

## Esther 7-8

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

### 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

### 2.19-23: Mordecai Uncovers a Plot

### 3.1-15: The Greatest Threat: Genocide

### 3.1-6-11: Haman's Effort to Exterminate the Jews

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

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 Cyropaedeia 1.6.46)

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 4-5: Mordecai Convinces Esther to Act /Esther Approaches the King

### 6.1-8.3: A Long and Eventful Day

### 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'?)

### 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?

4 '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?

'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?

## **8: Undermining the Planned Genocide**

### **1-8: Esther and Mordecai Acquire Authority**

Herodotus (3.128-129) reports that in Achaemenid Persia, a traitor's property went to the state 'all he was to her' – familial relationship/importance of the bond between Esther and Mordecai

3 'the wicked scheme of Haman the Agagite which he had devised': What is unspoken?

5 What are the four elements on Esther's list as she appeals to Xerxes?

7-8 'You write it!' The Dilemma of Scroll #2 - (Cline, *Esther Scroll* 19: 'Write what you like, says the king, as long as it doesn't overturn, revoke, or contradict anything previously written . . . as long as you realize that Haman's decree still stands. Write what you like, for I give up. Write what you like, if you can think of a way to reverse the irreversible')

### **9-17: Mordecai issues a new decree on behalf of the King**

Seventy days later! Significance of 70

The 13<sup>th</sup> Day of the Twelfth month, Adar – Jewish calendar, in mid-March of 2019

Compare the edicts in **3.12-15 to 8.9-16**. What is the same? What is different?

'post horses' – the team of horses used in the royal postal system, described in Xenophon

11 What does Mordecai's decree enable the Jews to do? Why might this be helpful? Horrible?

17 'many people of the land professed to be Jews' – not 'the Kingdom' (1.14; 2.3; 3.6; 5.3; 7.2), but 'the Land'; the *Land* – generally means 'Palestine';

Who is in Palestine in this period? 375-490 B.C. (Ezra 4.4; 6.21; 10.2; Neh. 10.29-31)

'fear fell upon them' – Exodus 15.16; 1 Samuel 11.7; Psalm 105.38; Job 13.11

Who is afraid of what/whom? Why?