

## The Book of Esther<sup>7</sup>

### Lesson 4

## Esther Chapter 6 and 7

473 BC

Haman takes the advice of his wife and friends and attaches a gallows to his house in order to hang Mordecai in the morning with the king's permission. He rises early to enter the court to wait for the king not knowing of the king's activities during the night.

### King's Insomnia

**Esther**<sup>6:1</sup> During that night the king could not sleep so he gave an order to bring the book of records, the chronicles, and they were read before the king. <sup>2</sup> And it was found written what Mordecai had reported concerning Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs who were doorkeepers, that they had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. <sup>3</sup> And the king said, "What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?" Then the king's servants who attended him said, "Nothing has been done for him."

For some reason, when Esther entertained the king and Haman at her banquet the previous day, she could not bring herself to complain about Haman's edict. Rather, she invited them to come back on the following day for another banquet. Because she delays the conversation, Haman has time to fuel the fire of his anger and the king has time to remember that he was remiss in thanking Mordecai for saving his life. Unable to sleep, Xerxes calls for the scribe to read to him the record of his reign. The scribe reads about Mordecai and the king realizes his mistake. "What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?" the king asks. "Nothing," the attendant replies.

### King's Instruction

**Esther**<sup>6:4</sup> So the king said, "Who is in the court?" Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king's palace in order to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows which he had prepared for him. <sup>5</sup> And the king's servants said to him, "Behold, Haman is standing in the court." And the king said, "Let him come in." <sup>6</sup> So Haman came in and the king said to him, "What is to be done for the man whom the king desires to honor?" And Haman said to himself, "Whom would the king desire to honor more than me?"

Haman waits in the court to ask for permission to take Mordecai's life but before he can make his request, the king expresses his desire to bestow on Mordecai a great honor and blessing overrides Haman's request. With the invitation to Esther's banquet and his elevation to the second position in the kingdom, Haman's ego has grown out of proportion to reality. In Haman's mind, he deserves to be honored more than any other man in the empire.

### Haman's Response

**Esther**<sup>6:7</sup> Then Haman said to the king, "For the man whom the king desires to honor, <sup>8</sup> let them bring a royal robe which the king has worn, and the horse on which the king has ridden, and on whose head a royal crown has been placed; <sup>9</sup> and let the robe and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble princes and let

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them array the man whom the king desires to honor and lead him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him, 'Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor.'"

Haman wants one of the king's royal robes as well as one of his horses and one of his crowns. Receiving a robe, a horse, a crown, and then riding through the city will fulfill Haman's wildest dreams. Haman, thinking that no one else deserves such a reward, recommends this great honor.

### King's Order

**Esther**<sup>6:10</sup> Then the king said to Haman, "Take quickly the robes and the horse as you have said, and do so for Mordecai the Jew, who is sitting at the king's gate; do not fall short in anything of all that you have said."

The king likes his suggestion and commands Haman to fulfill it quickly in every detail with Mordecai as the recipient. What can Haman say? He has come to ask permission to kill Mordecai and now he must lead him through the streets as a tribute to his service to the king.

### Haman's Duty

**Esther**<sup>6:11</sup> So Haman took the robe and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and led him *on horseback* through the city square, and proclaimed before him, "Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor."

Haman must fulfill the command of Xerxes. He leads Mordecai through the streets of Susa on the horse and proclaims, "Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor." *Anyone can have the same reward if the king desires to bestow it on him!*

### Haman's Home

**Esther**<sup>6:12</sup> Then Mordecai returned to the king's gate. But Haman hurried home, mourning, with *his* head covered. <sup>13</sup> And Haman recounted to Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him. Then his wise men and Zeresh his wife said to him, "If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish origin, you will not overcome him, but will surely fall before him."

Haman is now the one who is mortified. He has had to put the royal robe on the man previously dressed in sackcloth and place the king's crown upon his filthy head. Moreover, he has had to lead him through the streets as if he were a prized prince of the king. Back home, Haman's true heart is exposed. His friends and his wife are keenly aware of the new circumstances with Mordecai. In their eyes, Haman has already fallen below Mordecai in favor with the king, even though that might not reflect Xerxes' feelings at the time. In their eyes, if Haman continues to disdain Mordecai, it will bring about his end.

### Haman's Escort

**Esther**<sup>6:14</sup> While they were still talking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hastily brought Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared.

The trip through the streets of Susa takes most of the morning and it is time for the banquet in the queen's chamber. Xerxes sends his servant to escort Haman to the event. Haman must be late because the Scripture says they take him "hastily".

### King's Request

**Esther**<sup>7:1</sup> Now the king and Haman came to drink *wine* with Esther the queen.<sup>2</sup> And the king said to Esther on the second day also as they drank their wine at the banquet, "What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be done."

At the banquet, in the same setting as the previous day, the king makes the same offer to Esther. He really wants to know why she came unannounced to him in his court the day before.

### Esther's Plea

**Esther**<sup>7:3</sup> Then Queen Esther answered and said, "If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me as my petition, and my people as my request; <sup>4</sup>for we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed and to be annihilated. Now if we had only been sold as slaves, men and women, I would have remained silent, for the trouble would not be commensurate with the annoyance to the king."

Esther asks for her life and the lives of her people because they have been sold to be annihilated. "Now if we had only been sold as slaves, men and women, I would have remained silent, for the trouble would not be commensurate with the annoyance to the king," Esther says. Her people have been enslaved before and they can endure that again. Her people have been exiled from their land and they can endure that again. However, they cannot endure an edict that will annihilate every Jew on the earth. For that reason Esther has approached the king with her petition.

### King's Response

**Esther**<sup>7:5</sup> Then King Ahasuerus asked Queen Esther, "Who is he, and where is he, who would presume to do thus?"

As if he has no idea who the culprit is, Xerxes says, "Who is he, and where is he, who would presume to do thus?" Truly, Xerxes has some ownership in this disaster. He is the one who agreed to it the month before. He is the one who gave Haman his signet ring to seal the order without reading it. He is the one who allowed Haman to send the order as if it had come from the king himself. Xerxes has some responsibility to his people and the kingdom for the edict. The exile is over. Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem and the Promised Land back in 536 BC. It is now 473 BC and if the Persians fulfill the decree, every Jew in every province of the Persian Empire will die on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the twelfth month of that year, including all Jews who have returned to Jerusalem and the Holy Land after the exile.

What is Haman thinking as he hears Esther's petition?

### Esther's Reply

**Esther**<sup>7:6</sup> And Esther said, "A foe and an enemy, is this wicked Haman!" Then Haman became terrified before the king and queen.

Once Esther points to Haman, he must know that she is referring to his decree issued just a few days before. Fear grips Haman to the core of his being.

### Haman's Desperation

**Esther**<sup>7:7</sup> And the king arose in his anger from drinking wine *and went* into the

palace garden; but Haman stayed to beg for his life from Queen Esther, for he saw that harm had been determined against him by the king.

The king does not react to Haman immediately. Because he must think, he goes to the palace garden where he had held the seven day banquet 11 years before as recorded in the first chapter of this story. Haman makes a tactical error. Rather than follow the king into the garden to speak with him, Haman begs Esther for his life. His family had spoken correctly earlier that morning when they said to him, "If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish origin, you will not overcome him, but will surely fall before him."<sup>8</sup>

### King's Anger

**Esther**<sup>7:8</sup> Now when the king returned from the palace garden into the place where they were drinking wine, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was. Then the king said, "Will he even assault the queen with me in the house?" As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face.

No one knows what the king has decided while he is out in the palace garden, but when he sees Haman's sprawled on Esther's private couch, his anger towards Haman builds. The servants at the banquet know they know the nuances of Xerxes' voice. They can anticipate his intentions from his first word so they take action by restraining Haman and covering his face. Haman has uttered his last word in the presence of the king and queen.

### King's Command

**Esther**<sup>7:9</sup> Then Harbonah, one of the eunuchs who were before the king said, "Behold indeed, the gallows standing at Haman's house fifty cubits high, which Haman made for Mordecai who spoke good on behalf of the king!" And the king said, "Hang him on it." <sup>10</sup> So they hanged Haman on the gallows which he had prepared for Mordecai, and the king's anger subsided.

Harbonah, whose name means barren, and is therefore considered a natural eunuch, informs the king that Haman had a gallows built the previous day on which to hang Mordecai. Xerxes orders him to be hanged on his own gallows at his house that day. Once Haman is dead, Xerxes' anger recedes.

### King's Gifts

**Esther**<sup>8:1</sup> On that day King Ahasuerus gave the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews, to Queen Esther; and Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had disclosed what he was to her. <sup>2</sup> And the king took off his signet ring which he had taken away from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.

Xerxes gives to Esther all of Haman's possessions. Xerxes gives Haman's position as the Prime Minister of the Persian Empire, the second in command of his kingdom, to Mordecai. Xerxes now knows that his queen is a Jew and that she is kin to Mordecai. Both have found favor with the king. Xerxes trusts Mordecai so much that he gives him his signet ring, bestowing on him his power in all matters. Esther then paces Mordecai over all of Haman's belongings that the king has just given her. But the decree set in place by Haman cannot be changed. The law of the Medes and the Persians will not allow the king to stop the annihilation. What can the king do to thwart the decree?

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<sup>8</sup> Esther 6:13