

Esther 5-6

- Set in Susa during reign of Ahasuerus (Xerxes I), who ruled Persia from 486-465

The Feasts of Xerxes (1.1-2.18)

1. The Royal Banquets (1.1-9)

2. A Queen Puts Her Foot Down and Pays the Price (1.10-22)

2.1-18: Esther Becomes Queen

5 'Jewish man', a member of the expatriate Jewish community dispersed throughout the Persian Empire; 'Mordecai, son of Jair, . . . a Benjaminite'; from the line of Kish connects him to King Saul, the enemy of Agag and the Amalekites (Haman)

Bad blood between Israelites and Amalekites/Agagites: Exodus 17.14-16; 1 Samuel 15.2-8; 2 Samuel 1.8-16

7 lit. 'fair of figure and lovely of appearance'; Hadassa – 'myrtle'; Esther, from Persian *stara*, 'star'

2.19-23: Mordecai Uncovers a Plot

'the king's gate' – In the 1970s, French archaeologists uncovered a 13,000 foot gate 90 yards from the palace
'sitting at the king's gate' - likely means 'to hold an office in the palace administration'

3.1-15: The Greatest Threat: Genocide

3.1-6: Haman's Decision to Exterminate the Jews

Haman is an Agagite (see 2.5); 'Mordecai would not bow down . . .'

3.7-11: Haman Gains the King's Permission to Execute His Extermination

7 *pur* is an Akkadian (Old Persian) word for 'lot', from *pur kararu* – 'to cast a lot'. The casting of lots among the Persians was a known practice (Herodotus 3.128; Xenophon Cyropaedia 1.6.46)

8a lit. 'one people scattered and isolated (from other peoples)/unassimilated'

9 this payment is 333 tons of silver!! annual revenue of the Persian Empire in that era was 10.920 talents. . .

3.12-15: Haman Orders the Extermination of the Jews

Esther 4: Mordecai Convinces Esther to Act

14: "who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

The fast of intercession ('on my behalf'): 1 Kings 21.27; Jonah 3.5-8; Nehemiah 9.1

Timing: likely this fast would have occurred during the Passover (3.7-12), abolishing the observance that year

Esther 5.1-8: Esther Approaches the King

1 lit. 'clothed herself in royalty'

3 lit. 'what is with you, Queen Esther?'

God's provision and the Xerxes' favor – '1/2 my empire'

4-5a Invitation to a banquet – who is invited?

5b-8: Banquet # 1:

6 the wine course! ☺

7 The King's question: 'What is your petition and request?'

8 Shrewd and deliberate Esther – what game is she playing?

5.9-6.14: The Humiliation of Haman

5.9-14 – Haman and Mordecai, Part 2

9 How is Haman feeling after his meals with Esther and the King? Why?

Mordecai 'did not tremble before him' (Haman)

9-13 Hatred for Mordecai and the Jews

14 'Zeresh and all his friends' – the hatred Mordecai and the Jews is broad and deep

+ the gallows is 75 feet high. 'hang' - Impalement or Crucifixion

How does the thought of Mordecai's impalement affect Haman?

6.1-14: Xerxes Remembers Mordecai's Help

Providence: consider this series of 'coincidences'

1-3 – The king's insomnia and inspiration (remember 2.19-23, Mordecai 'the Jew?')

4-9 Haman's hopes and counsel

Note the uneven text and Haman's lack of courtly deference ('if it please the king')

Royal robes? – Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 5, on Achaemenid Persia

10 A dramatic surprise! – 'Quick!'

11 Who is serving whom?

12-14 The Wicked's Shame and God's favor