

Esther Invites Ahasuerus and Haman to a Banquet (June 24, 474 BC)

Esther 5

1 It so happened that on the third day Esther put on her royal attire and stood in the inner court of the palace, opposite the king's quarters. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the palace, opposite the entrance.

2 When the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, she met with his approval. The king extended to Esther the gold scepter that was in his hand, and Esther approached and touched the end of the scepter.

3 The king said to her, "What is on your mind, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even as much as half the kingdom will be given to you!"

4 Esther replied, "If the king is so inclined, let the king and Haman come today to the banquet that I have prepared for him."

5 The king replied, "Find Haman quickly so that we can do as Esther requests." So the king and Haman went to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

6 While at the banquet of wine, the king said to Esther, "What is your request? It shall be given to you. What is your petition? Ask for as much as half the kingdom, and it shall be done!"

7 Esther responded, "My request and my petition is this:

8 If I have found favor in the king's sight and if the king is inclined to grant my request and perform my petition, let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet that I will prepare for them. At that time I will do as the king wishes.

9 Now Haman went forth that day pleased and very much encouraged. But when Haman saw Mordecai at the king's gate, and he did not rise nor tremble in his presence, Haman was filled with rage toward Mordecai.

10 But Haman restrained himself and went on to his home. He then sent for his friends to join him, along with his wife Zeresh.

11 Haman then recounted to them his fabulous wealth, his many sons, and how the king had magnified him and exalted him over the king's other officials and servants.

12 Haman said, "Furthermore, Queen Esther invited only me to accompany the king to the banquet that she prepared! And also tomorrow I am invited along with the king.

13 Yet all of this fails to satisfy me so long as I have to see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."

14 Haman's wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, "Have a gallows seventy-five feet high built, and in the morning tell the king that Mordecai should be hanged on it. Then go with the king to the banquet contented." It seemed like a good idea to Haman, so he had the gallows built.

Ahasuerus Orders Haman to Honor Mordecai (June 25, 474 BC)

Esther 6

1 Throughout that night the king was unable to sleep, so he asked for the book containing the historical records to be brought. As the records were being read in the king's presence,

2 it was found written that Mordecai had disclosed that Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs who guarded the entrance, had plotted to assassinate King Ahasuerus.

3 The king asked, "What great honor was bestowed on Mordecai because of this?" The king's attendants who served him responded, "Not a thing was done for him."

4 Then the king said, "Who is that in the courtyard?" Now Haman had come to the outer courtyard of the palace to suggest that the king hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had constructed for him.

5 The king's attendants said to him, "It is Haman who is standing in the courtyard." The king said, "Let him enter."

6 So Haman came in, and the king said to him, "What should be done for the man whom the king wishes to honor?" Haman thought to himself, "Who is it that the king would want to honor more than me?"

7 So Haman said to the king, "For the man whom the king wishes to honor,

8 let them bring royal attire which the king himself has worn and a horse on which the king himself has ridden—one bearing the royal insignia!

9 Then let this clothing and this horse be given to one of the king's noble officials. Let him then clothe the man whom the king wishes to honor, and let him lead him about through the plaza of the city on the horse, calling before him, 'So shall it be done to the man whom the king wishes to honor!'"

10 The king then said to Haman, "Go quickly! Take the clothing and the horse, just as you have described, and do as you just indicated to Mordecai the Jew who sits at the king's gate. Don't neglect a single thing of all that you have said."

11 So Haman took the clothing and the horse, and he clothed Mordecai. He led him about on the horse throughout the plaza of the city, calling before him, "So shall it be done to the man whom the king wishes to honor!"

12 Then Mordecai again sat at the king's gate, while Haman hurried away to his home, mournful and with a veil over his head.

13 Haman then related to his wife Zeresh and to all his friends everything that had happened to him. These wise men, along with his wife Zeresh, said to him, "If indeed this Mordecai before whom you have begun to fall is Jewish, you will not prevail against him. No, you will surely fall before him!"

14 While they were still speaking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived. They quickly brought Haman to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

A Fateful Banquet (June 25, 474 BC)

Esther 7–8

Esther's Request

7:1 So the king and Haman came to dine with Queen Esther.

2 On the second day of the banquet of wine the king asked Esther, "What is your request, Queen Esther? It shall be granted to you. And what is your petition? Ask up to half the kingdom, and it shall be done!"

3 Queen Esther replied, "If I have met with your approval, O king, and if the king is so inclined, grant me my life as my request, and my people as my petition.

4 For we have been sold—both I and my people—to destruction and to slaughter and to annihilation! If we had simply been sold as male and female slaves, I would have remained silent, for such distress would not have been sufficient for troubling the king."

5 Then King Ahasuerus responded to Queen Esther, "Who is this individual? Where is this person to be found who is presumptuous enough to act in this way?"

6 Esther replied, "The oppressor and enemy is this evil Haman!" Then Haman became terrified in the presence of the king and queen.

7 In rage the king arose from the banquet of wine and withdrew to the palace garden. Meanwhile, Haman stood to beg Queen Esther for his life, for he realized that the king had now determined a catastrophic end for him.

Haman Hanged

8 When the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet of wine, Haman was throwing himself down on the couch where Esther was lying. The king exclaimed, "Will he also attempt to rape the queen while I am still in the building!" As these words left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face.

9 Harbona, one of the king's eunuchs, said, "Indeed, there is the gallows that Haman made for Mordecai, who spoke out in the king's behalf. It stands near Haman's home and is seventy-five feet high." The king said, "Hang him on it!"

10 So they hanged Haman on the very gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. The king's rage then abated.

Esther Rewarded and Mordecai Promoted

8:1 On that same day King Ahasuerus gave the estate of Haman, that adversary of the Jews, to Queen Esther. Now Mordecai had come before the king, for Esther had revealed how he was related to her.

2 The king then removed his signet ring (the very one he had taken back from Haman) and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther designated Mordecai to be in charge of Haman's estate.

Esther's Request to Save the Jews

3 Then Esther again spoke with the king, falling at his feet. She wept and begged him for mercy, that he might nullify the evil of Haman the Agagite which he had intended against the Jews.

4 When the king extended to Esther the gold scepter, she arose and stood before the king.

5 She said, "If the king is so inclined and if I have met with his approval and if the matter is agreeable to the king and if I am attractive to him, let an edict be written rescinding those recorded intentions of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, which he wrote in order to destroy the Jews who are throughout all the king's provinces.

6 For how can I watch the calamity that will befall my people, and how can I watch the destruction of my relatives?"

Ahasuerus Authorizes Esther and Mordecai to Issue a Decree in His Name

7 King Ahasuerus replied to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, "Look, I have already given Haman's estate to Esther, and he has been hanged on the gallows because he took hostile action against the Jews.

8 Now you write in the king's name whatever in your opinion is appropriate concerning the Jews and seal it with the king's signet ring. Any decree that is written in the king's name and sealed with the king's signet ring cannot be rescinded.

Mordecai Decrees that the Jews May Defend Themselves

9 The king's scribes were quickly summoned—in the third month (that is, the month of Sivan), on the twenty-third day. They wrote out everything that Mordecai instructed to the Jews and to the satraps and the governors and the officials of the provinces all the way from India to Ethiopia—a hundred and twenty-seven provinces in all—to each province in its own script and to each people in their own language, and to the Jews according to their own script and their own language.

10 Mordecai wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed it with the king's signet ring. He then sent letters by couriers on horses, who rode royal horses that were very swift.

11 The king thereby allowed the Jews who were in every city to assemble and to stand up for themselves—to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate any army of whatever people or province that should become their adversaries, including their women and children, and to confiscate their property.

12 This was to take place on a certain day throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus—namely, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month (that is, the month of Adar).

13 A copy of the edict was to be presented as law throughout each and every province and made known to all peoples, so that the Jews might be prepared on that day to avenge themselves from their enemies.

14 The couriers who were riding the royal horses went forth with the king's edict without delay. And the law was presented in Susa the citadel as well.

The Jews Rejoice

15 Now Mordecai went out from the king's presence in purple and white royal attire, with a large golden crown and a purple linen mantle. The city of Susa shouted with joy.

16 For the Jews there was radiant happiness and joyous honor.

17 Throughout every province and throughout every city where the king's edict and his law arrived, the Jews experienced happiness and joy, banquets and holidays. Many of the resident peoples pretended to be Jews, because the fear of the Jews had overcome them.

The Jews Soundly Defeat Their Enemies (April 5–7, 473 BC)

Esther 9:1–19

1 In the twelfth month (that is, the month of Adar), on its thirteenth day, the edict of the king and his law were to be executed. It was on this day that the enemies of the Jews had supposed that they would gain power over them. But contrary to expectations, the Jews gained power over their enemies.

2 The Jews assembled themselves in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to strike out against those who were seeking their harm. No one was able to stand before them, for dread of them fell on all the peoples.

3 All the officials of the provinces, the satraps, the governors and those who performed the king's business were assisting the Jews, for the dread of Mordecai had fallen on them.

4 Mordecai was of high rank in the king's palace, and word about him was spreading throughout all the provinces. His influence continued to become greater and greater.

5 The Jews struck all their enemies with the sword, bringing death and destruction, and they did as they pleased with their enemies.

6 In Susa the citadel the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men.

7 In addition, they also killed Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha,

8 Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha,

9 Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vaizatha,

10 the ten sons of Haman son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews. But they did not confiscate their property.

11 On that same day the number of those killed in Susa the citadel was brought to the king's attention.

12 Then the king said to Queen Esther, "In Susa the citadel the Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men and the ten sons of Haman! What then have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? What is your request? It shall be given to you. What other petition do you have? It shall be done."

13 Esther replied, "If the king is so inclined, let the Jews who are in Susa be permitted to act tomorrow also according to today's law, and let them hang the ten sons of Haman on the gallows."

14 So the king issued orders for this to be done. A law was passed in Susa, and the ten sons of Haman were hanged.

15 The Jews who were in Susa then assembled on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar, and they killed three hundred men in Susa. But they did not confiscate their property.

16 The rest of the Jews who were throughout the provinces of the king assembled in order to stand up for themselves and to have rest from their enemies. They killed seventy-five thousand of their adversaries, but they did not confiscate their property.

17 All of this happened on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar. They then rested on the fourteenth day and made it a day for banqueting and happiness.

18 But the Jews who were in Susa assembled on the thirteenth and fourteenth days, and rested on the fifteenth, making it a day for banqueting and happiness.

19 This is why the Jews who are in the rural country—those who live in rural cities—set aside the fourteenth day of the month of Adar as a holiday for happiness, banqueting, holiday, and sending gifts to one another.

The Feast of Purim (April 6–7, 473 BC)

Esther 9:20–32

20 Mordecai wrote these matters down and sent letters to all the Jews who were throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far,

21 to have them observe the fourteenth and the fifteenth day of the month of Adar each year

22 as the time when the Jews gave themselves rest from their enemies—the month when their trouble was turned to happiness and their mourning to a holiday. These were to be days of banqueting, happiness, sending gifts to one another, and providing for the poor.

23 So the Jews committed themselves to continue what they had begun to do and to what Mordecai had written to them.
24 For Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised plans against the Jews to destroy them. He had cast pur (that is, the lot) in order to afflict and destroy them.
25 But when the matter came to the king's attention, the king gave written orders that Haman's evil intentions that he had devised against the Jews should fall on his own head. He and his sons were hanged on the gallows.
26 For this reason these days are known as Purim, after the name of pur.
27 Therefore, because of the account found in this letter and what they had faced in this regard and what had happened to them, the Jews established as binding on themselves, their descendants, and all who joined their company that they should observe these two days without fail, just as written and at the appropriate time on an annual basis.
28 These days were to be remembered and to be celebrated in every generation and in every family, every province, and every city. The Jews were not to fail to observe these days of Purim; the remembrance of them was not to cease among their descendants.
29 So Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter about Purim.
30 Letters were sent to all the Jews in the hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the empire of Ahasuerus—words of true peace—
31 to establish these days of Purim in their proper times, just as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had established, and just as they had established both for themselves and their descendants, matters pertaining to fasting and lamentation.
32 Esther's command established these matters of Purim, and the matter was officially recorded.

Mordecai Honored (c. 473–465 BC)

Esther 10

1 King Ahasuerus then imposed forced labor on the land and on the coastlands of the sea.
2 Now all the actions carried out under his authority and his great achievements, along with an exact statement concerning the greatness of Mordecai, whom the king promoted, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia?
3 Mordecai the Jew was second only to King Ahasuerus. He was the highest-ranking Jew, and he was admired by his numerous relatives. He worked enthusiastically for the good of his people and was an advocate for the welfare of all his descendants.

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