

# The Book of Esther

## Introduction:

### Date

At the end of Ezra chapter 6, Zerubbabel had completed the construction of the new temple in Jerusalem. 21 years had passed from the Israelites' returning to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple (i.e., first year of Cyrus / 536 BC to the sixth year of Darius the Great / 515 BC [Ezra 1:1ff; 6:15]). Ezra chapter 7 takes place during the 7<sup>th</sup> year of Artaxerxes I Longimanus who ruled Persia from 464 to 424 BC (cf. Ezra 7:7) (i.e., 457 BC). Between the sixth year of Darius and the seventh year of Artaxerxes I Longimanus there was a period of 58 years skipped by Ezra (the time between chapter 6 and 7). During this time, it is most probable that the events of Esther occur. One proof of this date may be seen when we follow the time line of Artaxerxes I Longimanus in Ezra and Nehemiah; his reign goes into the 32<sup>nd</sup> year (cf. Neh. 2:1; 5:14; 13:6). The Artaxerxes / Ahasuerus of the book of Esther only reigned 20 years so they cannot possibly be the same people. Ezra 7 begins in the seventh year of Artaxerxes I Longimanus (i.e., 457 BC), and chapter six ended during the sixth year of Darius (i.e., 515 BC). The book of Esther was written during the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the reign of Ahasuerus (485 – 465 BC) (i.e., 482 BC / cf. Esther 1:2).

### Author

The book's author is difficult, if not impossible, for us to determine. Some have suggested that it was Mordecai himself due to statements in 9:20-23. It seems that the wording of Esther 10:1-3 disqualifies Mordecai from being the author. Who wrote Esther is unknown.

### Authenticity

Skeptics have doubted the authenticity of the book of Esther partly because of the unusually cruel decree suggested by Haman and carried out by King Ahasuerus (Esther 3:8-11). However, this is an unfounded conclusion. When one looks into the character of Artaxerxes, such cruel acts, as mentioned in this book, become reality. Artaxerxes was described by Roman historians as "a very luxurious, voluptuous, and at the same time an extremely cruel tyrant."<sup>1</sup> Keil and Delitzsch record Artaxerxes' cruelties as including sawing a man in half and commanding his armies to pass between the body and beheading bridge builders due to storms wiping out their bridges. Lastly, the king was one who dealt with the shame of defeat by engaging in sensuality. Indeed, this despot had the capability of such cruel acts as mentioned in the book of Esther.

### But the name of God is not found in the book of Esther

Though the word "God" is not found in Esther, it is everywhere inferred. Mordecai is said to be son of Kish of the tribe of Benjamin (Esther 2:5). Mordecai would not bow down and worship Haman because he was "a Jew" bound by law to give such worship to Jehovah God alone (Esther 3:4). Lastly, Mordecai appears to believe in the providential care of God for His people (Esther 4:14).

### Objective of the book of Esther

The objective of the book of Esther may be fourfold. First, we find characters in the book that we gain insight into regarding Godly and godless living. The character of Esther teaches us to seize spiritual opportunities (Est. 4:14ff), to be courageous (Est. 4:16), to show wisdom (Est. 5:4ff), and to exhibit boldness (Est. 7:1-6). Mordecai teaches us spiritual courage, too, in that he refused a governmental decree to bow down

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<sup>1</sup> Keil and Delitzsch; A Commentary on the Old Testament, Esther pg. 192

to a man (Est. 3:2-5). Ahasuerus was a despotic king who was willing to have an entire race of people wiped out due to their insubordination to the government of the Medes and Persians (Est. 3:10ff). Haman is the true scoundrel of the book. Haman was filled with anger due to Mordecai not bowing down to him (Est. 3:2ff). Haman's anger got the better of him when he plotted to exterminate the Jewish race for Mordecai's insubordinate act. He consulted with his wicked wife and friends and determined to do away with Mordecai even quicker. Little did Haman know that Mordecai had previously saved the king's life and was about to be honored by the king for his act of loyalty. Haman, a self-centered (Est. 5:13), deceptive (Est. 3:8), and vain (Est. 6:6ff) man learned the value of human life the hard way. He lost his life due to his unbridled passions.

A secondary objective of Esther is to give an account of the origin of the feast of Purim. The Jews, now foreigners in their own land, face extinction at the hands of Haman. Lots were cast to determine the day in which the extermination would take place (Est. 9:24, 26-28). The word Purim is a Hebrew word meaning "casting lots." The Jews celebrate Purim as a time in which Mordecai delivered the Jews from their impending demise (14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month Adar).

Thirdly, we find lessons on God's providence in the book of Esther. The word providence means "control exercised by a deity; divine direction" (American Heritage Dictionary 997). God was divinely directing Esther (4:14) and the events surrounding Haman's desire to hang Mordecai on the gallows (Est. 6:1-5) so that His people might be saved from the wicked plot.

Lastly, it seems that an overriding lesson of the book is the effects of pride on the human soul. Haman was eaten up with self love. The wise king Solomon once wrote, "*Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall*" (Prov. 16:18).

#### **Practical Application (Romans 15:4)**

While pride and providence are valuable lessons for us today, it seems that faithful courage is the overall thrust of Esther. There comes a time in every man and woman's life when we must stand for what we believe to be right even if there is potential pain involved. Esther was the Jew's greatest hope in retaining their physical lives, and she did not disappoint her kindred. She courageously made her request to the king and acted with great faith and wisdom (Est. 4:16, 5:4ff). Mordecai also evidenced his faith and courage by encouraging Esther to do that which was necessary to save the people (Est. 4:9-14). We, too, ought to act with such faith, courage, and wisdom when truth is at stake (cf. Eph. 6:10ff). Let us understand that as God has providentially cared for His people in the past, so He will care for us today (I Pet. 5:7).

## Chapter 1

### I. **Ahasuerus puts the Power and Wealth of the Medo-Persian Empire on Display (1:1-8):**

A. *“Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus (this is Ahasuerus who reigned from India even unto Ethiopia, over a hundred and seven and twenty provinces), that in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace, in the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him; when he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honor of his excellent majesty many days, even a hundred and fourscore days”* (1:1-4).

1. The 3<sup>rd</sup> year of Ahasuerus would be 482 BC. Ahasuerus invites all the nobles of each province to a feast that he may show them the power and wealth of the Medo-Persian Empire.
2. Why he did this for 180 days is not revealed, however, Keil and Delitzsch offer some insight. “When we compare the statement of Herod. vii. 8, that Xerxes (Ahasuerus), after the re-subjection of Egypt, summoned the chief men of his kingdom to Susa to take counsel with them concerning the campaign against Greece, it is obvious, that the assembly for 180 days in Susa, of the princes and nobles mentioned in the book of Esther, took place for the purpose of such consultation. When, too, we compare the statement of Herod. vii. 20, that Xerxes was four years preparing for this war, we receive also a corroboration of the particular mentioned in v. 3, that he assembled his princes and nobles in the third year of his reign...for the purpose of showing them the possibility of carrying into execution his contemplated campaign against Greece.”<sup>2</sup>

B. *“And when these days were fulfilled, the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both great and small, seven days, in the court of the garden of the king’s palace. There were hangings of white cloth, of green, and of blue, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble: the couches were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and white, and yellow, and black marble. And they gave them drink in vessels of gold (the vessels being diverse one from another), and royal wine in abundance, according to the bounty of the king. And the drinking was according to the law; none could compel: for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should do according to every man’s pleasure”* (1:5-8).

1. After the 180 days of displaying the power and wealth of Persia and Media, Ahasuerus throws a seven day party for his guest (i.e., the princes, nobles, and servants). A beautiful display of fabric and vessels were on hand to make the party a festive atmosphere.
2. Wine was served in abundance and all were compelled to drink as much as they so desired “*according to every man’s pleasure.*” “According to Grecian information, an exceedingly large quantity of wine was drunk at Persian banquets.”<sup>3</sup>

### II. **Ahasuerus Requests Vashti to Parade her Beauty before the men of Persia and Media (1:9-12):**

A. *“Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women in the royal house which belonged to king Ahasuerus. On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that ministered in the presence of Ahasuerus the king, to bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to show the peoples and the princes her beauty; for she was fair to look on. But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king’s commandment by the chamberlains: therefore was the king very wrath, and his anger burned in him”* (1:9-12).

1. While Ahasuerus and the other men are feasting and drinking for seven days Vashti has her own party. Seven days are spent drinking what was apparently an intoxicating wine.
2. Ahasuerus makes a request to have Vashti parade her beauty before the men that all may see how fair she was. Ahasuerus’ request was made while his heart was made “*merry with wine.*”

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid. pg. 202

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. pg. 203

3. Note that the king “*commanded*” his chamberlains to bring Vashti to do this deed. Vashti rejects the king’s command and causes Ahasuerus to go into a fit of rage.
  4. We are not told what the queen’s reasons for not parading her beauty were. She may have been drunk and having a great time with the other ladies and simply rejected the king’s request. It may have been that the king desired her to parade nude before the men of Persia and she was not going to do this even at the king’s command. The fact is we simply do not know why she refused to follow the king’s command. What we do know from the story is that it was serious business to ignore the king’s command.
- B. *“Then the king said to the wise men, who knew the times (for so was the king’s manner toward all that knew law and judgment; and the next unto him were Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, who saw the king’s face, and sat first in the kingdom), What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to law, because she hath not done the bidding of the king Ahasuerus by the chamberlains?” (1:13-15).*
1. The important facts for this study is that when the king commanded Vashti to come parade her beauty and she refused to come there was a violation of Persian and Mede’s law. Nothing is said to this point as to other issues that would have repercussions of such disobedience.
  2. Ahasuerus sits with a high powered council composed of the king, his wise men, and seven princes of Persia and Media. The purpose of the gathering was to determine the punishment for Vashti because she *“hath not done the bidding of the king.”*
- C. *“And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the peoples that are in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus. For this deed of the queen will come abroad unto all women, to make their husbands contemptible in their eyes, when it shall be reported, the king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not. And this day will the princesses of Persia and Media who have heard of the deed of the queen say the like unto all the king’s princes. So will there arise much contempt and wrath” (1:16-18).*
1. Memucan, one of the king’s prices’ over a major province, speaks up. Memucan warns the king against a possible women’s liberation movement. When other women hear of Vashti refusing to do as the king (her husband) commands without punishment other women may be emboldened to do the same thing seeing that there are no consequences.
  2. Vashti’s disobedience runs much deeper than a single family but rather it had the potential of affecting the entire kingdom seeing that this is such a high profile case.
  3. This leads us to another conclusion. Not only was it a Persian law to do all that the king commanded but women were obviously to be in subjection to their husbands in the Empire. Vashti’s disobedience to her husband may stand as an obstinate influence to other women.
- D. *“If it please the king, let there go forth a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and Medes, that it be not altered, that Vashti come no more before the king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she” (1:19).*
1. Memucan requests that the king solve the problem by not allowing Vashti to come unto him any more (a move that would equate to divorcing her).
  2. Memucan suggest to the king that he ought to replace Vashti with one *“better than she.”* Better in the since that she would obey the king’s commandments.
- E. *“And when the king’s decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his kingdom (for it is great), all the wives will give to their husbands honor, both to great and small” (1:20).*
1. Memucan further suggests that the act of putting away Vashti be published abroad so that all who had heard rumors about the event would be given clear information regarding Vashti’s disobedience to the king.
  2. Why? Memucan tells us so that *“all the wives will give to their husbands honor, both great and small.”*
    - a. Apparently the king and his princes did not consider it a small matter that Vashti rejected the king’s command to parade her beauty in the public’s eye.
    - b. Vashti’s error, from their perspective, was that she was disobedient to the king and showed the Medo-Persian Empire that woman may dishonor their husbands.

- c. To the king and his princes the issue was one of law and honor. Vashti was found lacking in both areas. Again, one may say that the king's request was unreasonable. This may be so, however, it was a universally accepted and known system Vashti was under that she violated and was thus found guilty and due punishment.
- F. *“And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan: for he sent letters into all the king's provinces, into every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and should speak according to the language of his people”* (1:21-22).
  - 1. When Memucan was finished with his speech the king was pleased and accepted it.
  - 2. Letters were sent out to all provinces of the Medo-Persian Empire and the overall message to the people was that *“every man should bear rule in his own house, and should speak according to the language of his people.”* The husband's word in the home was not to be trifled with. Women were to remain in subjection to them and do as they were command. Furthermore, if a Persian or Mede had a wife that spoke a different language they were to learn the tongue of their husband and speak his language (cf. Neh. 13:23-24).

### Thoughts on chapter 1

The Persians apparently had similar laws regarding women's subjection to men as did the Jews. There are things to note in this chapter that help us understand why Ahasuerus felt it necessary to put Vashti away. The king had commanded that Vashti come before him, and the people, with her crown to *“show the peoples and the princes her beauty”* (Est. 1:10-11). Vashti *“refused to come at the king's command”* and so Ahasuerus was filled with anger (Est. 1:12). Vashti's insubordinate act toward the king was a matter of *“law and judgment”* (Esther 1:13). The king assembles his wise men and seven princes together that they might determine a just punishment for Vashti *“according to law”* (Est. 1:15). Vashti's refusal of the king brought the king and queen's marital affairs before the whole kingdom. Many would say that if the king does not rule his home well how can he possibly rule the Medo-Persian Empire.

Memucan, one of the princes, suggest that Vashti's rebellion not only affected the king but the whole Medo-Persian Empire. Memucan contends that *“this deed of the queen will come abroad unto all women, to make their husbands contemptible in their eyes, when it shall be reported”* (Est. 1:17). Memucan suggest that the king send a *“royal commandment”* that outlines Vashti's punishment of abandonment, confiscation of her royal estate, and another be sought out to replace her who is *“better than she”* in that she would obey the king's commands. The design of the decree was that when the Empire heard it *“all the wives will give to their husbands honor”* and secondly all husbands would *“rule in his own house”* demanding that the inhabitants speak his language (cf. Est. 1:20-22). The overall concern is that there might be a women's liberation movement that would violate the customs and laws of the Medo-Persian Empire. Not only had Vashti violated the king's command (i.e., broke civil law) (Est. 1:10-13) but she had showed contempt (Est. 1:17), dishonor (Est. 1:20), and a lack of submission toward her husband (Est. 1:22). Vashti's actions also had the potential of exploding the peace within each home of the Empire due to her error (Est. 1:16-18).

Note that the chapter's portrayal of Ahasuerus' apparent drunken request (Est. 1:10) did not excuse Vashti's disloyalty to the man who was king and her husband. She was *“wrong”* to refuse the king's request (Est. 1:16). We may also examine the wrong in Ahasuerus. The king had put on display all that could possibly wow the world (i.e., the power, wealth of Persia and Media, and his great honor as king) (cf. Est. 1:3-4). The only thing left to anyone's imagination was the beauty of the Queen. In a drunken stupor the king demands that she come before the people and parade her beauty that all may be wowed once again. One has rightly said, *“when wine is in the wit is out.”* When we put all that we have on display to the world there is certainly a degenerate one lurking in the shadows to plunder and steal. Ahasuerus subjected his kingdom to plunder and his wife to adulterous eyes (see study # 1; Foolish Vows and Requests).

## Chapter 2

### I. Ahasuerus chooses Esther as his new Queen (2:1-17):

- A. *“After these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was pacified, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her. Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king: and let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hegai the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be given them; and let the maiden that pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king; and he did so”* (2:1-4).
1. Time generally heals all wounds so they say. Ahasuerus, over time, remembered his queen. Vashti's name and memories were before the king. We are not told if the king longed to be with her again but it is apparent that he desired another queen.
  2. The king's ministering servants suggest that the king find another queen from among the fair virgins of the province of the Empire. The saying pleased the king and so he granted the petition.
- B. *“There was a certain Jew in Shushan the palace, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite, who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captives that had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away. And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maiden was fair and beautiful; and when her father and mother were dead, Mordecai took her for his own daughter”* (2:5-7).
1. We are introduced to Mordecai. Mordecai was a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin. The events of the book of Esther occur in the *“third year”* of king Ahasuerus (i.e., 482 BC). The seventy years of captivity for Judah began in 606 BC when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem and carried away a wave of captives. These dates leave us with Mordecai being at least 124 years of age. It is most likely that the author does not intend to mean that Mordecai was literally among the captives taken to Babylon but rather he was taken in the form of his forefathers before him. He was a child of the captivity. Similarly, Genesis speaks of Jacob's grandchildren and great-grandchildren going down to Egypt with him before they were even born.
  2. Mordecai has taken Esther and raised her as his own daughter due to the fact that her parents had died.
- C. *“So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was taken into the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women. And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her things for purification, with her portions, and the seven maidens who were meet to be given her out of the king's house: and he removed her and her maidens to the best place of the house of the women”* (2:8-9).
1. Esther quickly gains the favor of Hegai, the king's chief eunuch.
  2. Hegai removed Esther from the common place of women and gave her a private room with her maids
- D. *“Esther had not made known her people nor her kindred; for Mordecai had charged her that she should not make it known. And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what would become of her. Now when the turn of every maiden was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that it had been done to her according to the law for the women twelve months (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, to wit, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odors and with the things for the purifying of the women), then in this wise came the maiden unto the king: whatsoever she desired was given her to go with her out of the house of the women unto the king's house. In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain, who kept the concubines: she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and she were called by name”* (2:10-14).



1. The procedure for picking a new queen:
    - a. All selected women were brought to the palace and prepared to be paraded before the king.
    - b. The women would go through a one year period of purification during which they were prepared with oils and perfumes to come before the king.
    - c. The women were given what ever jewels and apparel they so desired to appear before the king wearing. They would stay the night with the king and then return to the custody of Shaashgaz (keeper of the king's concubines) and would not return to the king unless he called her by name.
  2. Each day, while Esther was awaiting her turn to go before the king, Mordecai came to her and asked of her well being.
  3. Problems arise in our minds as we discuss this process in light of NT teaching on marriage, divorce and remarriage. The entire book of Esther is based upon an adulterous relationship between Ahasuerus and Esther. Esther, in the eyes of God, could not lawfully wed Ahasuerus. When considering this question we must take into consideration Deuteronomy 24 and Matthew 19. The people of Moses' day divorced and remarried for "every cause." Though this was not God's original plan for marriage the people nonetheless did so with Moses' approval.
- E. *"Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favor in the sight of all them that looked upon her. So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained favor and kindness in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti"* (2:15-17).
1. When Esther's turn came to go before the king she relied not upon the costly jewels that others had but rather came before the king in the appointed garments of Hegai.
  2. Ahasuerus was taken by Esther's beauty and thereby fell in love with her making her the queen of the Medo-Persian Empire.

## II. **Mordecai saves the king's life and the event is recorded in the Chronicles of the Empire (2:18-23):**

- A. *"Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Esther's feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the bounty of the king. And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai was sitting in the king's gate. Esther had not yet made known her kindred nor her people; as Mordecai had charged her: for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him"* (2:18-20).
1. The king makes a feast to celebrate the new queen.
  2. It is somewhat difficult to determine the purpose of the "second gathering of virgins" (vs. 19). "The only explanation is the view, that even after the choice of Esther to be queen, a second gathering together of virgins actually took place; for this, as C. A. Lapidé remarks, is what the words undoubtedly declare. The matter itself was in accordance with the prevailing custom of polygamy, which kings carried to such an extent, that as Lapidé points out, Solomon, e.g., had 700 wives and 300 concubines."<sup>4</sup>
  3. At this point, the king has no idea as to Esther's ethnic background. Esther continued to obey the command of Mordecai in not revealing this information.
- B. *"In those days, while Mordecai was sitting in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those that kept the threshold, were wroth, and sought to lay hands on the king Ahasuerus. And the thing became known to Mordecai, who showed it unto Esther the queen; and Esther told the king thereof in Mordecai's name. And when inquisition was made of the matter, and it was found to be so, they were both hanged on a tree: and it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king"* (2:21-23).
1. Bigthan and Teresh were those "*who kept the door*" (2:21). "Two eunuchs who guarded the entrance to the king's sleeping apartment. This was a position of the highest possible trust, and gave conspirators a terrible advantage. Xerxes (Ahasuerus) actually lost his life through a

<sup>4</sup> Keil and Delitzsch; A Commentary on the Old Testament, Esther pg. 211-212

conspiracy formed by Artabanus, the captain of his guard, with Aspamitras, a eunuch and chamberlain.”<sup>5</sup>

2. The events that transpired which caused great indignation on the part of Bigthan and Teresh are not revealed. It may have been envy, ambition, malice, or even revenge for something. Whatever the cause, Mordecai gained intelligence of the anger and plot by Bigthan and Teresh and warned Ahasuerus through Esther of their murderous plan.
3. The matter was resolved and Mordecai’s name was recorded in the Persian archive chronicles as one who saved the king’s life.

### **Important things to consider:**

- Mordecai was of the tribe of Benjamin and a man of faith (Esther 2:5).
- Esther was loved by king Ahasuerus (Esther 2:17).
- Esther did not make known who her kindred were to the king at the request of Mordecai (Esther 2:10, 20).
- Mordecai was responsible for saving the king’s life and the event was recorded in the Persian chronicles (Esther 2:23).

## **Chapter 3**

### **I. Mordecai refuses to bow and give reverence to Haman (3:1-6):**

**A.** *“After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him. And all the king’s servants, that were in the king’s gate, bowed down, and did reverence to Haman; for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not down, nor did him reverence”* (3:1-2).

1. Haman’s deeds to deserve such high honor from the king are not told. What we do know is that the king promoted Haman to a position of deity among the peoples.
2. Note that Ahasuerus had commanded that all “bow down and give reverence to Haman.”
3. Mordecai refused to bow to another man. Mordecai was a Jew of the family of Benjamin. His father’s were taken captive into Babylon for their disobedience yet his faith in the Lord appears to be stout.

**B.** *“Then the king’s servants, that were in the king’s gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king’s commandment? Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai’s matters would stand: for he had told them that he was a Jew. And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not down, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath. But he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had made known to him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai”* (3:3-6).

1. The king’s servants questioned Mordecai daily regarding his reason for not bowing down to Haman as the king had commanded. When Mordecai’s insubordination continued the king’s servants told Haman. Haman was full of anger and wrath. He would have killed Mordecai on the spot had it not been for the fact that he was a Jew and the deed may cause a national crisis. Haman determines to have the entire Jewish race extinguished for this one man’s crime.
2. A key statement is made when we read, *“for he had told them that he was a Jew.”* Though the name of God is not mentioned in the book of Esther we find godly principles being upheld. Mordecai would have violated the law of God by bowing down to Haman and so he did not give reverence to this man (cf. Ex. 20:3-5). Here is a key principle delivered when it comes to governing authorities:
  - a. Note that God voluntarily allowed His people to be in subjection to the Babylonians and thereby to the Medes and Persians.
  - b. The captives were to subject themselves to their new government so long as they did not demand that they do something unlawful.

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<sup>5</sup> PPC; Vol. 7, pg. 55 (Esther).



- c. Likewise we are commanded to subject ourselves to the existing government (Rom. 13:1ff; I Pet. 2:13-15) unless they demand that we do something unlawful (Acts 5:29) (see study # 2; The Individual Christian and Government).

## II. Haman plots to exterminate the Jews (3:7-15):

- A. *“In the first month, which is the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, which is the month Adar. And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from those of every people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them. If it please the king, let it be written that they be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those that have the charge of the king's business, to bring it into the king's treasuries”* (3:7-9).
  - 1. The Hebrew word “*Pur*” equals “*the lot*.” Haman cast lots to determine what day the Jews ought to be destroyed. After he determined that the Jews should be killed on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month (Adar) he approaches the king with the proposal. The current date was the 1<sup>st</sup> month (Nisan) of the 12<sup>th</sup> year of Ahasuerus.
  - 2. Note that Haman does not reveal to the king the real reason for his anger against the Jews. Haman chooses to approach the king and paint a horrid picture of the Jews before the king that he may have his wishes granted. Haman’s true character of extreme pride, hatred, and deception are now fully revealed.
    - a. Haman tells the king that the Jews will not follow the Persian government ways.
    - b. Haman tells the king that the treasures taken in such a raid will be given to the king’s treasury.
- B. *“And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy. And the king said unto Haman, The silver is given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee. Then were the king's scribes called in the first month, on the thirteenth day thereof; and there was written according to all that Haman commanded unto the king's satraps, and to the governors that were over every province, and to the princes of every people, to every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language; in the name of king Ahasuerus was it written, and it was sealed with the king's ring”* (3:10-12).
  - 1. Ahasuerus agrees to the plan and seals the decree with his ring he seals the decree.
  - 2. The king’s scribes write the decree within the archives of the chronicles just as they had written the good deeds of Mordecai.
- C. *“And letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey. A copy of the writing, that the decree should be given out in every province, was published unto all the peoples, that they should be ready against that day. The posts went forth in haste by the king's commandment, and the decree was given out in Shushan the palace. And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city of Shushan was perplexed”* (3:13-15).
  - 1. Ahasuerus agrees to the plan, however, he does not want the spoil for himself. He tells Haman that he may keep it and disperse it as he sees fit.
  - 2. What seems very strange is that the execution of this decree was not to take place until the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month. It was now the first month. Eleven months lay between them. Why would Haman work so diligently at spreading this decree at such an early date? It is most probable that Haman had hoped that the Jews would be terrified at the decree and leave the province. Haman would not have to deal with them.
  - 3. The city of Susa reacted to this decree in “*perplexity*.” No one seemed to understand why such a cruel decree would be passed.

### Here are the facts thus far:

- During the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of Ahasuerus' reign in the Medo-Persian Empire his queen, Vashti, disobeyed his command and was relieved of her royal crown (Est. 1:11, 19).
- During the 7<sup>th</sup> year of Ahasuerus, Esther came to be queen of the Empire by choice of the king (Est. 2:16-17).
- *"In those days"* Mordecai gains intelligence of a plot to kill Ahasuerus and tells the matter to Esther. Esther warns the king by Mordecai's name and the king's life is spared. The scribes record the matter into the archive of the Persian chronicles (Est. 2:21-23).
- Later, Haman is promoted to a position of great honor. The king commands that all bow down to Haman and give him reverence as a deity (Est. 3:1-2).
- Mordecai refuses to bow and give reverence to Haman because he was a "*Jew*" (Est. 3:2-5).
- Haman is angered and during the 1<sup>st</sup> month and 12<sup>th</sup> year of Ahasuerus, lots (Pur) are cast to determine what day Mordecai and all Jews should be extinguished (Est. 3:7ff).
- Haman gains permission of Ahasuerus to destroy all Jews and confiscate their goods on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month of the 12<sup>th</sup> year of Ahasuerus (Est. 3:13).
- Let us recall that at this point Esther has not revealed her Jewish descent to the king (Est. 2:10, 20). Secondly, we must keep in mind the love that Ahasuerus had for Esther (Est. 2:17).

## Chapter 4

### I. Mordecai reveals Haman's evil plot to Esther (4 all):

- A. *"Now when Mordecai knew all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry; and he came even before the king's gate: for none might enter within the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes"* (4:1-3).
1. Mordecai is mortified at the thought of his actions causing the extermination of the Jews in all the provinces of the Medes and Persians. He mourns deeply over the thought.
  2. Mordecai finds himself in an odd predicament because he has faithfully kept God's will in relation to bowing down and giving reverence to other supposed deities, however, such obedience has led to the punishment of others.
  3. Not only Mordecai but all the Jews of the provinces mourned over the decree. These were not only perplexing days but days of fear and sorrow among God's people.
- B. *"And Esther's maidens and her chamberlains came and told it her; and the queen was exceedingly grieved: and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take his sackcloth from off him; but he received it not. Then called Esther for Hathach, one of the king's chamberlains, whom he had appointed to attend upon her, and charged him to go to Mordecai, to know what this was, and why it was. So Hathach went forth to Mordecai unto the broad place of the city, which was before the king's gate. And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, and the exact sum of the money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them. Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given out in Shushan to destroy them, to show it unto Esther, and to declare it unto her, and to charge her that she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him, for her people. And Hathach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai"* (4:4-9).
1. Apparently Esther had no idea that the king and Haman had agreed to exterminate the Jews. Esther sends a eunuch by the name of Hathach to inquire of Mordecai why he is so sad.
  2. Mordecai informs Hathach that Haman intends to destroy all Jews and take their belongings. Mordecai also gives Hathach a copy of the decree and asks him to show it to Esther. Mordecai explains to Hathach that Esther must go before the king to make request on behalf of her people the Jews.

- C. *“Then Esther spake unto Hathach, and gave him a message unto Mordecai saying: All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law for him, that he be put to death, except those to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days”* (4:10-11).
1. Esther replies to Mordecai’s request with a statement from the Medes and Persian’s law.
  2. No one may come to the king unless he or she has been summoned. To come unannounced and or uncalled for results in death unless the king extends the golden scepter of acceptance. Esther’s point is that if she so chooses to go unto the king without his calling her she is susceptible to the death penalty.
  3. It had now been 30 days since Esther had been summoned by Ahasuerus (cf. Est. 4:11). “From these words it appears, that formerly she had been more frequently summoned before the king. Now, however, a whole month had passed without any invitation. Hence she concluded that the king did not much wish to see her, and for this reason dared not go unto him unbidden...To set aside an irrevocable decree sealed with the King’s seal, must have appeared to Esther an impossible undertaking.”<sup>6</sup>
- D. *“And they told to Mordecai Esther's words. Then Mordecai bade them return answer unto Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then will relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house will perish: and who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”* (4:12-14).
1. Mordecai replies to Esther by exposing the real picture. Esther is in a no win situation. If she remains silent, she shall be put to death for she is a Jew as well. Secondly, if she goes before Ahasuerus without being bidden she will most likely be put to death. Thirdly, her family will surely perish by the edict if she chooses to do nothing. Fourthly, even if she decides to do nothing, God will raise up a deliverer.
  2. Though the name of God is not used in Esther it is every where implied. Mordecai implies his faith in God to raise up a deliverer even if Esther does nothing (cf. Est. 4:13).
  3. With these facts before Esther, Mordecai makes a stirring statement of truth. *“Who knows whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”* (4:14). Mordecai challenges Esther to contemplate the fact that she may be God’s providential deliverer for His people (see study # 3; The Providence of God). Mordecai then induces Esther to use her high position to erase the edict.
- E. *“Then Esther bade them return answer unto Mordecai, Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast in like manner; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish. So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him”* (4:15-17).
1. Esther’s conclusions were now delivered to Mordecai. Mordecai thereby does as Esther commands.
  2. Note once again that it is apparent that the fasting for three days would be for the purpose of prayer unto Jehovah God for deliverance.
  3. The queen concludes that she understands her predicament and states, “if I perish, I perish” (i.e., if I die trying at least I can know that I tried to save my people).

### **Facts that reveal Mordecai and Esther’s faith and reliance in the providential care of God:**

- Mordecai was of the tribe of Benjamin (Est. 2:5).
- Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman because he was a “Jew” (i.e., he was bound to keep the Mosaic Law) (cf. Est. 3:4).

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid. Pg. 220

- Mordecai tells Esther that if she fails to go before the king on behalf of the Jews then “*will relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place*” (Est. 4:14).
- Mordecai (Est. 4:1), Esther (Est. 4:16), and the Jewish people (Est. 4:16) fasted and no doubt prayed to God regarding this serious situation.

## Chapter 5

### I. Esther approaches the King (5:1-8):

A. “*Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the entrance of the house. And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favor in his sight; and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the scepter*” (5:1-2).

1. After fasting and no doubt praying for three days the queen (Esther) goes before the King at the risk of losing her life.
2. Esther obtains favor of the king and he extends the golden scepter to her indicating his approval of her presence. There are two things to consider here:
  - a. Ahasuerus loved Esther (cf. Est. 2:17).
  - b. Ahasuerus must have concluded that there was something very important upon the queen’s mind to take such a chance.

B. “*Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? And what is thy request? It shall be given thee even to the half of the kingdom. And Esther said, If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him. Then the king said, Cause Haman to make haste, that it may be done as Esther hath said. So the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared. And the king said unto Esther at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition? And it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? Even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed. Then answered Esther, and said, My petition and my request is: if I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and I will do to-morrow as the king hath said.*” (5:3-8).

1. The king’s love for his queen is depicted in the fact that he offers to give her anything she request even up to half of the Medo-Persian Empire.
2. Esther explains to the king that she has prepared a banquet and wishes for both he and Haman to attend it. Esther would reveal to the king her request at the banquet.
3. The king responds favorably and commands that Haman be brought to the banquet as the queen has requested. Haman appears immediately and the three of them have a small banquet. Esther tells the king that she would like to have a more formal banquet with the three of them the next day. She promises the king that on that day she would reveal to the king what her request is.

### II. Esther invites the king and Haman to a special Banquet (5:9-14):

A. “*Then went Haman forth that day joyful and glad of heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up nor moved for him, he was filled with wrath against Mordecai. Nevertheless Haman refrained himself, and went home; and he sent and fetched his friends and Zeresh his wife*” (5:9-10).

1. The folly and foolishness of Haman begins to unravel. Rather than being fearful that their might be problems with such a serious decree he has ordered he is enamored with the idea that he is so close to the king and queen.
2. Haman’s joy is soon soured by Mordecai’s rebellion at the king’s gate. Mordecai remains consistent with his conviction knowing that the decree against the Jews has been determined. Haman also knew that Mordecai’s fate was sealed and thereby refrained from causing a public scene.

3. Haman goes home and gathers together all of his family and friends to announce to them his supposed good fortune.
- B.** *“And Haman recounted unto them the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king. Haman said moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself; and to-morrow also am I invited by her together with the king. Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate. Then said Zeresh his wife and all his friends unto him, Let a gallows be made fifty cubits high, and in the morning speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon: then go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet. And the thing pleased Haman; and he caused the gallows to be made”* (5:11-14).
1. The wise king Solomon once wrote, *“Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall”* (Prov. 16:18). Haman was a man filled with pride (see study # 4; Pride). He rehearses before the gathering of people the great riches, many children, his promotion by the king, and now Esther’s personal invitation to attend a banquet. All seems wonderful and glorious for Haman but it is soon to come unraveled.
  2. There is only one man who stands in the way of Haman’s progress in the Empire and that man is Mordecai. The only pain that Mordecai caused Haman was a blow to his pride.
  3. Zeresh, Haman’s wife, and his friends come up with a solution. If Mordecai is ruining all of Haman’s fun then why not build gallows fifty cubits high and have him hung.
  4. The saying pleased Haman and so he commanded that the gallows be constructed. Note that he had not obtained the favor of Ahasuerus to do this, however, he considered himself in such good standing with the king that surely nothing would stand in the way of this plan’s success. Secondly, note that such an act of murder would cause Haman to enjoy his banquet with the king and queen in a *“merry”* spirit.

### **Problems with Haman’s Character:**

- **Deceptive:** Haman did not tell the king the real reason he wanted the Jews killed. Such an admission may reveal to the king his wicked character and thereby cause his demotion (Est. 3:8).
- **Selfish:** Haman was more concerned about his own emotional comfort than the entire Jewish race. Haman is determined to exterminate the Jews simply because one of them will not bow down to him (Est. 3:1-2, 8, 13).
- **Wicked Influences:** Haman was surrounded by wicked influences (i.e., his wife and friends had no regard for human life (cf. Est. 5:14).
- **Wicked:** It is said that birds of a feather flock together. Haman was just as wicked as his wife and friends (Est. 5:14).
- **Vainglorious:** All of life was about Haman. If others did not recognize his greatness by bowing down and giving him reverence he was willing to get rid of them (Est. 5:13).

## **Chapter 6**

### **I. Ahasuerus Honors Mordecai the Jew (6 all):**

- A.** *“On that night could not the king sleep; and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles, and they were read before the king. And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, of those that kept the threshold, who had sought to lay hands on the king Ahasuerus. And the king said, What honor and dignity hath been bestowed on Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him”* (6:1-3).
1. By the providence of God’s own timing the king, unable to sleep on the eve of his banquet with Esther and Haman, decides to have the *“book of records of the chronicles”* read in his hearing (see study # 3).



2. We may recall that Mordecai had saved the king's life by exposing a plot by Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's own chamberlains, to kill the king (Esther 2:21-23).
  3. Ahasuerus asks if anything was ever done for Mordecai as a favor for saving the king's life. The answer was no, nothing was ever done for him.
- B.** *“And the king said, Who is in the court? Now Haman was come into the outward court of the king's house, to speak unto the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him. And the king's servants said unto him, Behold, Haman standeth in the court. And the king said, Let him come in. So Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honor? Now Haman said in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honor more than to myself? And Haman said unto the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honor, let royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and on the head of which a crown royal is set: and let the apparel and the horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man therewith whom the king delighteth to honor, and cause him to ride on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honor”* (6:4-9).
1. The king providentially read of the honorable deed done by Mordecai to save his life. Haman has now appeared, by the providence of God, at the appropriate time. Haman has come to request that Mordecai be hanged upon the gallows yet the king's desire is to honor Mordecai. Neither the king, Haman, nor Mordecai know anything about what the other is doing or planning yet God has brought this moment to a critical head to thwart the wicked plan of Haman (see study # 3).
  2. We noted at Esther 5:13 that Haman was a man who approached life from a selfish standpoint. Haman considered his own desires and feelings to be superior to everyone else's and he was willing to even exterminate a race of people to satisfy his selfish lusts. It is no surprise to us when we read of Ahasuerus asking Haman what should be done to honor a noble person in the kingdom that the self centered Haman would have vainly thought that the king was thinking of him (reminds us of the song, “Your so Vain... you probably think this song is about you.. don't you, don't you, don't you).
  3. Haman suggest that the king's royal apparel, crown, and horse be given to the man and that he be lead through the streets of the city by one of the king's nobles.
- C.** *“Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken. Then took Haman the apparel and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and caused him to ride through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honor”* (6:10-11).
1. As Solomon said, *“pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before the fall”* (Prov. 16:18). When Haman heard the name Mordecai as the man to honor and that he would be the one leading him about the streets his heart must have nearly jumped out of his chest. I guess the request to hang Mordecai upon the gallows was not brought up (smile).
  2. Haman did as the king requested. This was the beginning of the worst day in the life of wicked Haman. Eventually all wicked men's deeds will catch up to them.
- D.** *“And Mordecai came again to the king's gate. But Haman hasted to his house, mourning and having his head covered. And Haman recounted unto Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had befallen him. Then said his wise men and Zeresh his wife unto him, If Mordecai, before whom thou hast begun to fall, be of the seed of the Jews, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him. While they were yet talking with him, came the king's chamberlains, and hasted to bring Haman unto the banquet that Esther had prepared”* (6:12-14).
1. Haman's wife and friends, coworkers to the premeditated murderous plot against Mordecai, now see that Haman is in big trouble. Mordecai is a Jew and Haman has asked that all Jews be destroyed.



2. Haman's meeting with his wife and friends is interrupted by the king's chamberlains as they come to escort Haman to the banquet that had been prepared by Esther. No doubt Haman was in no mood for a banquet. He is in big trouble and he knows it.

### More on Haman's Character:

- Haman is **vain**. He foolishly supposes that the king is minded to honor him when in reality the king honors Mordecai, Haman's thorn in the flesh (Est. 6:6ff). The Psalmists said, "*I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love*" (Psalms 119:113).

## Chapter 7

### I. Haman is Exposed and Executed (7 all):

- A. *"So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen. And the king said again unto Esther on the second day at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition, queen Esther? And it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? Even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed"* (7:1-2).
  1. The time for Esther to reveal her request to the king had now come. Haman had been bubbling with joy over the thought of being personally summoned to the Queen's banquet.
  2. King Ahasuerus now asks Esther what her request is in the company of Haman.
- B. *"Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favor in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request: for we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my peace, although the adversary could not have compensated for the king's damage"* (7:3-4).
  1. Esther now makes her request. She and her people are scheduled to be destroyed and so she asks to be spared.
  2. Esther concedes that if it were the case that the Jews be made slaves she would not interfere with the edict, however, extermination of a race of people is nothing to sit back in a state of idleness.
  3. Haman must have listened with quizzical ears of confusion. Remember, Esther has not revealed to any of the nobles her kindred due to Mordecai's request (cf. Esther 2:10, 20).
- C. *"Then spake the king Ahasuerus and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so? And Esther said, An adversary and an enemy, even this wicked Haman. Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen. And the king arose in his wrath from the banquet of wine and went into the palace garden: and Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen; for he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king"* (7:5-7).
  1. Things go from bad to worst for Haman. Esther exposes Haman's wicked plot and her heritage. Haman's design to destroy all Jews included Ahasuerus' wife, The Queen of the Medo-Persian Empire. The king could hardly believe his ears. Ahasuerus knew that once a law was passed and the king's signet ring sealed it that it could not be overturned (cf. Est. 3:12; 8:8). The king leaves the banquet in great anger to contemplate what must be done.
  2. While gone, Haman throws himself at the queen and begs for mercy.
- D. *"Then the king returned out of the palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman was fallen upon the couch whereon Esther was. Then said the king, Will he even force the queen before me in the house? As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. Then said Harbonah, one of the chamberlains that were before the king, Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman hath made for Mordecai, who spake good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. And the king said, Hang him thereon. So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified"* (7:8-10).

1. Haman's situation goes from bad, to worse, and finally to death. Ahasuerus comes back into the banquet room only to find Haman throwing himself all over Esther begging for his life. Ahasuerus assumes that Haman is trying to violate Esther and immediately commands that he be apprehended.
2. Harbonah, one of the king's chamberlains, tells the king of Haman's plot to hang Mordecai on the gallows. The king is even more enraged and sentences Haman to hang upon the gallows he built for Mordecai. Haman is thereby killed.

### More on Esther and Haman's Character:

- Note that Esther boldly accomplishes what Mordecai requested of her.
- Haman begs for his life not considering all the lives that he was willing to take to pacify his thirst for self glory. His selfishness continues to the bitter end.

## Chapter 8

### I. Ahasuerus Passes a new Decree to allow the Jews to Defend Themselves (8 all):

- A. *"On that day did the king Ahasuerus give the house of Haman the Jews' enemy unto Esther the queen. And Mordecai came before the king; for Esther had told what he was unto her. And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman"* (8:1-2).
  1. All that Haman had; i.e., *"advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him"* (cf. Est. 3:1), was now given to Mordecai the Jew.
  2. Esther exerted her authority as well and set Mordecai over the house of Haman.
- B. *"And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews. Then the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre. So Esther arose, and stood before the king. And she said, If it please the king, and if I have found favor in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews that are in all the king's provinces: for how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? Or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?"* (8:3-6).
  1. Apparently Esther once again approaches the king without being bidden to come.
  2. Ahasuerus extends the welcoming golden censer to Esther. The queen pleads with the king on behalf of her kindred the Jews.
- C. *"Then the king Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand upon the Jews. Write ye also to the Jews, as it pleaseth you, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring; for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse"* (8:7-8).
  1. Ahasuerus reminds Esther and Mordecai of all that he has done for them and even written it in the chronicles and sealed it with his ring of authority.
  2. Ahasuerus is sympathetic to Queen Esther's requests, however, he makes it clear that once the King's signet ring has been used to decree a law, it is irreversible.
- D. *"Then were the king's scribes called at that time, in the third month Sivan, on the three and twentieth day thereof; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded unto the Jews, and to the satraps, and the governors and princes of the provinces which are from India unto Ethiopia, a hundred twenty and seven provinces, unto every province according to the writing thereof, and unto every people after their language, and to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language. And he wrote the name of king Ahasuerus, and sealed it with the king's ring, and sent letters by post on horseback, riding on swift steeds that were used in the king's service, bred of the stud: wherein the king granted the Jews that were in every city to gather*

*themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, their little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey, upon one day in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, namely, upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar. A copy of the writing, that the decree should be given out in every province, was published unto all the peoples, and that the Jews should be ready against that day to avenge themselves on their enemies” (8:9-13).*

1. Ahasuerus has a plan to help his queen’s cause. He gives his signet ring to Mordecai and gives him freedom to establish a new decree with the King’s ring that will thwart the first decree made by Haman.
  2. Mordecai therefore used the ring to set a new decree which declared that every Jew in all the providences of the kingdom has the right to defend themselves against attacks. The decree was quickly sent out in the third month of the year.
- E. *“So the posts that rode upon swift steeds that were used in the king’s service went out, being hastened and pressed on by the king’s commandment; and the decree was given out in Shushan the palace. And Mordecai went forth from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a robe of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan shouted and was glad. The Jews had light and gladness, and joy and honor. And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king’s commandment and his decree came, the Jews had gladness and joy, a feast and a good day. And many from among the peoples of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews was fallen upon them” (8:14-17).*
1. As news spread throughout the kingdom, the Jews were joyous and held feast to commemorate this very decree.
  2. So joyous were the people in general that many who were not Jews joined themselves to the Jews (to confess oneself a Jew, to become a Jew cf. Ex. 15:16 and Deut. 11:25).

## Chapter 9

### I. The Jews protect themselves as Decreed (9:1-18):

- A. *“Now in the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king’s commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, on the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have rule over them, (whereas it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them,) the Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as sought their hurt: and no man could withstand them; for the fear of them was fallen upon all the peoples. And all the princes of the provinces, and the satraps, and the governors, and they that did the king’s business, helped the Jews; because the fear of Mordecai was fallen upon them. For Mordecai was great in the king’s house, and his fame went forth throughout all the provinces; for the man Mordecai waxed greater and greater” (9:1-4).*
1. Recall that the edict to kill all Jews in the Medo-Persian Empire was decreed upon the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the 1<sup>st</sup> month and was to occur on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month (cf. Est. 3:12-13).
  2. The time had now arrived. The Jews in all Persian provinces assembled together to fight against the Jew haters as was decreed by Ahasuerus.
  3. When it came time to fight most were too fearful mainly because the king and all the governors were on Mordecai’s side. To fight against the people of Mordecai would be to fight against the Medes and the Persians. Mordecai grew greater and greater in the eyes of the people.
- B. *“And the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and with slaughter and destruction, and did what they would unto them that hated them. And in Shushan the palace the Jews slew and destroyed five hundred men. And Parshandatha, and Dalphon, and Aspatha, and Poratha, and Adalia, and Aridatha, and Parmashta, and Arisai, and Aridai, and Vaizatha, the ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Jew’s enemy, slew they; but on the spoil they laid not their hand. On that day the number of those that were slain in Shushan the palace was brought before the king” (9:5-11).*

1. Some in the Persian provinces attempted to kill the Jews. Five Hundred Jew haters in Shushan were killed by the Jews.
  2. Others that were killed included the ten sons of Haman. The total number of slain was told to Ahasuerus.
- C. *“And the king said unto Esther the queen, The Jews have slain and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the palace, and the ten sons of Haman; what then have they done in the rest of the king's provinces! Now what is thy petition? And it shall be granted thee: or what is thy request further? And it shall be done. Then said Esther, If it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews that are in Shushan to do to-morrow also according unto this day's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows. And the king commanded it so to be done: and a decree was given out in Shushan; and they hanged Haman's ten sons”* (9:12-14).
1. These were gruesome times. The king tells Esther, the queen, what has occurred; i.e., 500 men have died in Shushan (the capital city). The king asks Esther what her further request might be.
  2. Esther requests that the ten sons of Haman be hung upon the gallows in Shushan and Ahasuerus grants her request.
- D. *“And the Jews that were in Shushan gathered themselves together on the fourteenth day also of the month Adar, and slew three hundred men in Shushan; but on the spoil they laid not their hand. And the other Jews that were in the king's provinces gathered themselves together, and stood for their lives, and had rest from their enemies, and slew of them that hated them seventy and five thousand; but on the spoil they laid not their hand. This was done on the thirteenth day of the month Adar; and on the fourteenth day of the same they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. But the Jews that were in Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth day thereof, and on the fourteenth thereof; and on the fifteenth [day] of the same they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness”* (9:15-18).
1. Before the killing was over there would be 75,000 people killed by the Jews. The next day, the 14<sup>th</sup>, 127 providences of Persia took rest from their killing. The providence where lie the capital city Shushan, however, took one more day to slaughter Jewish haters.
  2. This fourteenth day saw 300 more Jewish enemies killed. Shushan then took rest on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month.

## II. Institution of the Feast of Purim (9:19-32):

- A. *“Therefore do the Jews of the villages, that dwell in the unwalled towns, make the fourteenth day of the month Adar a day of gladness and feasting, and a good day, and of sending portions one to another. And Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews that were in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, both nigh and far, to enjoin them that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same, yearly, as the days wherein the Jews had rest from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to gladness, and from mourning into a good day; that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor”* (9:19-22).
1. The Jews made the 14<sup>th</sup> day of Adar a “*day of gladness and feasting.*” The Jews would “*send portions to one another,*” they would send “*gifts to the poor*” and celebrate the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> day of Adar as a time when they had rest from their enemies.
  2. Mordecai passed a decree that made it a law for all peoples of the Medes and Persians to celebrate the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> day of Adar (i.e., The 12<sup>th</sup> Jewish month [Adar] corresponds to our February / March).
- B. *“And the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto them; because Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that is the lot, to consume them, and to destroy them; but when the matter came before the king, he commanded by letters that his wicked device, which he had devised against the Jews, should return upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. Wherefore they called these days Purim, after the name of Pur. Therefore because of all the words of this letter, and of that which they had seen concerning this matter, and that which had come unto them”* (9:23-26).

1. The “*days of Purim*” would thereby be remembered as the time when the Jews had rest from Haman’s wicked plot to have them destroyed.
  2. Mordecai wrote to the Jews in all provinces and explained to them what the time of Purim (i.e., the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> day of Adar) was all about.
- C. *“the Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them, so that it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to the writing thereof, and according to the appointed time thereof, every year; and that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the remembrance of them perish from their seed”* (9:27-28).
1. When the Jews read Mordecai’s letter they ordained among themselves to keep the feast of Purim every year on the 12 month (Adar) for two days (i.e., the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>).
  2. The Jews agreed to make this an annual feasts that was to be partaken every year in the future generations that all may remember the wicked deed of Haman and the two days of rest.
- D. *“Then Esther the queen, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote with all authority to confirm this second letter of Purim. And he sent letters unto all the Jews, to the hundred twenty and seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, with words of peace and truth, to confirm these days of Purim in their appointed times, according as Mordecai the Jew and Esther the queen had enjoined them, and as they had ordained for themselves and for their seed, in the matter of the fastings and their cry. And the commandment of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim; and it was written in the book”* (9:29-32).
1. After Mordecai wrote a letter to all the provinces of the Medes and Persians Esther writes her own letter to confirm the words of Mordecai.
  2. The feast of Purim = “a Jewish festival celebrated one month before Passover on 14 and 15 Adar, the final month of the biblical year, usually corresponding to February/ March... during the Maccabean period it was called ‘Mordecai’s day.’... Later Celebrations... The 13<sup>th</sup> day is observed by fasting in commemoration of Esther’s prayer and fasting before she approached the king. In the evening, at the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> day, the book of Esther is read in the synagogues with interpretations; the listeners shout, shake rattles, stamp their feet when Haman’s name is read. Other persecutors and foes also sometimes are execrated. The names of Mordecai and Esther receive blessings. On the morning of 14<sup>th</sup> synagogue services are again held and presents are given to the poor and to friends. The rest of the day and the 15<sup>th</sup> are spent feasting and rejoicing; even certain excesses are condoned in the exuberance of national spirit”<sup>7</sup>

## Chapter 10

- I. **Mordecai promoted to Second in Command among the Medes and Persians (10 all):**
- A. *“And the king Ahasuerus laid a tribute upon the land, and upon the isles of the sea. And all the acts of his power and of his might, and the full account of the greatness of Mordecai, whereunto the king advanced him, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia? For Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the good of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed”* (10:1-3).
1. The validity of the account of Ahasuerus, Esther, Mordecai, and Haman can be read in the “*book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia.*”
  2. Esther ends by revealing the great state that Mordecai obtained in the Medo-Persian Empire (i.e., second only to the king). All this occurred because Mordecai refused to bow down to a man.

<sup>7</sup> International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. E. Mack, Vol. 3, pg. 1056