationality so that the Jews would be ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies** if attacked **(8:13).** In that case it would be justice that prevailed, not revenge! The word *patshegn*, which is a **Persian** word for **a copy of the text (3:14; 4:8** and here**)**, is only found in the book of **Esther**. This shows that the author was familiar with the language of **the royal** court.

The couriers, riding the royal horses, went out, spurred on by the king's command, and the edict was issued in the citadel of Susa as **Haman's** was **(8:14).** The verbs **riding**, **went out** and **spurred on**, only heighten the sense of urgency in the story.

In **Esther**, the irrevocable **decree** of death and **a counter-decree** of life, were both given from the same authority – **the king's signet ring**. Just as **King Ahasuerus** could not merely withdraw **the** first **decree** of death, ADONAI cannot merely withdraw **the decree** of death pronounced in the garden of Eden against humanity. In its place, He issues **a counter-decree** of life, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Both were given by the same authority – **the KING of kings**. However, the

LORD did not simply withdraw the curse of death, His **counter-decree** of salvation rendered it null and void by His Son’s death on the cross. So when we pass from the family of Satan and spiritual darkness, to the family of God and spiritual light, that is the greatest reversal of all!