

HAMAN'S FATE
ESTHER 5:3 – 7:10

Esther lays a trap for Haman

³The king said to her, "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given you, even to the half of my kingdom." ⁴Then Esther said, "If it pleases the king, let the king and Haman come today to a banquet that I have prepared for the king." ⁵Then the king said, "Bring Haman quickly, so that we may do as Esther desires."

So the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared. ⁶While they were drinking wine, the king said to Esther, "What is your petition? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled." ⁷Then Esther said, "This is my petition and request: ⁸If I have won the king's favour, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet that I will prepare for them, and then I will do as the king has said."

⁹Haman went out that day happy and in good spirits. But when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, and observed that he neither rose nor trembled before him, he was infuriated with Mordecai. ¹⁰Nevertheless Haman restrained himself and went home. Then he sent and called for his friends and his wife Zeresh. ¹¹Haman recounted to them the splendour of his riches, the number of his sons, all the promotions with which the king had honored him, and how he had advanced him above the officials and the ministers of the king. ¹²Haman added, "Even Queen Esther let no one but myself come with the king to the banquet that she prepared. Tomorrow also I am invited by her, together with the king. ¹³Yet all this does me no good so long as I see the Jew Mordecai sitting at the king's gate."

¹⁴Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, "Let a gallows fifty cubits high be made, and in the morning tell the king to have Mordecai hanged on it; then go with the king to the banquet in good spirits." This advice pleased Haman, and he had the gallows made.

The author's dramatic sense is to have Haman present when Esther makes her request. He also wants the reader to enjoy the comedy of Haman's bragging before witnessing his downfall.

The suspense increases when, for the second time, Esther does not take up the opportunity of making her request. Will the king persist in his over-generous offer?

Mordecai persists in his refusal to bow down before Haman (see 3:2), even though he knows that it is this refusal that provoked Haman to get the king to organise an anti-Jewish pogrom (see 3:6-15; 4:1).

All is set for Haman to carry out his revenge against Mordecai.

We have already heard about Mordecai foiling a plot to assassinate Xerxes (see 2:19-23). We were told that the fact was 'recorded in the daily records in the king's presence'(2:23), but nothing was said about a reward.

The timing of this scene is perfect. Haman is on a high. He has just had the gallows built for Mordecai's hanging. Unbeknown to him Xerxes has just discovered that Mordecai's action was never rewarded, and he is determined to make up for the neglect.

Haman turns up and Xerxes seeks his advice. Such is his vanity that Haman thinks the king is speaking about him, so he suggests the highest honours of the realm. The irony is that Haman is planning Mordecai's death. Because of his vanity he is actually preparing the way for Mordecai's exaltation.

¹The king could not sleep that night, so he gave orders to bring the book of records, the annals, and they were read to the king.

²It was found recorded there how Mordecai had told about Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, who guarded the threshold, and who had conspired to assassinate King Ahasuerus.

³Whereupon the king said, "What honour or distinction has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?" The king's servants who attended him said, "Nothing has been done for him."

⁴The king said, "Who is in the court?" Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king's apartment to speak to the king about having Mordecai hanged on the gallows that he had prepared for him. ⁵So the king's servants told him, "Haman is there, standing in the court." The king said, "Let him come in."

⁶So Haman came in, and the king said to him, "What shall be done for the man whom the king wishes to honour?" Haman said to himself, "Whom would the king wish to honour more than me?"

⁷So Haman said to the king, "For the man whom the king wishes to honour, ⁸let royal robes be brought, which the king has worn, and a horse that the king has ridden, with a royal crown on its head. ⁹Let the robes and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble officials; let him robe the man whom the king wishes to honour, and let him conduct the man on horseback through the open square of the city, proclaiming before him: 'Thus shall it be done for the man whom the king wishes to honour.'"

Haman has to honour Mordecai

¹⁰Then the king said to Haman, “Quickly, take the robes and the horse, as you have said, and do so to the Jew Mordecai who sits at the king’s gate. Leave out nothing that you have mentioned.”

¹¹So Haman took the robes and the horse and robed Mordecai and led him riding through the open square of the city, proclaiming, “Thus shall it be done for the man whom the king wishes to honour.”

¹²Then Mordecai returned to the king’s gate, but Haman hurried to his house, mourning and with his head covered. ¹³When Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him, his advisers and his wife Zeresh said to him, “If Mordecai, before whom your downfall has begun, is of the Jewish people, you will not prevail against him, but will surely fall before him.”

¹⁴While they were still talking with him, the king’s eunuchs arrived and hurried Haman off to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

Note that the king refers to Mordecai as a ‘Jew’ (verse 10). We are not told when or how he came to this knowledge.

At first we are left to imagine his utter dismay when Haman learns that Xerxes is speaking of Mordecai, and that he, Haman, has to pay homage to the very man who has refused to bow down to him at the king’s gate!

Zeresh gives voice to the main theme of Esther. The Jews must ultimately triumph.

Haman is humiliated and Xerxes has at last carried out his obligation to reward Mordecai. We must now await the results of the coming banquet.

To this point Xerxes knows nothing of Esther being a Jew. She was ordered by Mordecai to conceal it (see 2:10, 20). It appears that Haman kept from Xerxes the fact that the edict which he signed was to have the Jewish race annihilated (see 3:13). He knows that Mordecai is a Jew (see 6:10). However, he was in honour bound to reward him once he discovered that he failed to do so when Mordecai foiled the attempt to have him assassinated.

Now Esther reveals that she is a Jew and that the edict organised by Haman is against her people (verse 3).

Once Xerxes discovers that the edict was against the race to which his queen belongs, and that he was tricked into this by his prime minister, Haman, he is shocked.

He leaves the stage. This offers Haman an opportunity to plead for his life with Esther – an action which leads to his undoing (verse 8).

When one of the king's attendants tells him about the gallows that Haman has prepared for Mordecai whom the king has just honoured, he gives orders that Haman be hanged.

¹So the king and Haman went in to feast with Queen Esther. ²On the second day, as they were drinking wine, the king again said to Esther, "What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled."

³Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have won your favour, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me—that is my petition—and the lives of my people—that is my request. ⁴For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. If we had been sold merely as slaves, men and women, I would have held my peace; for our problem would not have been worth bothering the king."

⁵Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, "Who is he, and where is he, who has presumed to do this?" ⁶Esther said, "A foe and enemy, this wicked Haman!" Then Haman was terrified before the king and the queen. ⁷The king rose from the feast in wrath and went into the palace garden, but Haman stayed to beg his life from Queen Esther, for he saw that the king had determined to destroy him. ⁸When the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet hall, Haman had thrown himself on the couch where Esther was reclining; and the king said, "Will he even assault the queen in my presence, in my own house?" As the words left the mouth of the king, they covered Haman's face. ⁹Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs in attendance on the king, said, "Look, the very gallows that Haman has prepared for Mordecai, whose word saved the king, stands at Haman's house, fifty cubits high." And the king said, "Hang him on that." ¹⁰So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the anger of the king abated.

