

Kill all the Jews on a Single Day, the Thirteenth Day, the Twelfth Month of Adar 3: 12-15

DIG: Why was the date of the thirteenth day of the first month so important to the Jews? Why would Haman pick that specific date? To whom was the decree sent? Why? On what date was the annihilation to take place? How long would Haman have to wait for his "lucky" day? Why were the citizens of Susa bewildered when they read the edict? Why does Peter warn us to be self-controlled and alert?

REFLECT: How would you react if you knew your whole race was going to be slaughtered by the government because of your faith in eleven months? What would you do? Young and old, women and children - on a single day! With all your neighbors watching you all the time how would you react? How would you defend yourself? Would you gather weapons or pray? Or both? Would it be wrong to defend yourself and your family? Why or why not? Why was the city of Susa thrown into confusion? What **three ways** does the Adversary seek to devour believers?

Then on the thirteenth day of the first month the royal secretaries were summoned (3:12a). The decree was sent out on the thirteenth day of the first month, which ironically, is the very eve of the Passover (Exodus 12:18; Leviticus 23:5; Numbers 28:16). The paradox was unmistakable. The day before celebrating freedom from Egyptian oppression, a decree had been made for their very destruction. Only a Jew would understand this. It commemorates the deliverance of Israel from Pharaoh and celebrates the existence of the Israelites with their special relationship with ADONAI. The joy of the Passover was turned to grief when the edict was issued on the Passover and sentenced them to death merely because they were Jews. It could hardly fail to stir the question in their minds, can ADONAI not save us again from death under Ahasuerus?

The death sentence was written out in the script of each province and in the language of each people all Haman's orders to the king's provinces, the governors of the various provinces and the nobles of the various peoples (see Ak - [The King Gave a Grand Banquet in Susa, and Displayed the Vast Wealth of His Kingdom](#) for more information on the provinces). These were written in the name of King Ahasuerus himself and sealed with his own ring (3:12). The signet ring used to sign and seal the official documents is given to Haman, vesting him with the full authority of the throne to do as he wished. Whoever possessed the signet ring effectively held the king's authority.⁴⁷

The practice of making decrees of the king irrevocable is unknown in any of the extrabiblical texts during the reign of King Ahasuerus; therefore, some say this was not plausible. There are times in our lives when we are confronted with a situation where we have to trust in the Word of God or disbelieve it. And God intended it to be that way. He purposes to put us in a position that we are incapable of doing something or understanding something so that we must choose to act in faith. The Bible tells us that **without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6a)**. When we look at the "Hall of Faith" in Hebrews, all of those champions of the faith overcame situations that were not plausible. In fact, the more impossible it is, the more **faith** is needed. So here, regarding this irrevocable **edict**, believers choose to have faith in the Bible over extrabiblical texts because **all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the people of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (Second Timothy 3:16)**. When in doubt, trust the Bible.

Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces (3:13a). The Greek historian Herodotus writes about the "Pony Express" postal system first used more than 2,000 years ago in the **Persian Empire**. Men on horseback pass the mail from one rider to the next. Herodotus wrote, ". . . these men will not be hindered from accomplishing at their best speed the distance while they have to go either by snow, or rain, or heat, or by the darkness of night." Because of the vastness of the empire, a letter could take up to eight weeks to reach someone in the empire's outer reaches.⁴⁸ **The order was given to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews - young and old, women and children - on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods (3:13b)**. Eleven months still had to pass before the thirteenth of Adar, Haman's "lucky" day chosen by lot for the massacre (see **Av - The Lot Fell on the Twelfth Month, the Month of Adar, in the Presence of Haman**). The plunder of Jewish goods was permitted to provide incentive. It is interesting to note that all the letters of the Hebrew alphabet are found in this one verse.

A copy (the word *patshegn*, which is a **Persian** word for a **copy of the writings**, is found only in **Esther 3:14, 4:8, 8:13** and nowhere else in the TaNaKh) **of the death warrant was to be issued as law in every province and made known to the people of every nationality so they would be ready for that day (3:14)**. The edict was to be proclaimed so that suitable preparations could be made. Throughout history many have tried to destroy the **Jews**, from the time of the exodus to the twentieth century. But none have succeeded because **Isra'el is the apple of His eye (Deuteronomy 32:10b)**.

The couriers went out, spurred on by the king's command, and the edict was issued in the citadel of Susa. The king and Haman sat down to drink (3:15a CJB). Afterwards, **Haman** sat down to enjoy his genocide cocktail. The verse does not use **the king's** name, but it does mention **Haman** by name and thus highlights the fact that this **Persian** holocaust was his idea. **But the city of Susa was thrown into confusion (3:15b CJB)**. The citizens of

Susa were aghast. Apparently such a decree had never before come from the royal court. **Haman's** bloodthirstiness, however, along with **Ahasuerus'** seeming indifference to such atrocities was unbelievable even to a sophisticated society that was used to cruel behavior. Perhaps some of them wondered if they would be next on the list.⁴⁹ But those who have persecuted **the Jews** have always come to ruin. We must still take seriously ADONAI's promise to Abraham and his descendents: **I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse (Genesis 12:3a).**

Satan knew from the garden of Eden that **he** would have to prevent Jesus from dying on the cross or **he** would face an eternity in the lake of burning sulfur (Revelation 20:10). **The LORD God said to the Serpent . . . I will put animosity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers;** the Messiah would ultimately defeat **the Adversary** by dying a sinless, substitutionary death on the cross for all mankind (see my commentary on **Genesis Be - He Will Crush Your Head, and You Will Strike His Heel**).

The Adversary tried **three times** to keep the Messiah from dying on a cross. **First**, when Yeshua was about two years old, Satan had King Herod try to have Him killed so He wouldn't go to the cross (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ Aw - Herod Gave Orders to Kill all the Boys in Bethlehem Two Years Old and Under**). **Second**, after His baptism **the devil** tempted Christ to sin and thus prevent Him from being an acceptable sacrifice on the cross (see **The Life of Christ Bj - Jesus is Tempted in the Wilderness**). **And third**, even at His crucifixion, **Satan** tried six times to get Jesus to come down before dying (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ Lu - Jesus' First Three Hours on the Cross: The Wrath of Man**). But when Yeshua died a sinless death on the cross, **the Adversary** knew his ultimate defeat was assured and **he** needed to go to Plan B. If **he** couldn't prevent sinners from being saved, **he** and **his** demons would try to make them ineffective so others would not be saved. Simply put, **the devil** would try to take down as many people as **he** could with **him** into the lake of fire.

In 1942, the Christian apologist C. S. Lewis published a biting satire entitled *The Screwtape Letters* (he also wrote *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*). His novel described the activities of a senior demon named *Screwtape* and his nephew and junior tempter *Wormwood*. Being his mentor, *Screwtape* trains his young protégé in the different ways of enticing believers to sin, to destroy their testimony and, as a result, eliminate their ability to witness to others. In other words, Plan B. The book provides a series of lessons in the importance of taking a deliberate role in living out our faith by portraying a typical human life, with all its temptations and failings, as seen from **the devils'** point of view. In this convoluted way of seeing spiritual warfare, ADONAI, His holy angels and all true believers are viewed as "the enemy."

This is why **Peter** writes to us and warns: **Be self-controlled and alert.** The reason believers must **be self-controlled and alert** is that they face fierce and relentless spiritual

opposition from **the deceiver** and **his demons**. Being **alert** (*gregoresate*) is an imperative command that means *be watchful or stay awake*. **Your Adversary** (*antidikos*) was used as a technical term meaning *legal opponent*, as well as any kind of enemy who was seriously aggressive and hostile. **The devil** commands the demonic realm and administrates the human, fallen **world** system. Personally and through **his** surrogates the demons, who like **him** never sleep nor rest, **the destroyer of souls** untiringly, like a predator in the night of **his** own evil darkness, hunts to kill. **He prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour** (**First Peter 5:8**). Peter's imagery of the **roaring lion** derives from the TaNaKh (**Psalms 7:2, 10:9-10, 17:12, 22:13-21, 35:17, 58:6, 104:21; Ezekiel 22:25**), and pictures the viciousness of this **hunter** pursuing his prey. **Devour** has the sense of *to gulp down*, emphasizing the final objective, not to wound but to destroy.⁵⁰

Satan seeks to devour believers in three ways. First, ADONAI may allow **the Adversary** to attack a believer directly (**Job 1**), but more generally, **Satan** and **his** demons constantly mount the attack on individuals through the ever-present, sinful and alluring **world** system. **John** condensed this spiritual battle down to this: **Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever** (**First John 2:15-17**).

Secondly, Paul recognized that **the devil** attacks believers in the most intimate realm of human relations - marriage and the family. For that reason, Paul charged the believers living in Corinth: **The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you to sin because of your lack of self-control** (**1 Cor 7:3-5**). When one partner withholds a sexual relationship from the other, **the evil one** will tempt the one deprived to sin, thereby hastening attitudes that often bring the destruction of that marriage and family.

Thirdly, believers - both the leaders and the members of the congregation - are vulnerable to the attacks of **the Adversary** within the body of believers. Paul instructed **Timothy** to choose well-qualified men as shepherds, **so that they would not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap** (**First Timothy 3:1-7**). **The ancient dragon** also seeks to destroy the unity within the body of believers, causing its spiritual power to become useless (**First Corinthians 1:10, 6:1-6, 11:17-34, 14:20-38; Revelation 2-3**). Peter's first line of defense is to **be self-controlled and alert**. If Eve was so easily deceived in the perfect garden of Eden (see my commentary on **Genesis Ba - The Woman Saw the Fruit of the Tree and Ate It**), how much more are redeemed sinners living in a sinful, fallen **world** susceptible to the craftiness and deception of **the evil one**?

Contrary to what some teach, Scripture nowhere commands believers to attack **Satan** or demons with prayers or formulas, or to "bind **the devil**." Those who foolishly engage in useless efforts to speak to **the great dragon** (who is not omnipresent anyway), or to command **him**, or to dismiss **him** or other demons are confused and wrong about their powers as believers. Since neither Christians, nor the righteous of the TaNaKh are apostles of the Messiah, they have no authority over **the serpent** or **his demons** (**Matthew 10:1**; **Luke 9:1-2**; **Second Corinthians 12:12**). Only Christ Himself, by dispatching a powerful holy angel, can bind **the Enemy** (see my commentary on **Revelation Fb - He Seized the Dragon, or Satan, and Bound Him for a Thousand Years**).⁵¹

From the Amalekites to **Haman** to Herod to Hitler, **Satan** used all of them to try to eliminate **the Jews** from the face of the earth. Charles Swindoll has stated, "**Esther** is a story of triumph that grew out of tragedy, ecstasy out of agony, celebration out of devastation. Yours can be the same." This book has shown us many things, including that God can use anyone for His glory that is willing to be used, that He is ultimately in control of all things in our lives, and He will work according to His foreknowledge to bring all things together in our lives for our best and His glory (**Romans 8:28**). **Beelzebub** may rage, but God will turn **his** attacks back on **his** own head ultimately. We need to stand strong against the three-fold enemy that directed the lives of **Ahasuerus** and **Haman**, **the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life**. It ultimately destroyed **them** both.

The impact of the lives of **Esther** and Mordecai is one of the most amazing aspects of this story, and it shows us that the LORD is not limited in who He works through, nor how. In view of the world in which we live, we need more **Esther's** and Mordecai's that will stand up and make a difference for God and His children, even if it is at their peril as these two experienced. ADONAI needs servants today who will speak up when His people are in danger or when injustice and corruption are rampant in society.⁵² **Esther** and Mordecai were not perfect, nor were they spiritual giants when they first were brought into their place of influence. How encouraging that is for us who are not another Moses or Paul or others of their caliber, because God can work in and through us just as well.

Let all of us be able to say with the beloved Rabbi Sha'ul at the end of the stories of our lives: **As for me, my life has already been poured out as an offering to God. The time of my death is near. I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits me - the crown of righteousness that the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that great day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his glorious return (Second Timothy 4:6-8 NLT).**