

30. Defining a Type of Genocidal Decree (Esther)

The Jewish people's deliverance in the days Mordechai and Esther forms an integral part of a scriptural pattern of a reversal of circumstances in which God's people who are about to perish are miraculously spared and triumph over their enemies. If this account simply remains a story, in other words, and isn't additionally perceived as a type and shadow of the end-time, then but little can be gleaned from it. By now, we should have learned that all things that transpire at the end of the world—specifically events that precede Jesus' second coming—have types and shadows in Israel's past. Reliving those former events, in effect—as Jews celebrate the annual feasts of Purim and others—conditions them for a great end-time deliverance and reversal of circumstances that God has decreed for those who love him.

Applying all scriptures to ourselves for our profit and learning, therefore, imagine a decree concerning us in our day issued by a world power like the one the Jews faced in Persia: “In the name of King Ahasuerus was it written, and sealed with the king's ring. And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey” (Esther 3:12–13). What would we do in those circumstances if it was us?

This was Mordechai's response and that of the Jews of Persia: “When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry; And came even before the king's gate: for none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes” (Esther 4:1–3).

This was Esther's response: “Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer, Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish. So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him” (Esther 4:15–17).

At their eventual victory over their enemies, the Jews celebrated with “a day of gladness and feasting” (Esther 9:17–19). The exact nature of their deliverance, however, was less important than the manner in which it was obtained. God had raised up saviors in the persons of Mordechai and Esther before the event. Yet he was willing for the intrigues of evil men to test his people under the terms of the Sinai Covenant in order to keep alive the remembrance of him while in exile. Herein, we again see how “my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil” (3 Nephi 21:10; Doctrine & Covenants 10:43)—a point on which God's repentant people may always rely.

Another typological event that repeats itself in the end-time was God's deliverance of King Hezekiah's people from an Assyrian army of 185,000 men that surrounded Jerusalem. When the people kept the king's law and the king kept God's law under the terms of the Davidic Covenant,

the Lord said, “I will protect this city and save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David. Then the angel of Jehovah went out and slew a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the Assyrian camp. And when men arose in the morning, there lay all their dead bodies!” (Isaiah 37:35–36).

A Book of Mormon type of end-time event occurs in the days of Lachoneus when Giddianhi led a horde of robbers against the Nephites to destroy them. Lachoneus adjured his people, “As the Lord liveth, except ye repent of all your iniquities, and cry unto the Lord, ye will in no wise be delivered out of the hands of those Gadianon robbers. And so great and marvelous were the words and prophecies of Lachoneus that they did cause fear to come upon all the people; and they did exert themselves in their might to do according to the words of Lachoneus” (3 Nephi 3:15–16).

At their ultimate victory over the robbers under the terms of the Sinai Covenant, the Nephites “did break forth, all as one, in singing, and praising their God for the great thing which he had done for them, in preserving them from falling into the hands of their enemies. Yea, they did cry: Hosanna to the Most High God. And they did cry: Blessed be the name of the Lord God Almighty, the Most High God. And their hearts were swollen with joy, unto the gushing out of many tears, because of the great goodness of God in delivering them out of the hands of their enemies; and they knew it was because of their repentance and their humility that they had been delivered from an everlasting destruction” (3 Nephi 4:31–33).

In his great vision of the end of the world, Nephi “beheld that the great mother of abominations did gather together multitudes upon the face of all the earth, among all the nations of the Gentiles, to fight against the Lamb of God. And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld the power of the Lamb of God, that it descended upon the saints of the church of the Lamb, and upon the covenant people of the Lord, who were scattered upon all the face of the earth; and they were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory” (1 Nephi 14:13–14). In that day, says the Lord, “every nation which shall war against thee, O house of Israel, shall be turned one against another, and they shall fall into the pit which they digged to ensnare the people of the Lord. And all that fight against Zion shall be destroyed, and that great whore, who hath perverted the right ways of the Lord, yea, that great and abominable church, shall tumble to the dust and great shall be the fall of it” (1 Nephi 22:13–14).