

Esther 6-7

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

The Feasts of Xerxes (1.1-2.18)

A Queen Puts Her Foot Down and Pays the Price (1.1-22)

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

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

Esther 5.1-8: Esther Approaches the King

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

5.9-14 – Haman and Mordecai, Part 2

Mordecai 'did not tremble before him' (Haman)

9-13 Hatred for Mordecai and the Jews: + the gallows is 75 feet high. 'hang' - Impalement or Crucifixion

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

7.1-10: Esther Appeals to the King

Esther's challenge: expose the culpability of Haman while never appearing to bring any charge against the king. What is the setting? Who is present? When do they begin their discussion?

3 lit. 'let my life be granted to me – that is my wish; and that of my people – that is my request'

4 Powerful. 4b especially has been translated a number of ways. Likely that the best translation is this: 'for the calamity is not comparable with the trouble to the king' What is Esther saying to Xerxes?

5 the repetition is deliberate. The narrator heightens the drama of the king's response.

6 Esther is clear and direct – 'this vile Haman!' Haman's shock. What did he clearly not know? Terror

7 How does Xerxes respond? Recall 1.13-15, 2.2-4, and 6.3-6. How does Xerxes make decisions?

8 What precipitates Haman's hooding/arrest? How is this helpful to Esther and to Xerxes?

The Persian court had very strict rules of court propriety which prohibited any contact between courtiers and women of the harem, much less the queens. 'covered Haman's face' likely means he was hooded for execution

9 Who is Harbonah? (1.10) What info does he add which further justifies Haman's execution?

10 For what crime is Haman executed? What remains unresolved?