

ADDENDUM TO ESTHER

FIVE SENTENCE PRAYER

"My longing is that the captivity end without delay-**Esther 167**(or 160 weeks "sevens")

"May they put my Glory above my ancient leader of people.

"You declared, "I will answer their Purim and hide Myself"

"Messiah and his order or sederim

"**SHIELD** of our prosperity or joyful festivity

"the altar!

COMMENT

The word for "Defender" is writ large as if The LORD -the Messiah of David and David's line was the trusted "shield and buckler" of the Jewish people in the writer's mind. The "sederim" may well be the readings and prophecies and truths of the Torah. The "hiddenness" of God is as the hidden afikomen in the Passover-behind it lies the deep hope and historic end of days revolution not unlike that under Mordecai.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The mention of Esther with the number 167 or 160 weeks (often used of years) suggests a time in the region of 317BC if we take the 3rd year of Ahasuerus to be 484BC. Hellenism following the conquests of Alexander had come to the former Persian Empire. Alexander the great had died in 323BC and the precise time we are looking at featured Ptolemy who had moved from his power base in Egypt and taken Jerusalem -but in 315BC which is just 2 years after this note the Seleucid king from the north took Jerusalem leading eventually to Antiochus Epiphanes and the violation of the temple by the setting up of an altar to Zeus in 175. Copies of the law (cf Sederim) were burned.

THE MACCABEES (HAMMERERS)

The prayer is of a sort that might even have been uttered in the Maccabean context of 175- It was when a representative of Epiphanes visited Modein and a priest there ordering him to sacrifice to Zeus that resistance was born. Mattathias that priest slew the representative and Mattathias and his 5 sons fled to the hills to begin a long and ultimately successful battle against Antiochus. After guerrilla warfare in the hills Judas Maccabeus fought a successful pitched battle with Antiochus 'forces went on to **cleanse the temple and the altar**. The reference to the altar in the prayer suggests that its author may even have lived in this later era. The victory of Judas who was succeeded by Simon -perhaps the noblest of the brothers- led in 143BC to the 31 year reign of John Hyrcanus -3rd son of Simon Maccabeus- grandson of Mattathias. His son in the third generation of the Hasmoneans was Aristobolos who took the title of "king" but in this way displeased the people. In this division of the nation the Sadducean and Pharisaic separation took place. The first sided with the "king" and the others with pure religion.

Bob Coffey
A Bible Companion