



THE BOOK OF ESTHER



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INTRODUCTION

The Book of Esther is a history of Israel while the Jews were in the lands of their captivity. It is a historical chronicle that centres around the life of two people, and particularly around the fate of all Jews who lived throughout the Persian Empire.

Esther's story takes place in the Persian Empire during the reign of Ahasuerus, known more familiarly to us by the Greek form of his name, Xerxes I. He was the son of Darius the Great and reigned from 486-465 B.C., [Ezra 4:24](#) / [Ezra 5:5-7](#) / [Ezra 6:1-15](#) / [Daniel 6:1](#) / [Daniel 6:25](#) / [Haggai 1:15](#) / [Haggai 2:10](#). He ruled over a vast empire that extended from India to Ethiopia, [Esther 1:1](#).

Esther was a descendant of the tribe of Benjamin, which had been part of the kingdom of Judah. Her ancestors were among the Jews who had been carried captive to Babylon nearly one hundred years earlier.

After the death of Esther's parents, she was brought up in Susa by her uncle, Mordecai, [Esther 2:7](#), who served in the Persian ruler's palace. She was a Jewish orphan girl who eventually became the queen of Persia.

The book, which is named after Esther, is purely historical, and what's unique about it is that the Name of God doesn't appear anywhere within it. However, just because the Name of God isn't mentioned, this doesn't mean that God is absent. Whilst reading through the book, we can clearly see God's fingerprints throughout.

AUTHOR

This book is named after Esther, whose Jewish name was Hadassah. Some believe that she was Queen Amestris, whom the historian Herodotus mentioned as the queen during the reign of Xerxes, that is, Ahasuerus, the king of Persia. Her name means 'a star,' which was possibly given to her because of her unique beauty.

No one knows who wrote the book, but it must have been written after the death of Ahasuerus, the Xerxes of the Greeks, which took place in B.C. 465. Some commentators believe that because of the historical details within the book, the writer was contemporary with Mordecai and Esther. Hence, they conclude that the book was written probably about B.C. 444 and that the author was one of the Jews of the dispersion.

DATE

The exact date of the book is difficult to determine; however, some commentators suggest that because Ahasuerus is generally linked to Xerxes I, 486-464 B.C., the events of the book correspond to the dates 483-473 B.C.

OUTLINE

The removal of Queen Vashti, Esther 1
 The choice of Esther as Queen, Esther 2:1-20
 Mordecai discovers a plot against the life of the king, Esther 2:21-23
 Haman's plot to destroy the Jews, Esther 3-4
 Esther's successful petition, Esther 5-8:2

The deliverance of the Jews, Esther 8:3-9:16
 The Feast of Purim, Esther 9:17-32
 A description of Mordecai's greatness, Esther 10

THE TEXT

INTRODUCTION

'This is what happened during the time of Xerxes, the Xerxes who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush: At that time, King Xerxes reigned from his royal throne in the citadel of Susa, and in the third year of his reign, he gave a banquet for all his nobles and officials. The military leaders of Persia and Media, the princes, and the nobles of the provinces were present. For a full 180 days, he displayed the vast wealth of his kingdom and the splendour and glory of his majesty. When these days were over, the king gave a banquet, lasting seven days, in the enclosed garden of the king's palace, for all the people from the least to the greatest who were in the citadel of Susa. The garden had hangings of white and blue linen, fastened with cords of white linen and purple material to silver rings on marble pillars. There were couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl, and other costly stones. Wine was served in goblets of gold, each one different from the other, and the royal wine was abundant, in keeping with the king's liberality. By the king's command, each guest was allowed to drink with no restrictions, for the king instructed all the wine stewards to serve each man what he wished. Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women in the royal palace of King Xerxes.' Esther 1:1-9

QUEEN VASHTI DEPOSED

The history of Esther begins with the setting of how she became queen of the greatest world empire of that time, [Esther 1:1](#). Xerxes, also known as Ahasuerus, reigned from 486 to 465 B.C. at Susa, [Esther 1:2](#); some translations have the name Shushan.

The military leaders at the time were Persia and Media, [Daniel 2:36-45](#) / [Daniel 5:30-31](#) / [Daniel 8:20](#). In the time of Darius and Cyrus, there were only one hundred and twenty provinces, [Daniel 6:1](#); now there are over one hundred and twenty-seven, [Esther 1:1](#).

Archaeology discovered a foundation tablet, which was recovered from Xerxes' palace at Persepolis, which lists both India and Ethiopia as provinces of Xerxes' realm. Also, Herodotus mentioned that both the Ethiopians and the Indians paid tribute to Xerxes, [Esther 1:1](#).

There are three feasts happening in this opening chapter.

1. The first feast was probably a regrouping of the leaders of the Persian Empire in order to reassess their military position in reference to threats against the Empire that existed at this time in the reign of Xerxes, [Esther 1:3](#).

It was probably also a time when Xerxes could show off the glory and splendour of the riches of his kingdom, [Daniel 5:3](#). This feast lasted for one hundred and eighty days, [Esther 1:4](#).

2. The second feast was for the citizens of the capital city, Susa, and it lasted for seven days, [Esther 1:5](#).

Notice how extravagant the garden, the furniture and the pavement within the palace were, [Esther 1:6](#). The historian Herodotus mentioned these eloquent furnishings in the palaces of Persia.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘White and blue or violet were the royal colours in Persia. Such awnings as are here described were very suitable to the pillared halls and porches of a Persian summer palace, and especially to the situation of that of Susa.’

The royal wine was now flowing, and every one of the guests was well invited to drink as much as they liked, Esther 1:7-8. Every feast like this was political, and so, some of those who were invited wanted to use the occasion for politics.

3. The third feast was for the women in the royal palace and was conducted by the wife of King Xerxes, Queen Vashti Esther 1:9.

She gave a banquet for the women because it wasn't the custom for women to participate in the feast that was conducted by the king and his men, Daniel 5:2. Therefore, the queen conducted a separate feast for the wives of the leaders.

‘On the seventh day, when King Xerxes was in high spirits from wine, he commanded the seven eunuchs who served him—Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar and Karkas—to bring before him Queen Vashti, wearing her royal crown, in order to display her beauty to the people and nobles, for she was lovely to look at. But when the attendants delivered the king's command, Queen Vashti refused to come. Then the king became furious and burned with anger.’ Esther 1:10-12

King Xerxes was in high spirits from the wine on the seventh day, Esther 1:10, which means he was rather drunk. And so, he makes an irrational demand on Queen Vashti, whom he thought would, on his command, parade herself immodestly before the men of the king's feast, Esther 1:10-11.

Notice that Queen Vashti refused the king's command, which was delivered by the ‘attendants’, who were eunuchs of the king's court who served the royal family, Esther 1:13 / Esther 1:10.

She certainly knew the consequences of her refusing him. It's here that we see her moral stature as she refuses to allow herself to be an object of immoral thought by parading herself before others.

Jewish tradition says, ‘she was ready to appear before the banqueters completely unclothed, except that God smote her with leprosy just as she received the request.’ This is highly unlikely.

The Jewish Targum is an Aramaic paraphrase, explanation, and interpretation of the Hebrew text of the Jewish Scriptures provided by the rabbis in the course of teaching. The Targum adds the word ‘naked’ to this verse.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Scholars have suggested several possible reasons why Vashti would not obey the king, but in all likelihood, Vashti was pregnant with Artaxerxes I.’

Samuel, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This banquet probably took place just before the birth of Artaxerxes, and her natural modesty rebelled against making a display of herself before the king and his well drunken banqueters.’

Notice that when Vashti refused to come to the king, the king became furious and burned with anger, Esther 1:12.

‘Since it was customary for the king to consult experts in matters of law and justice, he spoke with the wise men who understood the times and were closest to the king—Karshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memukan, the seven nobles of Persia and Media who had special access to the king and were highest in the kingdom.

“According to law, what must be done to Queen Vashti?” he asked. “She has not obeyed the command of King Xerxes that the eunuchs have taken to her.” Then Memukan replied in the presence of the king and the nobles, “Queen Vashti has done wrong, not only against the king but also against all the nobles and the peoples of all the provinces of King Xerxes. For the queen's conduct will become known to all the women, and so they will despise their husbands and say, ‘King Xerxes commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, but she would not come.’ This very day, the Persian and Median women of the nobility who have heard about the queen's conduct will respond

to all the king's nobles in the same way. There will be no end of disrespect and discord. "Therefore, if it pleases the king, let him issue a royal decree and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media, which cannot be repealed, that Vashti is never again to enter the presence of King Xerxes. Also, let the king give her royal position to someone else who is better than she. Then when the king's edict is proclaimed throughout all his vast realm, all the women will respect their husbands, from the least to the greatest." The king and his nobles were pleased with this advice, so the king did as Memukan proposed. He sent dispatches to all parts of the kingdom, to each province in its own script and to each people in their own language, proclaiming that every man should be ruler over his own household, using his native tongue.' Esther 1:13-22

It was customary for the king to consult experts in matters of law and justice, and so he spoke with wise men, Esther 1:13. These wise men, who 'understood the times' Esther 1:13, weren't necessarily astrologers of the king's court who advised the king as some suggest. It's more likely that they were men of practical wisdom who knew the facts and customs of former times.

The seven nobles were seven families of the first rank in Persia, Esther 1:14, from which alone the king could take his wives. Their chiefs were entitled to have free access to the monarch's person. King Xerxes then, according to law, what must be done to Queen Vashti? She has not obeyed the king's commands, Esther 1:15 / Esther 1:13.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following concerning the question, 'What shall we do to the queen Vashti according to the law?'

'1. Though it was the queen who was guilty, the law must have its course. 2. Though the king was very angry, yet he would do nothing but what he was advised was according to law.'

After inquiring about what should be done about the queen, Memukan's answer was based on the belief that the example of the queen would encourage women throughout the Empire to show contempt for their husbands.

They were basically afraid that because of Queen Vashti's example, the wives of all the kings and nobles would despise their husbands, Esther 1:16-17. They wouldn't respect their husbands and show discord towards them, Esther 1:18. It appears that they wanted to make sure that each man is the master in his own house, Ephesians 5:33.

Some commentators believe there were some personal agendas happening in the background. They suggest that there may have been some personal contention between the king and the queen, with the wise men taking advantage of the situation in order to advance their beliefs.

It's possible that the wise men had a falling out with the queen at some point in the past, and so, they took advantage of the opportunity to have her banished from the presence of the king. They possibly took advantage of the situation in order to maintain the submission of the women throughout the Empire.

Memukan suggest that the king issues a royal decree and write it in the laws of Persia and Media, which cannot be repealed and that Vashti is never again to enter the presence of King Xerxes, Esther 1:19.

He also suggest that the king give her royal position to someone else who is better than she, Esther 1:19. By doing this, all the women in his vast realm will respect their husbands, from the least to the greatest, Esther 1:20.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'Both God's law and common sense taught this from the foundation of the world. And is it possible that this did not obtain in the Persian empire, previously to this edict? The twentieth verse has another clause, that all wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small. This was also universally understood. This law did nothing. I suppose the parade of enactment was only made to deprive honest Vashti of her crown.'

'The Targum adds, 'that each woman should speak the language of her husband.' If she were even a foreigner, she should be obliged to learn and speak the language of the king. Perhaps there might be some common sense in this, as it would oblige the foreigner to devote much time to study and improvement, and, consequently, to make her a better

woman and a better wife. But there is no proof that this was a part of the decree. But there are so many additions to this book in the principal versions, that we know not what might have made a part of it originally.’

The king and his nobles agreed with the advice they were given, [Esther 1:21](#), and so letters, [Esther 3:12-15](#) / [Esther 8:9-14](#), were sent out to each of the provinces, [Esther 1:2](#) / [Esther 1:1](#).

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

‘Later, when King Xerxes’ fury had subsided, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what he had decreed about her. Then the king’s personal attendants proposed, “Let a search be made for beautiful young virgins for the king. Let the king appoint commissioners in every province of his realm to bring all these beautiful young women into the harem at the citadel of Susa. Let them be placed under the care of Hegai, the king’s eunuch, who is in charge of the women; and let beauty treatments be given to them. Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti.” This advice appealed to the king, and he followed it.’ [Esther 2:1-4](#)

ESTHER MADE QUEEN

A few commentators believe that after Xerxes sent out his royal decree, [Esther 1:22](#), he went on his four-year campaign against Greece, which ended up being a disaster for him. The Persians were defeated at Salamis in 480 B.C. and again at Plataea in 479 B.C.

This implies that four years have passed between chapters 1 and 2. Further evidence of this is also seen by the fact that he banished Vashti in the third year of his reign, and he married Esther in the seventh year of his reign.

After the king had banished Vashti from his sight, he began to remember her, and he began to remember what she had done and how he had made this royal decree, [Esther 2:1](#). We’re not told what he was thinking about, but it appears he’s in remorse and reflecting upon his decree and his decision to banish her from his presence.

Because he was drunk when he signed the decree, [Esther 1:10](#), he couldn’t go against his own decree; he couldn’t change his mind and bring Vashti back again.

The king obviously thought he had made a rather rash decision, and so, his personal attendants encouraged him to seek to replace her with another beautiful woman, [Esther 2:2](#).

In an effort to find a replacement, all the virgins from one hundred and twenty-seven provinces of his kingdom, [Esther 1:1](#), were to be brought to Susa, [Esther 2:3](#). Josephus says Xerxes had a total of four hundred women selected.

They were to be prepared for the king and kept under the care of Hegai, who was a eunuch, so that he could choose which one would become his new queen, [Esther 2:3-4](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘In the Persian palaces it was very extensive, since the monarchs maintained, besides their legitimate wives, as many as 300 or 400 concubines, [Esther 2:14](#).’

Being a eunuch meant that he couldn’t have sexual relations with women. A man was a eunuch for three reasons.

1. Congenital.

They were born that way; their sexual organs were dysfunctional, so they have no sexual drive. They have no real need to be married to satisfy that desire, so they don't get married. Jesus says some people are born that way.

2. Castration.

They were made that way by men; kings in ancient society used to do that a lot. They had their harems, and they didn't want the man in charge of the Harem messing around with the women, so they castrated them so they would lose sexual desire, and they could do their business without being attracted to the women.

3. Commitment to God.

They want to serve the kingdom of God without being tied down to a wife and the responsibilities and time commitment that would take. So, by choice, they remained single.

We must note that none of these young virgins would have a choice in this matter, and all of them would become part of the king's harem. King Xerxes is more than happy with the advice, and so he goes along with the plan to find a new queen for himself, [Esther 2:4](#).

'Now there was in the citadel of Susa a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, named Mordecai son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, who had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, among those taken captive with Jehoiachin king of Judah. Mordecai had a cousin named Hadassah, whom he had brought up because she had neither a father nor mother. This young woman, who was also known as Esther, had a lovely figure and was beautiful. Mordecai had taken her as his own daughter when her father and mother died. When the king's order and edict had been proclaimed, many young women were brought to the citadel of Susa and put under the care of Hegai. Esther also was taken to the king's palace and entrusted to Hegai, who had charge of the harem. She pleased him and won his favour. Immediately, he provided her with her beauty treatments and special food. He assigned to her seven female attendants selected from the king's palace and moved her and her attendants into the best place in the harem. Esther had not revealed her nationality and family background because Mordecai had forbidden her to do so. Every day, he walked back and forth near the courtyard of the harem to find out how Esther was and what was happening to her.' [Esther 2:5-11](#)

Here, we're first introduced to Mordecai and Esther. Mordecai belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, and his great-grandfather was Kish, who had been taken into captivity, [Esther 2:5](#).

The Jews were taken into captivity in three different stages, and Kish was taken into captivity in the second stage, [Esther 2:6](#). The name Mordecai is believed to be derived from the pagan god Marduk, meaning dedicated to Mars.

Both Mordecai and Esther, as well as their parents, were born in captivity. Mordecai adopted his cousin Hadassah, that is, Esther, as his own daughter because she had no one else to take care of her, [Esther 2:7](#). She was a beautiful young lady, [Esther 2:7](#), which is why she was one of the women chosen to go before the king, [Esther 2:8-9](#).

We can be sure that all of the virgins were beautiful in appearance but for some reason, which we're not told about how Esther stood out from all the other virgins, [Proverbs 3:3-4](#), and Hegai made sure she got extra beauty treatments that the other virgins didn't receive, [Esther 2:9](#).

Each of the virgins were provided with seven female attendants and Hegai moved Esther along with her attendant to the best part in the house of the women, [Esther 2:9](#).

Notice that Esther was forbidden by Mordecai to reveal that she was a Jew, [Esther 2:10](#). The Jews weren't culturally favoured by the Persians, and the Jews may have been looked down upon by them, so he didn't want her ethnic background to cause her to become a mere concubine in the king's harem.

Mordecai's love for Esther, his adopted daughter, is clearly seen in that he paces back and forth around the women's quarters waiting for updates on Esther's welfare, [Esther 2:11](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Mordecai occupied, apparently, a humble place in the royal household. He was probably one of the porters or doorkeepers at the main entrance to the palace, [Esther 2:21](#).’

‘Before a young woman’s turn came to go in to King Xerxes, she had to complete twelve months of beauty treatments prescribed for the women, six months with oil of myrrh and six with perfumes and cosmetics. And this is how she would go to the king: Anything she wanted was given her to take with her from the harem to the king’s palace. In the evening, she would go there and in the morning return to another part of the harem to the care of Shaashgaz, the king’s eunuch, who was in charge of the concubines. She would not return to the king unless he was pleased with her and summoned her by name. When the turn came for Esther (the young woman Mordecai had adopted, the daughter of his uncle Abihail) to go to the king, she asked for nothing other than what Hegai, the king’s eunuch who was in charge of the harem, suggested. And Esther won the favour of everyone who saw her. She was taken to King Xerxes in the royal residence in the tenth month, the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

Now the king was attracted to Esther more than to any of the other women, and she won his favour and approval more than any of the other virgins. So he set a royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. And the king gave a great banquet, Esther’s banquet, for all his nobles and officials. He proclaimed a holiday throughout the provinces and distributed gifts with royal liberality.’ [Esther 2:12-18](#)

We can only imagine the stress these women are going through as they are taken from their homes, knowing they were going to belong to the king and having to go through a one-year preparation process, [Esther 2:12](#).

Rawlinson, in his commentary, says the following concerning the oils and perfumes.

‘Myrrh was highly esteemed, both for its scent and for its purifying power, by the ancients. In Egypt, it was employed largely in the preparation of mummies. The Jews were directed to make it one of the chief ingredients of their ‘holy anointing oil’, [Exodus 30:23-25](#). Dresses and beds were scented with it, [Psalm 45:8](#) / [Proverbs 7:17](#). The word translated ‘sweet odours’, that is, perfumes, seems to mean ‘spices’ generally.’

After one year of preparation, the virgins were allowed to wear whatever they wanted to try and impress the king when they went to his bed that night, [Esther 2:13-14](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Esther returned to the ‘house of the women,’ but not to the same part of it. She became an inmate of the ‘second house,’ or ‘house of the concubines,’ under the superintendence of a distinct officer, Shaashgaz.’

This again must have been very stressful because they knew that if the king didn’t choose them to be his queen, then they would be sent to the second house, which was the place where his concubines would stay for the rest of their lives. The only time they would ever see the king again was if he asked for them, and the chances of that happening were next to none.

It’s interesting that when it came to her turn to go to the king, she relied on Hegai, the eunuch to pick out what clothes she should wear before the king, [Esther 2:15](#).

Notice again, that Esther stood out and gained the favour of everyone who saw her, [Esther 2:15](#). The good news is that the eunuch’s advice paid off because the king chose her out of all the women that came before him and he made her queen in the seventh year of his reign [Esther 2:16-17](#).

According to the customs of that time, the king made a great feast for this occasion and proclaimed a holiday in honour of his new wife, [Esther 2:18](#). He also reduced the taxes of the people, [Esther 2:18](#), which I’m sure the people would be grateful for.

MORDECAI UNCOVERS A CONSPIRACY

‘When the virgins were assembled a second time, Mordecai was sitting at the king’s gate. But Esther had kept secret her family background and nationality just as Mordecai had told her to do, for she continued to follow Mordecai’s instructions as she had done when he was bringing her up.’ Esther 2:19-20

Since Mordecai was sitting at the gate and was able to stay outside the woman’s courtyard, it’s believed by many that he was employed by the king as a gatekeeper, [Esther 2:19](#).

We read that Esther was obedient and she respected Mordecai as her adopter father because she didn’t reveal who her family was, [Esther 2:20](#). Even though she is now the queen of the greatest world empire at the time, she still respected and obeyed the one who took care of her in her youth, [Esther 2:20](#).

‘During the time Mordecai was sitting at the king’s gate, Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s officers who guarded the doorway, became angry and conspired to assassinate King Xerxes. But Mordecai found out about the plot and told Queen Esther, who in turn reported it to the king, giving credit to Mordecai. And when the report was investigated and found to be true, the two officials were impaled on poles. All this was recorded in the book of the annals in the presence of the king.’ Esther 2:21-23

Whilst sitting at the king’s gate, Mordecai finds out about the plot of the two officers, Bigthana and Teresh, [Esther 2:21](#). He tells Esther and she then goes on to tell the king, [Esther 2:22](#) / [1 Peter 2:17](#). This is one of these moments

that can’t be a coincidence, when we think about what will eventually happen in the life of Esther and Mordecai.

We begin to understand that God was working in the lives of these two people in order to bring about the deliverance of the Jews in their land of captivity. If Mordecai hadn’t spoiled their plans, it would have been very easy for them to assassinate the king because they had access to the king when he was sleeping.

When King Xerxes finds out about the conspiracy, he investigates the matter and finds it to be true, and he had Bigthana and Teresh impaled on poles, [Esther 2:23](#). They would have been impaled, and then their corpses were hung on a tree for public exhibition.

Later, we will see that the ten sons of Haman were first killed with the sword, but afterwards, their bodies were hanged on the gallows of their father, [Esther 9:10-14](#) / [Deuteronomy 21:22-23](#) / [Joshua 8:29](#) / [Joshua 10:26](#) / [1 Samuel 31:8-10](#) / [2 Samuel 4:12](#) / [2 Samuel 21:9-10](#).

Mordecai’s deed was recorded in the annals, [Esther 2:23](#), and notice that the king didn’t reward Mordecai at this time, but later on, he will be rewarded. As I mentioned in the introduction, the Name of God isn’t mentioned anywhere within this book, but it’s clear that everything which has happened so far has happened because of the providence of God, [Psalm 75:6-7](#).

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

‘After these events, King Xerxes honoured Haman, son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, elevating him and giving him a seat of honour higher than that of all the other nobles. All the royal officials at the king’s gate knelt down and paid honour to Haman, for the king had commanded this concerning him. But Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honour. Then the royal officials at the king’s gate asked Mordecai, “Why do you disobey the king’s command?” Day after day, they spoke to him, but he refused to comply. Therefore, they told Haman about it to see whether Mordecai’s behaviour would be tolerated, for he had told them he was a Jew. When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honour, he was enraged. Yet having learned who Mordecai’s people were, he scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai. Instead, Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai’s people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes.’ Esther 3:1-6

HAMAN'S PLOT TO DESTROY THE JEWS

It appears that Haman was given a promotion, [Esther 3:1](#), although we're not told why; maybe he stood out from everyone else. Haman was an Agagite, an Amalekite, [Esther 3:1](#), and some believe that since his father is called Agagite, he may have been a direct descendant of King Agag, who was the king that King Saul was supposed to kill but didn't, [1 Samuel 15:9](#).

One of the honours Haman received was that the people were to kneel to him and pay him honour, [Esther 3:2](#). To the Persians, this was the same as paying honour to a god. Haman loved this because he loved feeling powerful and important, but notice, however, that Mordecai refused to bow down to him, [Esther 3:2](#).

Although Haman didn't notice, his servants noticed, and they confronted Mordecai about it daily, [Esther 3:3-4](#). Mordecai listened to them and said, The reason he wouldn't bow to Haman was that he was a Jew, [Esther 3:4](#). We must note that there's nothing in the law of Moses that would keep him, a Jew, from paying respect to the authority of another, [Genesis 18:2](#) / [Genesis 23:7](#) / [Genesis 43:26](#) / [Exodus 18:7](#) / [2 Samuel 16:4](#), but to bow down to someone and pay honour to them as a god would be idolatry. It's also important to remember that the Amalekites were the ancient enemies of the Jews, [Exodus 17:14-16](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'The Targum says that Haman set up a statue for himself, to which everyone was obliged to bow, and to adore Haman himself. The Jews all think that Mordecai refused this prostration because it implied idolatrous adoration. Hence, in the Apocryphal additions to this book, Mordecai is represented praying thus: 'Thou knowest that if I have not adored Haman, it was not through pride, nor contempt, nor secret desire of glory, for I felt disposed to kiss the footsteps of his feet (gladly) for the salvation of Israel but I feared to give to a man that honour which I know belongs only to my God.'

After Haman had been told about Mordecai's refusal to bow down, he started watching, and sure enough, he wasn't bowing down, and this made Haman angry, [Esther 3:5](#), but he wasn't going to take out his vengeance on Mordecai alone.

He comes up with a devious plan to take out the entire Jewish population, [Esther 3:6](#). Haman despised the Jews because he was a descendant of the King Agag, [1 Samuel 15:8](#) / [1 Samuel 15:33](#).

Because Israel had the mandate from God to destroy all the Amalekites because of their mistreatment of Israel immediately after the nation came out of Egyptian captivity, [Exodus 17:8](#) / [1 Samuel 15:2-3](#). Haman came up with a plan to do the same for them.

In other words, his plan of revenge was for his forefathers. This shows us the real character of Haman; his pride caused him to hate Mordecai and all those like him, [Proverbs 16:18](#).

'In the twelfth year of King Xerxes, in the first month, the month of Nisan, the pur (that is, the lot) was cast in the presence of Haman to select a day and month. And the lot fell on the twelfth month, the month of Adar. Then Haman said to King Xerxes, "There is a certain people dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom who keep themselves separate. Their customs are different from those of all other people, and they do not obey the king's laws; it is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them. If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them, and I will give ten thousand talents of silver to the king's administrators for the royal treasury." Esther 3:7-9

The event recorded here happened around March and April, 474 B.C., [Esther 3:7](#). The casting of lots, the pur, [Esther 3:7](#), was common practice for the Persians to determine when to do certain things; here, they are used to determine the date to kill all the Jews.

The casting of the lots determined that the twelfth month would be the time of the massacre, [Esther 3:7](#). This was eleven months from the time they cast the lots. The long delay between the first month and the month of massacre against the Jewish people was ordained by God, [Proverbs 16:33](#).

Haman is obviously confident that he could persuade the king to sign this decree because he cast the lots for the Jews' death before he went to the king. Notice that he carefully chooses his words and makes it appear that the Jews had their own laws that they followed and that they wouldn't follow the king's law, [Esther 3:8](#).

This was a partial truth because the Jews had no problem following most of the king's laws. The only part that they wouldn't follow was the part which would force them to violate God's law, such as bowing down to someone or something as a god.

Haman now proceeds to offer to pay ten thousand talents of silver, which would go into the king's treasury to pay those who take care of this dirty deed, [Esther 3:9](#), in order that it doesn't drain the king's money. This was almost two-thirds of the annual income of the Empire from taxes and tribute.

This tells us that Haman was a very wealthy man, or as some commentators suggest, he planned on raising this money from the Jews' property after they were dead.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'According to Herodotus, the regular revenue of the Persian king consisted of 14,560 silver talents; so that, if the same talent is intended, Haman's offer would have exceeded two-thirds of one year's revenue (or two and one-half million British pound sterling). Another Persian subject, Pythius, once offered to present Xerxes with four million gold darics, or about four and one-half pounds.'

'So the king took his signet ring from his finger and gave it to Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. "Keep the money," the king said to Haman, "and do with the people as you please." Then on the thirteenth day of the first month, the royal secretaries were summoned. They wrote out in the script of each province and in the language of each people all Haman's orders to the king's satraps, the governors of the various provinces and the nobles of the various peoples. These were written in the name of King Xerxes himself and sealed with his own ring.

Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with the order 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. 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 they would be ready for that day. 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, but the city of Susa was bewildered.' [Esther 3:10-15](#)

The king thought this was a great idea, and so, he gave over his signet ring to Haman, [Esther 3:10](#), which gave him the authority to carry out his fiendish scheme.

We might wonder why the king would agree with this plot, but when we remember the background to what has just happened to Xerxes, it would make sense.

He's just back from a humiliating defeat by the Greeks. If there were any kind of threat of rebellion within his Empire, then he would want to squash it as quickly as possible.

Notice that the king refused the silver and allowed everything to be done by Haman, [Esther 3:11](#). Although we're not told why he didn't take the money, it's possible that the king wanted all this to fall on the shoulders of Haman. This, however, wouldn't get the king off the hook because he would still be associated with the massacre of the Jews, since he allowed it to happen.

We read about how the killing of Jews was announced, the scribe wrote the decree, [Esther 3:12](#), and it was sealed by the king's ring, [Esther 3:12](#). The signet ring was designed in a way that a stamp could be made on decrees, and the stamp made the decrees official.

In giving the ring to Haman, the king was surrendering the sovereignty of the Empire to Haman to carry out his plot. After this, they had the decree sent to all the provinces of the kingdom, Esther 3:13, over one hundred and twenty-seven of them, Esther 1:1.

The decrees say that not only were the Jewish men to be killed but women and children were to be killed as well, Esther 3:13 / Esther 4:16. Their property was to be plundered, Esther 3:13.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Thus, whoever killed a Jew had his property for his trouble! And thus the hand of every man was armed against these miserable people. Both in the Greek version and in the Latin the copy of this order is introduced at length, expressing ‘the king’s desire to have all his dominions in quiet and prosperity but that he is informed that this cannot be expected, while a certain detestable people are disseminated through all his provinces, who not only are not subject to the laws, but endeavour to change them and that nothing less than their utter extermination will secure the peace and prosperity of the empire and therefore he orders that they be all destroyed, both male and female, young and old.’

The property being plundered gives credibility to the idea that Haman would come with the ten thousand talents of silver from the Jews, Esther 3:9. The text doesn’t tell us if Haman suggested this in his discussions with the king, or if this was the king’s idea but we do know that the vast amount of silver the Jews possessed was going to be seized by Haman, ten thousand silver talents were going to be given to the state.

While Haman was happy with his plan, Esther 3:13-14, and sat down and enjoyed a drink with the king, the city of Susa, the capital of Persia was confused by this whole matter, Esther 3:15. Although the people were confused, we know that God wasn’t about to let this happen, especially when we think the Messiah would come from the Jews. Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Susa was now the capital of Persia, and the main residence of the Persians of high rank. These, being attached to the religion of Zoroaster, would naturally sympathise with the Jews and be disturbed at their threatened destruction. Even apart from this bond of union, the decree was sufficiently strange and ominous to ‘perplex’ thoughtful citizens.’

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION

‘When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly. But he went only as far as the king’s gate because no one clothed in sackcloth was allowed to enter it. In every province to which the edict and order of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing. Many lay in sackcloth and ashes.’ Esther 4:1-3

MORDECAI PERSUADES ESTHER TO HELP

The news of the massacre was devastating to the Jews, and Mordecai’s actions portrayed the feelings of the Jews. They had done nothing to deserve what was coming from the state.

When Mordecai learned what was going to happen, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, [Esther 4:1](#). The sackcloth was made from rough material and had animal hair on it, and the ashes were a visible sign of their mourning.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Either sackcloth or ashes was a sign of deep mourning; but both together were indications of the most distressing grief possible.’

Notice that Mordecai did this in the middle of the city to show everyone what he thought about this decree, [Esther 4:1](#). Some commentators suggest that it was considered a bad omen to the king; if anyone was sad in his presence, this could explain why Mordecai wasn’t permitted to enter the palace, [Esther 4:2](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘He could not enter into the gate of the place where the officers waited, because he was in the habit of a mourner; for this would have been contrary to law.’

All the Jews greatly mourned, wept, and wailed concerning the decree, [Esther 4:3](#). This is another moment which suggests that even though God isn’t mentioned by name, it’s clear God is involved because they were mourning and fasting for God to help them in this desperate situation.

‘When Esther’s eunuchs and female attendants came and told her about Mordecai, she was in great distress. She sent clothes for him to put on instead of his sackcloth, but he would not accept them. Then Esther summoned Hathak, one of the king’s eunuchs assigned to attend her, and ordered him to find out what was troubling Mordecai and why. So Hathak went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king’s gate. Mordecai told him everything that had happened to him, including the exact amount of money Haman had promised to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews. He also gave him a copy of the text of the edict for their annihilation, which had been published in Susa, to show to Esther and explain it to her, and he told him to instruct her to go into the king’s presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people. Hathak went back and reported to Esther what Mordecai had said.’ [Esther 4:4-9](#)

It’s obvious that Esther didn’t have a clue about what was going on, but she did find out that her cousin Mordecai was in distress, [Esther 4:4](#), and so, she sent some clothes for him to put on, in order that he might be comforted.

When he refused the clothes, [Esther 4:4](#), she knew something was wrong, and so, she sent Hathak to find out what was going on with Mordecai, [Esther 4:5](#). Mordecai goes ahead and tells Hathak all about it, including the money that Haman was offering the king, [Esther 4:6-7](#) / [Esther 3:9](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Throughout the Book of Esther, it is evident that Mordecai had access to any information that he requested, and this mention of the ten thousand talents of silver Haman agreed to pay the king indicates that, regardless of the king’s seeming refusal of it, it became finally a binding part of the agreement.’

Mordecai then sends a copy of this decree to the queen as proof because she wasn’t aware of it, [Esther 4:8](#). Since such legal matters didn’t relate to the women of the kingdom, Haman and his men acted immediately in order to carry out the conspiracy against the Jews, though the day of the massacre didn’t come for several months, [Esther 3:3-14](#). It’s at this point that Mordecai reveals that Esther is a Jew because he tells Esther to go before the king so that her people might be saved. Mordecai stood up and spoke up for what was right, [Esther 4:8](#) / [1 Peter 3:14-17](#). And so, Hathak went back and reported to Esther what Mordecai had said, [Esther 4:9](#).

‘Then she instructed him to say to Mordecai, “All the king’s officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned, the king has but one law: that they be put to death unless the king extends the gold sceptre to them and spares their lives. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king.” When Esther’s words were reported to Mordecai, he sent back this

answer: “Do not think that because you are in the king’s house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?” Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: “Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.” So Mordecai went away and carried out all of Esther’s instructions.’ [Esther 4:10-17](#)

Straight after Hathak told Esther what Mordecai said, she sent him back to Mordecai to tell him of the consequences if she went before the king without an invitation, [Esther 4:10-11](#).

The king had a golden sceptre that he kept with him, and if a person entered his room uninvited, he had the power to save their life if he held out his golden sceptre, [Esther 4:11](#).

Some commentators suggest that this rule, [Esther 4:11](#), was created as a protection against assassins. They also say, if anyone just ran into the private room of the king, they would likely be executed there and then on the spot, [Esther 4:11](#).

The normal procedure was that the king, through his guards or another representative, often his cupbearer, would invite someone into his presence, [Esther 4:11](#).

Notice that Esther didn’t know if she had any influence on the king any longer because he hadn’t called for her for thirty days, [Esther 4:11](#). Remember that Esther is a Jew, but Haman didn’t know this, and so, she would be among those who were to be slaughtered.

He let her know that if she remained silent, she wouldn’t escape death because she was a Jew as well, [Esther 4:12-14](#). She was willing to risk her life for the life of Mordecai, and the rest of the Jews, [Esther 4:14](#).

Even if Esther had remained silent, I believe God would have used some other way to preserve these Jews, and if she refused to go before the king, she would have been guilty of sin, [Esther 4:14](#) / [James 4:17](#).

Mordecai’s faith is clearly seen here because he knows that God would deliver His people from this mindless plot of Haman. Mordecai believed that his people would be spared from the massacre in one way or another.

He believed that Esther didn’t become queen by chance; he knew she was the queen by God’s divine providence. He believed that if she went before the king, she could bring about the deliverance of her people.

The New Bible Commentary says the following.

‘Mordecai’s argument here was brutal in its clarity. Death awaited Esther whether or not she went in to the king. She had nothing to lose. If she failed, deliverance would come from some other place; but maybe, who knows, maybe God had made her queen just for the purpose of rescuing his people.’

When she received this message, she knew what she had to do, and so, she asked Mordecai to get all the Jews in Susa to fast for her for three days; she and her attendants would do the same, [Esther 4:15-16](#). She asks the Jews to fast and pray to God so that she might be successful before the king, [Esther 4:16](#).

Notice that the text doesn’t say anything about prayer, however, it is implied as prayer and fasting usually go together, [Matthew 17:20](#). In times of distress, the people’s fasting and prayer were a proclamation of their faith that God continue to work among His people.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘What a strange thing, that still we hear nothing of prayer, nor of God! What is the ground on which we can account for this total silence? I know it not. She could not suppose there was any charm in fasting, sackcloth garments, and lying on the ground. If these were not done to turn away the displeasure of God, which seemed now to have unchained their enemies against them, what were they done for?’

Notice Esther committed herself to go before the king, whether she was put to death or not, [Esther 4:16](#) / [Matthew 10:28](#) / [Acts 4:19-20](#) / [Philippians 1:21](#). Esther was once again obedient to her uncle, who had brought her up from childhood. So Mordecai went away and carried out all of Esther's instructions, [Esther 4:17](#).

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION

‘On the third day, Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king’s hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall, facing the entrance. When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther approached and touched the tip of the sceptre. Then the king asked, “What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you.” “If it pleases the king,” replied Esther, “let the king, together with Haman, come today to a banquet I have prepared for him.” “Bring Haman at once,” the king said, “so that we may do what Esther asks.” So the king and Haman went to the banquet Esther had prepared. As they were drinking wine, the king again asked Esther, “Now what is your petition? It will be given you. And what is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted.” Esther replied, “My petition and my request is this: If the king regards me with favour and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfil my request, let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for them. Then I will answer the king’s question.” Esther 5:1-8

ESTHER’S REQUEST TO THE KING

Earlier, Haman talked the king into setting a date for all the Jews in his kingdom to be killed, [Esther 3:3-14](#), and Mordecai sent word to Esther that she needed to go before the king and ask him to stop this massacre, [Esther 4:4-8](#). She was hesitant, to begin with, but in the end, she decided to go before the king, even though it might cost her her life, [Esther 4:16](#).

This chapter deals with what happened next, and so, Esther, her attendants, and the Jews had been fasting for three days, [Esther 4:16](#), and just as Esther had promised, she went before the king. We can only imagine the courage she must have had and what was going through her mind at this point, will she live or will she die!

After putting on her royal robes, Esther entered in a way that wasn’t threatening, [Esther 5:1](#), so the guards didn’t take action against her. She stood in a visible place where she could be seen by the king, who was sitting on his royal throne, [Esther 5:1](#), and when the king saw her, he held out to her the gold sceptre,

The king may have found Esther’s beauty irresistible, and so, he was drawn to him by her presentation. She found favour in his sight, and so the king held out his golden sceptre and invited her into his presence, [Esther 5:2](#). And Esther approached and touched the tip of the sceptre, [Esther 5:2](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Septuagint represents ‘the king as being at first greatly enraged when he saw Esther, because she had dared to appear before him unveiled, and she, perceiving this, was so terrified that she fainted away; on which the king, touched with tenderness, sprung from his throne, took her up in his arms, laid the golden sceptre on her neck, and spoke to her in the most endearing manner.’ This is more circumstantial than the Hebrew but is not contrary to it.’

It's now that the prayers and fasting for three days by the people have been answered, as she is now standing before the king, [Esther 4:16](#). The king knew that Esther wanted something; otherwise, she wouldn't have risked her life to come before him.

He wants to know what she wants, and he tells her that he will give her up to half the kingdom, [Esther 5:3](#). I don't think the king saying 'he would give her half of the kingdom', is to be taken literally, rather it was an expression which was used to say that the king was willing to grant someone what they asked for, [Mark 6:21-23](#).

We can see the wisdom of Esther here as she didn't tell the king what she wanted straight away, rather she waited for the right time, by inviting the king and Haman to attend a banquet later that day, [Esther 5:4](#).

Esther didn't rush in and present the pleas of the people who were to be killed in the plot of Haman, she wanted Haman in the presence of the king when the truth was revealed, [Proverbs 21:1](#).

The king is obviously curious about what Esther was about to say, hence why he asks Haman to come quickly so they can go to the banquet, [Esther 5:5](#). So the king and Haman went to the banquet Esther had prepared, [Esther 5:5](#).

Notice again, while they were drinking wine, the king wants to know what Esther wanted, and he promised her up to half the kingdom again, [Esther 5:6](#) / [Esther 5:3](#), but once again, Esther puts it off for another day, [Esther 5:7-8](#). She tells the king that she will tell him her request tomorrow at the next banquet, [Esther 5:8](#).

We don't know why she kept putting off presenting her request to the king, as the text doesn't tell us. Some commentators have suggested that she possibly lacked the courage, so she kept putting it off.

Some commentators suggest that she wanted to have more time to pray about the matter. Other commentators suggest she was doing this so she would have more time to please the king, so that he might be more inclined to grant her request.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Esther seems to have been afraid to make her real request of Xerxes too abruptly. She concluded that the king would understand that she had a real petition in the background, and would recur to it, as in fact he did, [Esther 5:6](#) / [Esther 7:2](#).'

HAMAN'S RAGE AGAINST MORDECAI

'Haman went out that day happy and in high spirits. But when he saw Mordecai at the king's gate and observed that he neither rose nor showed fear in his presence, he was filled with rage against Mordecai. Nevertheless, Haman restrained himself and went home. Calling together his friends and Zeresh, his wife, Haman boasted to them about his vast wealth, his many sons, and all the ways the king had honoured him and how he had elevated him above the other nobles and officials. "And that's not all," Haman added. "I'm the only person Queen Esther invited to accompany the king to the banquet she gave. And she has invited me along with the king tomorrow. But all this gives me no satisfaction as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the king's gate." His wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, "Have a pole set up, reaching to a height of fifty cubits, and ask the king in the morning to have Mordecai impaled on it. Then go with the king to the banquet and enjoy yourself." This suggestion delighted Haman, and he had the pole set up.' [Esther 5:9-14](#)

Haman, who was second in command, after receiving the personal invitation to attend a banquet by the king and queen, is certainly filled with joy [Esther 5:9](#), and we can only imagine his excitement about what was to come. However, on his way from the palace, he again met Mordecai, who once again wouldn't bow in his presence, [Esther 5:9](#) / [Esther 3:2-5](#). Haman felt like striking Mordecai dead right there, and then, he was raging mad, [Esther 5:9](#), but he restrained himself and went home and invited his friends and his wife Zeresh to come to him, [Esther 5:10](#).

Notice how he did nothing but brag about his wealth and his accomplishments, and how he was the only one Queen Esther invited to accompany the king to the banquet, [Esther 5:11-12](#) / [Daniel 4:28-33](#).

Haman was full of pride and full of himself, [James 4:10](#). It appears that Mordecai's actions were just too strong for him, and he was allowing this to make him miserable, [Esther 5:13](#).

It's clear that Zeresh, Haman's wife, was caught up in all the excitement of her husband because she, too, would profit from any exaltation of Haman in the Empire.

In order to calm the anxiety of her husband concerning Mordecai, she suggests the means by which Mordecai would be put to death, [Esther 5:14](#) / [1 Kings 21:1-16](#).

Haman's wife and his friends suggest that gallows be built fifty cubits high, that would be about seventy-five feet high, so that Mordecai could be impaled on them, [Esther 5:14](#) / [Esther 2:23](#).

Gallows were a structure built of wood, and when it says that Mordecai was to be impaled, it wasn't talking about hanging him from a rope, but hanging him by crucifying him, which was the common practice among the Persians. The height of the gallows was so high that anyone who hung on them would be clearly seen by everyone in Susa.

It appears that Haman wanted a public sign for everyone who would defy him. Haman thought this was a wonderful idea, and he was certain that he could convince the king to impale Mordecai, [Esther 5:14](#), which is why he had the gallows built before he had the king's permission.

Duff, in his commentary, says the following.

'This stake would have been some ten feet high but set aloft upon a citadel, or the city wall, as in the case of Nicanor, [2 Maccabees 15:35](#).'

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'The gallows mentioned here were not for hanging a victim, but for violently killing and displaying the victim. 'A pointed stake is set upright in the ground, and the culprit is taken, placed on the sharp point, and then pulled down by his legs till the stake that went in at the fundament passes up through the body and comes out through the neck. A most dreadful species of punishment, in which revenge and cruelty may glut the utmost of their malice. The culprit lives a considerable time in excruciating agonies.'

CHAPTER 6

INTRODUCTION

'That night the king could not sleep; so he ordered the book of the chronicles, the record of his reign, to be brought in and read to him. It was found recorded there that Mordecai had exposed Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, who had conspired to assassinate King Xerxes. "What honour and recognition has Mordecai received for this?" the king asked. "Nothing has been done for him," his attendants answered.' [Esther 6:1-3](#)

MORDECAI HONOURED

Here again, we see God's providence at work as the king couldn't sleep, [Esther 6:1](#). It's possible that God was now at work in all parties concerning the conspiracy of Haman, and He wouldn't allow the king to sleep. Because he couldn't sleep, he asked for the book of the chronicles to be read to him, [Esther 6:1](#) / [Malachi 3:16](#).

Although the text doesn't tell us, it's certainly possible that he used this to help him get to sleep on occasion, but this time the written record caught his attention because it was about how Mordecai had saved him from the plot of his two eunuchs, [Esther 6:2](#) / [Esther 2:21](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'The Targum says the king had a dream, which was as follows: 'And the king sat one in the similitude of a man who spoke these words to him: Haman desireth to slay thee, and to make himself king in thy stead. Behold, he will come unto thee early in the morning, to ask from thee the man who rescued thee from death, that he may slay him, but say thou unto Haman, What shall be done for the man whose honour the king studieth? And thou wilt find that he will ask nothing less from thee than the royal vestments, the regal crown, and the horse on which the king rides.'

At that time, Mordecai hadn't been rewarded for his act of loyalty in reference to the king. He had saved the king's life by preventing the assassination plot of Bigthan and Teresh, [Esther 2:21](#).

The king didn't remember anything being done for him either, which is why he wanted to know if he had been honoured for his noble deed, [Esther 6:3](#). When he later discovered that Mordecai was a Jew, then he would conclude that the Jews were actually loyal to the king, [Esther 6:14](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'It was a settled principle of the Persian government that 'Royal Benefactors' were to receive an adequate reward. The names of such persons were placed on a special roll, and care was taken that they should be properly recompensed, though they sometimes waited for months or years before they were rewarded.'

'The king said, "Who is in the court?" Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the palace to speak to the king about impaling Mordecai on the pole he had set up for him. His attendants answered, "Haman is standing in the court." "Bring him in," the king ordered. When Haman entered, the king asked him, "What should be done for the man the king delights to honour?" Now Haman thought to himself, "Who is there that the king would rather honour than me?" So he answered the king, "For the man the king delights to honour, have them bring a royal robe the king has worn and a horse the king has ridden, one with a royal crest placed on its head. Then let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the king's most noble princes. Let them robe the man the king delights to honour and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, 'This is what is done for the man the king delights to honour!'" Esther 6:4-9

Haman had come early in the morning in order to get the king's permission to hang Mordecai and the king wanted to know who it was, [Esther 6:4](#). When he found out it was Haman, he invited him in [Esther 6:5](#).

Before Haman was able to say anything to the king, the king was asking Haman for his advice on how he should honour a man that he was delighted with, [Esther 6:6](#).

Haman, in his arrogant pride, thought the king wanted to honour him, [Esther 6:6](#), and so, he went out of his way to think of the best honour possible that would feed his ego. This is why you see him wanting to wear the royal robe and to be paraded around on a horse that the king has ridden, [Esther 6:7-9](#).

Wearing the king's clothing, [Esther 6:8](#), demonstrated the king's favour of the one who was presented before the people, [1 Samuel 18:4](#) / [2 Kings 2:13-14](#) / [Isaiah 61:3](#) / [Isaiah 61:10](#) / [Zechariah 3](#) / [Mark 5:27](#). We can imagine how Haman is feeling at this point; he would be well pleased with himself and full of himself.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Only the king seems to have been ignorant of the feud between Mordecai and Haman; certainly, everybody in Shushan must have been aware of it. Thus, the king had no idea of the irony of the situation in which he placed his favourite minister. However, the whole city of Shushan would have been astounded at this development.’

‘Go at once,’ the king commanded Haman. “Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king’s gate. Do not neglect anything you have recommended.” So Haman got the robe and the horse. He robed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city streets, proclaiming before him, “This is what is done for the man the king delights to honour!” Afterward Mordecai returned to the king’s gate. But Haman rushed home, with his head covered in grief, and told Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him. His advisers and his wife Zeresh said to him, “Since Mordecai, before whom your downfall has started, is of Jewish origin, you cannot stand against him—you will surely come to ruin!” While they were still talking with him, the king’s eunuchs arrived and hurried Haman away to the banquet Esther had prepared.’ Esther 6:10-14

We can only imagine the shock that came to Haman once he heard that he was to give the robe and the horse and more or less kneel down and pay homage to Mordecai, [Esther 6:10](#) / [Romans 8:28](#).

Haman wanted to kill Mordecai, but now he has to give him the honour that he thought he was going to receive. We can imagine how low he must have felt when he had to dress Mordecai in the royal robe and the horse with the royal crest and then have to parade him around town in front of everyone, [Esther 6:11](#) / [Proverbs 16:18](#).

Notice that Haman was so upset that he went home to mourn with his head covered, [Esther 6:12](#). His wife and his friends didn’t help matters because they told Haman that if Mordecai was a Jew, then he didn’t stand a chance of defeating him.

Haman would surely fall before Mordecai, [Esther 6:13](#). The tables have now been turned, as Haman wanted to oppress God’s people, God would raise them up, [1 Samuel 2:8](#) / [Revelation 3:8-9](#).

While Haman was throwing himself a pity party, the king’s eunuchs told him to come to the banquet prepared by the queen, [Esther 6:14](#). No doubt receiving the invite to the banquet would have made Haman feel a little better, but as we’re about to see in the next chapter, things aren’t going to go well for Haman, [Matthew 7:1-2](#).

CHAPTER 7

INTRODUCTION

‘So the king and Haman went to Queen Esther’s banquet, and as they were drinking wine on the second day, the king again asked, “Queen Esther, what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted.” Then Queen Esther answered, “If I have found favour with you, Your Majesty, and if it pleases you, grant me my life—this is my petition. And spare my people—this is my request. For I and my people have been sold to be destroyed, killed, and annihilated. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the king.” King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, “Who is he? Where is he—the man who has dared to do such a thing?” Esther said, “An adversary and enemy! This vile Haman!” Then Haman was terrified before the king and queen.’ Esther 7:1-6

It appears that this second banquet lasted for at least two days because it wasn’t until the second day that the king asked for a third time what Esther’s request was and that he would grant it, [Esther 7:1-2](#). For the third time, he offered her up to half the kingdom, [Esther 7:2](#) / [Esther 5:3](#) / [Esther 5:6](#).

Esther didn’t come right out and speak about Haman, instead for the first time she reveals that she was a Jew, and her people have been sold out and they are to be destroyed, [Esther 7:3-4](#) / [Esther 3:13](#).

She then says that she wouldn't have bothered the king with this matter if her people were just going to be sold as slaves, but even if that happened there's no way the king could be compensated for all the good people he would lose, **Esther 7:4**. In this case, they were sold into destruction by the promise of payment by Haman of ten thousand talents of silver, **Esther 3:9**.

Esther's reply to the king made it clear that the king had been deceived into carrying out a plot that would lead to the destruction of his beautiful queen. The king was astonished that his beautiful queen was one of the people who would be destroyed in the massacre planned by Haman. He was astonished that it was a Jew, Mordecai, who saved his life from an attempted assassination.

When the king heard all of this he became furious and he wants to know who would dare to do such a thing, **Esther 7:5**. It's at this point that Esther reveals that Haman is this vile man, **Esther 7:6 / Esther 3:10-11**, no wonder Haman was terrified, **Esther 7:6**.

Haman didn't realise that Esther was a Jew and now his decree that he made to kill all the Jews was an attack on the Queen. We can only imagine what's going through Haman's mind now; he has sealed his own fate.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

'Esther was in a very dangerous position. Not only did she now identify herself with a minority group that Haman had represented to the king as subversive, but she also accused one of his closest confidential advisers of committing an error in judgment.'

HAMAN IMPALED

'The king got up in a rage, left his wine and went out into the palace garden. But Haman, realising that the king had already decided his fate, stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life. Just as the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet hall, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was reclining. The king exclaimed, "Will he even molest the queen while she is with me in the house?" As soon as the word left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs attending the king, said, "A pole reaching to a height of fifty cubits stands by Haman's house. He had it set up for Mordecai, who spoke up to help the king." The king said, "Impale him on it!" So they impaled Haman on the pole he had set up for Mordecai. Then the king's fury subsided.' **Esther 7:7-10**

Some commentators suggest that according to tradition if a king rose up in anger, the person that made him angry would receive no mercy, **Esther 7:7**. When Haman learned that Esther was a Jew, he immediately realised that he was in serious trouble and so, while the king was out in the garden, Haman begins to beg the Queen for his life, **Esther 7:7**.

In desperation, he lay down on the couch the queen was sitting on and started pleading with her for his life, **Esther 7:8 / James 4:10**. However, when the king walked back in, he thought that Haman was trying to assault the Queen, and so, he had Haman's face covered, **Esther 7:8**. The covering of the face was the sign of an official arrest and sentence of death, as was the practice of the Macedonians and the Romans.

Moore, in his commentary, says the following.

'One must remember that in antiquity, very strong feelings and strict regulations centred on the harem. Had Haman knelt as much as a foot away from the queen's couch, the king's reaction could still have been justified.'

Haman had gallows built to hang Mordecai on, **Esther 5:14**, and now he would be hanged, or we could say crucified on his own gallows, **Esther 7:9 / Psalms 7:14-16 / Proverbs 26:27 / Galatians 6:7-8**. After Haman was impaled, the king's fury subsided, **Esther 7:10**.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Very well, so far, so good! But the danger was far from being averted. That evil decree sent forth in the authority of the Law of the Medes and Persians that didn’t alter, was still out there, in every province of the Empire, [Esther 3:12-18](#) / [Daniel 6:9](#). The great danger of wholesale slaughter of the Jews still persisted.’

CHAPTER 8

INTRODUCTION

‘That same day, King Xerxes gave Queen Esther the estate of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came into the presence of the king, for Esther had told how he was related to her. The king took off his signet ring, which he had reclaimed from Haman, and presented it to Mordecai. And Esther appointed him over Haman’s estate. Esther again pleaded with the king, falling at his feet and weeping. She begged him to put an end to the evil plan of Haman the Agagite, which he had devised against the Jews. Then the king extended the gold sceptre to Esther, and she arose and stood before him. “If it pleases the king,” she said, “and if he regards me with favour and thinks it the right thing to do, and if he is pleased with me, let an order 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. For how can I bear to see disaster fall on my people? How can I bear to see the destruction of my family?” [Esther 8:1-6](#)

THE KING’S EDICT ON BEHALF OF THE JEWS

On the same day that Haman was hung, [Esther 7:10](#), the king gave Esther the house of Haman, which would have included all his possession and his servants, [Esther 8:1](#).

This was done according to the custom of the time, the possessions of a traitor were confiscated by the state and the possessions of Haman were given to the one he had wronged.

Mordecai had already proven his allegiance to the king by spoiling the plot against his life, [Esther 2:21-23](#), and since he was the foster father of his queen, [Esther 2:7](#), it made perfect sense for the king to give his signet ring to Mordecai to make him second in command in the place of Haman, [Esther 8:2](#).

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The king gave Mordecai Haman’s place as second in authority, Joseph, [Genesis 41:42](#), Nehemiah, [Nehemiah 1:11](#) to [Nehemiah 2:8](#), and Daniel, [Daniel 5:7](#) / [Daniel 5:29](#) / [Daniel 6:3](#).’

Esther goes ahead and makes Mordecai the head of Haman’s household, [Esther 8:2](#), and so he lived in his home and enjoyed the riches that he had. When she did this, this signalled to the king that she desired that Mordecai be exalted to the position that Haman had formerly enjoyed.

He was given the signet ring, which meant he now had the power to seal documents that couldn’t be altered even by the king. This was a great honour, and it required great responsibility, and Mordecai was certainly qualified for such a task.

We must remember that although Haman has already been dealt with, his evil decree was still in force. Earlier, the king said that he would give the queen whatever she wanted, up to half of his kingdom, [Esther 5:3](#) / [Esther 5:6](#) / [Esther 7:2](#), but since nothing had been done to stop the slaughter, Esther comes before the king crying this time, [Esther 8:3](#).

Notice that the king once again held out his golden sceptre, [Esther 8:3](#), which suggests that Esther once again went before the king without being invited, [Esther 5:2](#).

Esther once again pleads for the king's favour and asks him to do what he sees as right and if the king is pleased with her, then let an order 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, [Esther 8:5](#). She tells him it would be just too much for her to handle her people and her family being killed, [Esther 8:6](#).

Baldwin, in his commentary, says the following.

'It is very moving to see the extent to which this young girl, who has everything money can buy, identifies herself with her own kith and kin, and is prepared to risk everything in an attempt to prevent the disaster that threatens them.'

'King Xerxes replied to Queen Esther and 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. Now write another decree in the king's name in 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." At once, the royal secretaries were summoned—on the twenty-third day of the third month, the month of Sivan. 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 Cush. These orders were written in the script of each province and the language of each people, and also to the Jews in their own script and language. Mordecai wrote in the name of King Xerxes, sealed the dispatches with the king's signet ring, and sent them by mounted couriers, who rode fast horses especially bred for the king. 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. The day appointed for the Jews to do this in all the provinces of King Xerxes was the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar. 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. 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.' [Esther 8:7-14](#)

King Xerxes tells Queen Esther and Mordecai that because Haman attacked the Jews, he has have given his estate to Esther, [Esther 8:7](#) / [Esther 8:1](#), and they have impaled him on the pole he set up, [Esther 8:7](#) / [Esther 7:10](#).

Remember, Esther pleaded for the king to reverse the decree that was sent out, [Esther 8:5](#) / [Esther 3:12-18](#), the problem is, once a decree was sealed with the signet ring, not even the king could reverse it, [Esther 1:19](#) / [Daniel 6:17](#).

However, the king made it possible for Esther to save her people because he gave her permission to send another decree that would make it impossible for the slaughter to occur, [Esther 8:8](#). This new decree also had to be sealed with the king's signet ring, [Esther 8:8](#).

Around two months had passed since Haman had made his decree, [Esther 3:12](#), but now a new decree was made by Mordecai that would protect the Jews, [Esther 8:9-10](#). Now they would be allowed to rise up and protect themselves from anyone who tried to slaughter them, [Esther 8:11](#).

We are told that the day appointed for the Jews to do this in all the provinces of King Xerxes was the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, [Esther 8:12](#).

We are also told that 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, [Esther 8:13](#). And so, 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, [Esther 8:14](#).

Wiersbe, in his commentary, says the following.

'If a group of pagan scribes and messengers, without modern means of transportation and communication, could take Mordecai's decree to an entire empire, how much more should Christian workers be able to take Christ's Gospel to a lost world!'

THE TRIUMPH OF THE JEWS

‘When Mordecai left the king’s presence, he was wearing royal garments of blue and white, a large crown of gold and a purple robe of fine linen. And the city of Susa held a joyous celebration. For the Jews, it was a time of happiness and joy, gladness, and honour. In every province and in every city to which the edict of the king came, there was joy and gladness among the Jews, with feasting and celebrating. And many people of other nationalities became Jews because fear of the Jews had seized them.’ Esther 8:15-17

Mordecai is dressed in all the royal clothing, [Esther 8:15](#), which proves that he was in control and had the favour of the king. The first Jews to learn about Mordecai’s new decree were the people of Susa, and it caused the people to rejoice because now they had hope, [Esther 8:15](#).

As the good news spread through the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, [Esther 8:9](#) / [Esther 1:1](#), all the Jews rejoiced, and they had a great feast because now they could protect themselves from Haman’s decree, [Esther 8:16-17](#). As the new decree was made known, the other people became scared of what would happen to them, so many of the people became Jews by becoming proselytes, [Esther 8:17](#). They were obviously persuaded that because Mordecai and Esther were Jews and the God of the Jews was working in and through the Jews, [Exodus 19:5-6](#) / [Ecclesiastes 12:13](#).

CHAPTER 9

INTRODUCTION

‘On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, the edict commanded by the king was to be carried out. On this day, the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, but now the tables were turned, and the Jews got the upper hand over those who hated them. The Jews assembled in their cities in all the provinces of King Xerxes to attack those determined to destroy them. No one could stand against them, because the people of all the other nationalities were afraid of them. And all the nobles of the provinces, the satraps, the governors, and the king’s administrators helped the Jews, because fear of Mordecai had seized them. Mordecai was prominent in the palace; his reputation spread throughout the provinces, and he became more and more powerful.’ Esther 9:1-4

The day of the great battle had now begun, [Esther 9:1](#), and those who hated the Jews were hoping they would be able to overpower them and wipe them from the face of the earth, but God was on the side of the Jews, and they prevailed against their enemies, [Esther 9:1](#) / [Romans 8:31](#).

On that day, all the Jews gathered together in each city, and they defended themselves, and no one could conquer them, because their enemies were afraid of them, [Esther 9:2](#). It’s certainly possible that they were in such fear because God created that fear in them, [Exodus 23:27](#), which again would be the providence of God.

Thanks to Mordecai’s position and the influence of God, the Jews weren’t alone. The king’s leaders, servants and most likely his military force were all helping the Jews survive Haman’s decree, [Esther 9:3](#).

This tells us that not everyone in the Persian Empire hated the Jews. We are told that Mordecai was prominent in the palace, and his reputation spread throughout the provinces, and he became more and more powerful, [Esther 9:4](#).

‘The Jews struck down all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying them, and they did what they pleased to those who hated them. In the citadel of Susa, the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men. They also killed Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vaizatha, the ten sons of Haman son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews. But they did not lay their hands on the plunder. The number of those killed in the citadel of Susa was reported to the king that same day. The king said to Queen Esther, “The Jews

have killed and destroyed five hundred men and the ten sons of Haman in the citadel of Susa. What have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? Now, what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? It will also be granted." "If it pleases the king," Esther answered, "give the Jews in Susa permission to carry out this day's edict tomorrow also and let Haman's ten sons be impaled on poles." So the king commanded that this be done. An edict was issued in Susa, and they impaled the ten sons of Haman. The Jews in Susa came together on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar, and they put to death in Susa three hundred men, but they did not lay their hands on the plunder.'

Esther 9:5-15

So, the enemies of the Jews didn't stand a chance, **Esther 9:5**, and in Susa alone, the Jews killed five hundred men, **Esther 9:6**. They also killed Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vaizatha and the ten sons of Haman, **Esther 9:7-10 / Esther 8:11**.

The Jews now have the right to plunder their enemy's goods, but they chose not to because they weren't interested in increasing their material wealth; they only wanted to save their lives.

The fact that it is mentioned in the text that the Jews didn't plunder those they overcame, **Esther 9:10**, is evidence of the fact that this wasn't a battle that would prosper them materially.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'This statement occurs no less than three times in this chapter, appearing also in **Esther 9:15**, and **Esther 9:16**.'

The New Layman's Bible Commentary says the following.

'The Jews had a right to take the spoil, but they waived it, because they were fighting for survival, not for material gain. They were not the aggressors in this conflict, but they were defending themselves from their enemies who sought to slay them.'

When the king finds out how many have been killed in Susa, **Esther 9:11**, he wonders how many have been killed in his other provinces. He lets Esther know this information, **Esther 9:12**. This shows us how much the king favoured Esther because he wants to know if there is anything more he can give her, **Esther 9:12**.

Esther goes ahead and requests two things. First, she wanted her people in Susa to be able to carry out the decree made by Mordecai for one more day, **Esther 9:13**.

Second, that Haman's ten dead sons be impaled on the gallows, **Esther 9:13 / Esther 3:1 / 1 Samuel 15:8-33**, which would serve as a warning to all those who were enemies of the Jews, **Deuteronomy 21:22-23 / Numbers 16:27 / Numbers 16:32-33 / Numbers 25:4 / Joshua 7:24-25 / 1 Samuel 31:8-12 / 2 Samuel 21:6**.

The king grants her request, **Esther 9:14**, and three more men are killed in the city, but once again, we're told that Jews chose not to plunder their goods, **Esther 9:15**.

'Meanwhile, the remainder of the Jews who were in the king's provinces also assembled to protect themselves and get relief from their enemies. They killed seventy-five thousand of them but did not lay their hands on the plunder.

This happened on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar, and on the fourteenth, they rested and made it a day of feasting and joy. The Jews in Susa, however, had assembled on the thirteenth and fourteenth, and then on the fifteenth they rested and made it a day of feasting and joy. That is why rural Jews—those living in villages—observe the fourteenth of the month of Adar as a day of joy and feasting, a day for giving presents to each other.'

We find out that the Jews in the other provinces had killed seventy-five thousand of their enemies on the thirteenth day of Adar, and they rested on the fourteenth day, but the Jews in Susa fought on the thirteenth day and fourteenth day and rested on the fifteenth day, **Esther 9:16-17**.

This is why there were two days of feasting and celebration, because most of the Jews rested on the fourteenth day, while the rest of them rested on the fifteenth day **Esther 9:18**. This event is where the feast of Purim originated from, **Esther 9:19**.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The absence of explicit reference in the text to God helping His people does not deny His help. Instead, it reflects the attitude of the Jews who chose to ignore God’s commands, through Isaiah and Jeremiah, to return to the land, **Isaiah 48:20 / Jeremiah 29:10 / Jeremiah 50:8 / Jeremiah 51:6 / Deuteronomy 28**. They had pushed God aside in their lives, as Mordecai and Esther apparently had done to some extent. Nevertheless, God remained faithful to His promises, in spite of His people’s unfaithfulness, **2 Timothy 2:13**.’

PURIM ESTABLISHED

‘Mordecai recorded these events, and he sent letters to all the Jews throughout the provinces of King Xerxes, near and far, to have them celebrate annually the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar as the time when the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month when their sorrow was turned into joy and their mourning into a day of celebration. He wrote them to observe the days as days of feasting and joy and giving presents of food to one another and gifts to the poor. So the Jews agreed to continue the celebration they had begun, doing what Mordecai had written to them. For Haman, son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them and had cast the pur (that is, the lot) for their ruin and destruction. But 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. (Therefore, these days were called Purim, from the word pur.) Because of everything written in this letter and because of what they had seen and what had happened to them, the Jews took it on themselves to establish the custom that they and their descendants and all who join them should, without fail, observe these two days every year, in the way prescribed and at the time appointed. These days should be remembered and observed in every generation by every family, and in every province and in every city. And these days of Purim should never fail to be celebrated by the Jews—nor should the memory of these days die out among their descendants.’ **Esther 9:20-28**

Mordecai wants to make the feast of Purim official, and its theme is how the Jews’ sorrow was turned into joy and their mourning into a holiday because they were allowed to defend themselves and defeat their enemies, **Esther 9:20-22 / Psalm 30:5**. Part of the celebration called for them to send gifts to one another and give gifts to the poor, **Esther 9:22**.

The Jews thought this feast was a great idea, and they accepted it, **Esther 9:23**. They accepted it because Haman the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them for their ruin and destruction, **Esther 9:24**.

We learn that it got its name from Pur, which means lot, **Esther 9:24 / Esther 3:7**. But 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, **Esther 7:10**, and his sons should be impaled on poles, **Esther 9:25 / Esther 9:14**.

Then they made it plural by calling it Purim, **Esther 9:26**, which indicates that many lots were cast against them. Again, this feast was to be celebrated yearly as a reminder of what Haman did and how Esther overturned his evil plot, **Esther 9:27-28**.

‘So Queen Esther, daughter of Abihail, along with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter concerning Purim. And Mordecai sent letters to all the Jews in the 127 provinces of Xerxes’ kingdom—words of goodwill and assurance—to establish these days of Purim at their designated times, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had decreed for them, and as they had established for themselves and their descendants in regard to their times of fasting and lamentation. Esther’s decree confirmed these regulations about Purim, and it was written down in the records.’ **Esther 9:29-32**

Once the Jews accepted the feast of Purim, the queen and Mordecai wrote a letter of authority concerning the Purim, **Esther 9:29**.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Esther and Mordecai had the king’s license so to do, and their own authority was great and extensive.’

Mordecai sent letters to all the Jews in the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces of Xerxes’ kingdom, **Esther 9:30 / Esther 1:1**, which included words of encouragement, **Esther 9:30**. The letter included fasting and lamenting, and so a day of fasting before the feast of Purim was observed as well, **Esther 9:31**.

The letter being sent out made this an official civil rule that was recorded in the records, **Esther 9:32**, which is most likely referring to the book of the chronicles of the king, **Esther 2:23 / Esther 6:1 / Esther 10:2**.

Whitcomb, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The book’, **Esther 9:32**, must be the one in which Mordecai recorded all these events, **Esther 9:20**, that most scholars have concluded may have been a source the writer of Esther used. This document was probably not the Book of Esther itself, assuming the writer of Esther was someone other than Mordecai.’

Though not a part of the Old Testament law, the feast became a very significant celebration for the Jews. It is mentioned in the apocryphal book, **2 Maccabees 15:36**, but there is no reference to the feast in the New Testament. Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Quite appropriately, the day of fasting was called the Fast of Esther, stressing the anxiety and danger that existed when, after three days of fasting, she went unbidden into the presence of Ahasuerus. That fast is observed on Adar 13th and the two days of feasting on the succeeding two days. ‘The Jews still keep this day as Esther’s fast, prior to the Purim celebrations proper, marked by the reading of the scroll of Esther in its original chant, accompanied by blessings and hymns.’

A Jewish commentator says the following.

‘Purim is the most raucous holiday on the Jewish calendar, and observance of the holiday begins with dressing up in costume. Some people choose to dress as characters from the Purim story, and others dress in non-Purim-related costumes.’

‘It is a mitzvah, that is, a commandment, to listen to the story of Purim chanted from Megillat Esther, ‘The Scroll of Esther’ and to hear every word. It is customary to make a loud noise with a noisemaker called a ‘ra’ashan’ in Hebrew, or ‘grager’ in Yiddish, every time Haman’s name is mentioned, in order to fulfil the obligation of blotting out Haman’s name.’

‘Part of the holiday also includes giving gifts or charity to the poor, called ‘matanot l’evyonim’. A fun tradition on the holiday is to perform a Purim spiel, a satirical show either dramatizing the Purim story in a humorous way, or just a funny skit on any theme.’

CHAPTER 10

INTRODUCTION

‘King Xerxes imposed tribute throughout the empire, to its distant shores. And all his acts of power and might, together with a full account of the greatness of Mordecai, whom the king had promoted, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Media and Persia? Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Xerxes, preeminent among the Jews, and held in high esteem by his many fellow Jews, because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews.’ **Esther 10:1-3**

THE GREATNESS OF MORDECAI

In this last chapter, we get our last glimpse of what happened in King Xerxes' reign. The word 'tribute', Esther 10:1, means forced labour from the original Hebrew, so the King had imposed forced labour throughout his vast kingdom. Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the tribute.

'Perhaps an allusion to some fresh arrangement of the tribute likely to have followed on the return of Xerxes from Greece.'

The last two verses give us a summary of the greatness of Mordecai, Esther 2:5, which were recorded in the annals of the king, Esther 10:2, and how he became second in command, and how his people respected him, Esther 10:3 / Psalms 34:13-15.

Although there is no mention of Esther, I believe we can safely say that the greatness of Esther is found in the greatness of Mordecai. We must also remember that the book wasn't written about Esther; it was written to show us how the Jews were saved from Haman's evil plot by the providence of God.

Smith in his commentary, says the following.

'Now, chapter 10 just deals with the exalting of Mordecai. He was made, more or less, prime minister over the Persian Empire. He was given pretty much the office and the role that Haman had had. And it is, no doubt, because of Esther and Mordecai and their position, that when Esther's husband Ahasuerus died, his son, also called Ahasuerus in the scriptures, became the next king, but Queen Esther, no doubt, had a great influence upon him, her stepson. And it was he who gave Nehemiah permission and all to go back and rebuild the city of Jerusalem, to restore the walls and all. The stepson of Esther is the one who gave that very important decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, the decree from which the beginning date of the prophecy of the coming of the Messiah. Four hundred and eighty-three years after that date, the Messiah will come. So that is, no doubt, because of the influence that Mordecai and Esther had.'