

The History, Book 12

Esther

The Book of Esther is the last of the Old Testament Books of History. Although the Book of Esther follows Nehemiah in the Bible, its events take place during the period described in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

The Book tells the story of the plot of a wicked man named Haman, a plot to exterminate the Jews completely, and of Esther's heroic defeat of his scheme. She accomplishes this with the advice and help of her elder cousin, Mordecai, who acts as her guardian/adoptive father.

In a human sense, had Esther not lived and done what she did, the Jewish nation would presumably have been wiped out. Without the Jewish nation, there would have been no Messiah; without the Messiah, the World would still be lost, hopelessly alienated from God. Of course, in the theological sense, the redemptive purpose and plan of God could not be defeated; yet we should not trivialize the life and accomplishments of Esther.

Her selfless courage and accomplishments are commemorated each year in early Spring, in the Hebrew month Adar (February-March) by observant, orthodox, Jews in the Feast of Purim. The word "purim" is Hebrew for "lots" (dice); this name for the festival may have been chosen as an ironic jab at Haman, because of his casting of one lot ("pur") to decide when to execute his plot to exterminate the Jews¹.

No Mention of God. As is the case with Song of Solomon, the name of God does not appear in the book of Esther². Although the presence of God and his orchestration of events are seen throughout the book, his name does not actually appear. These are the only two such books in the Bible; the other is Song of Solomon, the 5th and last of the Books of Poetry. For this reason, and because there is no record of Jesus' having quoted from Esther or referred to it, it was one of the last books to be accepted by the Church Fathers as inspired. And yet there is an interesting connection between this fact and the Apocrypha.

The Apocrypha Connection. The apocryphal book, "The Rest of Esther," is interesting. Although one of the controversial aspects of the Book of Esther is that

¹ It may be helpful here to remember that Hebrew words ending in "im" are plural. Thus one lot is a "pur" and two or more lots are "purim." This is one of the interesting things about the name of God, Elohim (Gen 1:1, et al); it is a plural, suggesting the Trinity.

² The reason for this is believed to be that Esther was copied from Persian records by Ezra; and, because the Persian scribes were pagan, they would have had no reason to honor or glorify the Jewish God. For an interesting thought concerning hidden names of God in Esther, see the opinion of the late Finis Jennings Dake in **NOTE b** below; see also the notes on *The Aleph Tav Messianic Scriptures* following Dakes thoughts on the subject.

God is not even mentioned, He appears in **the very first verse** of the Introduction to the apocryphal book, *The Rest of the Chapters of the Book of Esther* (also called “*Additions to Esther*” and “*The Rest of Esther*”), as follows: “Then Mardocheus (Mordechai) said, *God hath done these things.*” It seems to me to be regrettable that this first sentence of the apocryphal book was not included as the last sentence of in the canonical Book of Esther; **it would make the perfect ending.** However, Ezra and the Great Synagogue did not agree with me³.

NOTES:

a. Reverence for God is clearly implied by the fact that Mordecai, because he is a Jew, refuses to bow down to the wicked Haman, thus will bow down to no one but God (3:1-4).

b. Is it possible that the name of God does appear in the Book of Esther?

The late Finis Jennings Dake had an interesting theory to the effect that two of the names of God appear in the ancient Hebrew texts: “YHWH/JHVH” (YAHWEH/JEHOVAH), four times; and “EHYEH” (I Am that I Am), one time⁴. His position is that these names are hidden by abbreviations. Some are acrostics; and in three of the manuscripts the letters are written larger than those around them, so that they stand out above the rest of the text⁵.

Aleph/Tav (Tau)

Another, and more recent, theory is that of William H. Sanford, concerning the combination of “aleph” and “tav (tau),” in the ancient Hebrew texts. The Greek equivalent of “aleph” and “tav (tau)” is “alpha and omega” which, when applied to Himself by Jesus the Christ, became a synonym for the divine Godhead (Rev 1:11, et al). Sanford believes that this “aleph tav (tau)” combination was omitted by the translators from the Hebrew Masoretic Text, because it was not a complete word, and its significance was not (and could not have been) understood. Virtually all Western translations of the Old Testament, including the Authorized Version (KJV), have been translated from the Masoretic Hebrew text. Sanford has written a complete Old Testament (the Hebrew “Tanach”), which includes every occurrence of “aleph tav (tau).” In the Book of Esther, he finds “aleph tav (tau)” 23 times. Thus, according to Sanford’s reasoning, the divine Godhead appears 23 times in the Book of Esther. This is a fascinating possibility⁶.

³ Most critical (non-traditional/liberal) scholars reject the reality of the Great Synagogue and Ezra’s role in it. For more on this topic see “Closing of the Canon, The Old Testament Canon, **NOTE b,**” in Introductory Material.

⁴ Dake, Finis Jennings: The Dake Annotated Reference Bible, *Name of God in Esther*, p 516, Column 4.

⁵ For a refresher on the use of acrostics in ancient Hebrew, see “Introduction to the Books of Poetry” in the beginning of Part II, “The Poetry and the Prophets.”

⁶ Sanford, William H.: *The Messianic Aleph Tav Scriptures*. Monument, Colorado, Snowfall Press, 2013.

c. For an eloquent and interesting overview of the Book of Esther, and God's role in it as "Providence," see the introduction to Esther in the study Bible by the late J. Vernon McGee, ThD, LLD, known World-wide for his radio teaching ministry ("Through the Bible").

Sequence of Events. Although, in the Bible, the Book of Esther comes after the Book of Nehemiah, the events of Esther actually take place during the ministries of both Ezra and Nehemiah, and predate those of Nehemiah by about 30 years. Since the history of this remarkable woman is interrelated with that of Ezra and Nehemiah, the following chronology will help us to keep the story in order:

Sequence of Events in the Restoration Period

This outline of the events of the restoration period appears in the "Introduction to the Books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther" (which is at the beginning of the study guide to Ezra); but the outline may be a useful refresher at this point, the study of Esther, the third book of the Restoration, and the final book of Part I, the Books of History.)

Background

Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah and placed Zedekiah on the throne as a puppet king. Zedekiah ruled for 11 years and foolishly rebelled against Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem and conquered it. Zedekiah, blinded by Nebuchadnezzar, and most of the survivors of the siege of Jerusalem, are taken to Babylon as captives, about 585 BC.

1. Zerubbabel and the first group of Jews returned to Jerusalem from Babylon about 535 B.C., enabled by the decree of Cyrus.
2. The Temple was rebuilt in a 20-year period, hindered by enemies of the Israelites, and was finished about 515 B.C.
3. Esther, a Jewess, became Queen of Persia about 40 years later, i.e. about 475 B.C.
4. Esther saved all Jews from annihilation 5 years later--about 470 B.C.
5. Ezra was sent from Babylon to Jerusalem about 15 years later, i.e. about 455 B.C., bringing priests and Levites with him, to restore compliance with the Law of Moses.
6. About 10 years later, i.e. about 445 BC Nehemiah was sent from Babylon to rebuild the Wall of Jerusalem. The gates and walls were restored in 52 intense days, and Jerusalem was once again a fortified city, 90 years after the return of Zerubbabel, decreed by Cyrus, and about 140 years after its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar.

Esther's Role in the Restoration. Thus, Esther appears on the stage of history and plays her vital role about 60 years after the Decree of Cyrus, about 40 years after the rebuilding of the Temple was finished under Zerubbabel, and about 30 years before the rebuilding of the Wall under Nehemiah. It is likely that she continued to play a positive role in the Persian palace, 30 years after the events in the Book of Esther, in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. It is probable that she encouraged the decisions of King Artaxerxes to send Ezra to Jerusalem to correct religious matters, and then to send Nehemiah there to rebuild Jerusalem and its walls, for the King was her stepson.

Meanwhile, in the Outside World

During the Restoration, in the outside world it was the dawning of the age of Pericles, the “golden age” of Athenian Greece, the time of the historian Herodotus, and the philosophers, Socrates and Plato.

A. Author. Jewish tradition ascribes the Book of Esther to Ezra (along with I and II Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah). Augustine (354-430 AD) also attributes Esther to Ezra. The Talmud ascribes the book to the Great Synagogue, a religious ruling body made up of the spiritual leaders of returning Israel, which included the last Old Testament prophet to leave his writings in a book, Malachi. This, however, is not a contradiction, for Ezra was the founder and president of the Great Synagogue. Among other things, the Great Synagogue, under the leadership of Ezra, selected and closed the Old Testament canon. So, it is reasonable to assume that this very great man, who accomplished so much otherwise, was the human author of Esther. He was at least its editor-in-chief, working from Persian records.

Ezra almost certainly knew Queen Esther before being sent to Jerusalem, and I find this idea fascinating, if not exciting.

B. Place and Date. Although the book was compiled from the records kept in the Persian Palace at Shushan (Susa), the final work was probably done in Jerusalem about 450 BC.

C. Occasion. The occasion was the final compilation of the history of the Hebrew nation and the Hebrew Scriptures by the Great Synagogue, under the leadership of Ezra the Scribe and Priest.

D. Theme. The theme of Esther is the deliverance of the Jewish people from extermination, when it appeared that there was no hope for them. A secondary theme is that some people seem to be born and raised up to play pivotal roles in God's plan, at critical moments in history (*for such a time as this*, 4:14).

E. Highlights. Highlights of the Book of Esther include the following:

1. Queen Vashti Refuses to Be Put on Display. (1:1-12)

In the 3rd year of his reign, Ahasuerus (Xerxes), King of Persia and Media, hosts a six-month-long feast for his princes and subordinate leaders⁷. At the end of the feast he has a closing party, lasting seven days, for all in the royal court. During this seven-day-long party for the men, Queen Vashti has a similar party, in a separate place, for the women. By the 7th day the king, under the influence of alcohol, decides to show off his beautiful queen. He commands Vashti to appear, wearing her royal crown, before all the men of the court, most of whom have likewise been drinking for a week. Because this would have been insulting, and a violation of Persian custom, Vashti refuses to appear; and her refusal embarrasses and infuriates the king.

NOTES:

a. an inscription found by archeologists in excavations at Persepolis lists the numerous subject nations over which the Persian king ruled at this time, and it perfectly corroborates the statement in 1:1 that he ruled "from India even unto Ethiopia."

*b. According to Josephus, an ancient Chaldean paraphrase has the king ordering her to appear wearing **only** the crown (otherwise naked). This, however, would seem to be most unlikely. It would have been a violation of Persian custom for a queen to be subjected to public gaze, even fully clothed; and, to be put on display, in any attire, before those drunken men, would have been scandalously improper.*

For her to appear naked would have been, by the customs of the time, unthinkable. We must remember, however, that a king who has been drinking for a week might do things that would otherwise be unthinkable. I am inclined to agree with the ancient Chaldean paraphrase. (Josephus, Antiquities, 11.6.1 footnote b.)

2. Vashti Is Deposed. (1:13-22)

The king, embarrassed and angry, asks his astrologers and seven princes what he should do about Vashti, "according to the law." Memucan, one of the princes, answers for the group, saying that her refusal to obey her husband will set a bad example for all the wives in the kingdom; if she is not punished, he reasons, women all over the kingdom will be refusing to obey their husbands. Memucan recommends that Vashti be deposed, and that her position and possessions be given to another. And, since it appears that there is no law to deal with this situation, Memucan advises the king to issue such a law, stating that every man in the kingdom should "rule in his own house." Consider the scene: this was not only a

⁷ This six-month-long gathering was probably not just one long party. Comparing archeological findings and other extra-biblical sources, it appears that this feast was a "working banquet," during which the king and his princes were making preparations for the coming campaign against the Greeks. The seven-day party that followed was truly a celebration--a send-off party.

gathering of powerful men accustomed to having things their way, but a gathering of **drunk**, powerful men, accustomed to having things their way.

The king and all his other counselors think Memucan has a good idea, and Ahasuerus issues such a decree.

NOTE: The Ancient History Connection. *At this time, Ahasuerus (Xerxes) left on a campaign against the Greeks; it appears that the six-month-long banquet (Highlights 1 and 2) was held in preparation for the campaign. At the **Battle of Thermopylae**, his vastly superior force won a costly victory (or a defeat, depending on the point of view), when a small force of only 300 Spartans sacrificed itself to hold off the Persians at a narrow mountain pass, while the rest of the Greek forces escaped. The Persians went on to burn Athens, but it had been an extremely costly victory. The following month, the vastly superior Persian fleet was defeated at the **Battle of Salamis**. After this, Ahasuerus abandoned the Greek campaign and, after a two-year absence, returned to Persia.*

3. The Search for a New Queen. (2:1-11)

When the king returns from his failed two-year campaign against the Greeks, he remembers the drunken party that took place just before he left, and knows that he must comply with the edict he had issued then⁸. The king is reluctant to replace Queen Vashti, for he loves her; but his rash decision, made while he was drunk and converted into Persian law, must be carried out. Vashti must be replaced, and his advisors have a plan. They recommend that each province send a candidate for Vashti's replacement, all "fair, young virgins," that they should be gathered in the king's harem, and that the king select one of them. The king agrees. In the king's court there is a wise Jew, Mordecai, a great-grandson of Kish, one of the prominent Jews who had been brought to Babylon with King Jeconiah (Jehoiachin). Mordecai has an adopted daughter, Esther, his orphaned younger cousin. On Mordecai's recommendation Hegai, keeper of the harem, not only accepts Esther as one of the candidates, but he gives her special treatment. Esther does not reveal the fact that she is a Jewess, and Mordecai keeps an eye on the situation.

NOTE: *One possible interpretation of the wording of vv 5-6 is that Mordecai, himself, had been carried away from Jerusalem with King Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) by Nebuchadnezzar. Had this been true, however, Mordecai would have been over 100 years of age at this time. Since he was Esther's first cousin ("the daughter of Abihail, the uncle of Mordecai" - 2:15) and she a beautiful young woman, this would be almost impossible. The plain meaning of the wording in vv*

⁸ According to the Greek historian Herodotus, the king returned from the failed campaign to "comfort himself" with his harem.

5-6 tells us that it was Kish who was brought to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, and not his great-grandson, Mordecai.

4. The Great Beauty Pageant. (2:12-20)

All the candidates for replacing Vashti are prepared for a year with oils and perfumes and then, one by one, they spend one evening and night with the king. Whatever each maiden desires to take with her (special clothing, jewelry, etc) she can have. When Esther's time comes, she takes nothing elaborate, yet the king chooses her to be his new queen⁹. He declares a national holiday, and celebrates his new queen with a great banquet. On Mordecai's advice, she does not reveal to the king the fact that she is a Jewess; and Mordecai becomes one of the king's advisors ("sat in the king's gate").

5. Mordecai Saves the King from Murder. (2:21-23)

Two of the king's chamberlains (his personal attendants and representatives) become angry at the king and decide to murder him. Mordecai learns of the plot, tells Esther, and she gives Mordecai's message to the king. As a result, the plot is foiled, the plotters are hanged, and the incident is recorded "in the book of the chronicles before the [Persian] king¹⁰." Thus Mordecai is credited with saving the king's life, and this will soon become extremely important. This pivotal event, one that will be a key in Esther's later saving the Jewish nation from annihilation, is recorded in only three verses.

6. The King's Decree: "Death to All Jews." (Chapter 3)

The king promotes Haman, one of his counselors, to the position of chief counselor (prime minister), and directs that the other members of his inner circle bow to him. All of the king's counselors obey and treat Haman with great respect, except for one: Mordecai refuses to bow before him. When it is reported to Haman that Mordecai not only refuses to bow before him, but is a Jew, Haman wants to kill Mordecai, but is afraid to do so because the other Jews in the palace hold Mordecai in high esteem. Haman decides that the solution is to have all the Jews in the kingdom killed; and, because the Persian Kingdom covered most of the known World, it would mean the extermination of the Jewish race. He casts a pur, used for divination in the king's palace, seeking the right time to speak with the king about his plan; he does this daily for a year¹¹.

⁹ King Ahasueris (Xerxes) lived 13 years after marrying Esther; she almost certainly lived on many years, and was a significant influence for the good during the days of Ezra and Nehemiah.

¹⁰ The two would-be murderers were not executed by hanging; they were put to death by some other means, and their bodies were then hung up on public display as a message to any others who might consider murdering the king. For an explanation of this, see the explanatory **NOTE** following Highlight 9, "A Gallows for Mordecai."

¹¹ A pur was what we would call a die; the plural form is "purim" (our "dice").

After a year the time seems right, and Haman tells the king that there is a group of people, scattered throughout his kingdom, who do not obey his laws; but he does not tell the king who these people are. Haman recommends having them all killed, and offers to pay a very large sum of his own money to cover the expenses of the project. The king agrees to the plan, gives Haman total authority to carry it out, and the king says that he pay all expenses himself. The death decree concerning all Jews is published throughout the kingdom, in every language, and a year is set aside for preparations. Haman is delighted, and sits down to drink with the king; but the people, who see a coming tragedy, are greatly troubled¹².

NOTE: *This wicked man is described as a descendant of Agag. Agag was the poetic name, or title, of Amalek, grandson of Esau. Amalek was the king sinfully spared by King Saul, and subsequently slain by Samuel. Haman was thus descended from the king of the tribe that had plagued the Israelites since the time of Moses¹³. The generational hatred of Amalekites for Jews may have been what inspired Haman's plot to destroy them all. The Amalekites were the tribe that King Saul failed to "utterly destroy," in disobedience to God (I Samuel 15). Had Saul obeyed, he would probably have lived longer, and this evil Haman would never have existed.*

Archeological Note: *The Shushan (Susa) Palace, the Winter residence of Persian kings, was about 200 miles east of Babylon and 150 miles north of the Persian Gulf, in the hills of what is now west-central Iran. It was found and excavated from the mid-19th century, to the early 20th Century. In 1852 an inscription by Artaxerxes II was found by W.R. Loftus saying, "My ancestor, Darius, built this palace in former times. In the reign of my grandfather (Artaxerxes I) it was burned. I have restored it." In the later excavations by the French archeologist Dieulafoy, the king's gate, his outer court, and inner court, were identified, and even a die ("pur") was found. Since such an object was sacred and would have belonged to the king, since there would probably have been only one in the palace, and since in the passage (3:7) the singular ("pur") is used rather than the plural ("purim"), this may actually have been the one used by Haman. This palace was the residence of Darius, who authorized the rebuilding of the Temple, of Xerxes, Esther's husband, and Artaxerxes I (Esther's stepson) who authorized Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem and its walls. It is the actual scene where the momentous events of the Book of Esther took place. This is exciting; and, once again, archeology confirms the historical validity of the Bible!*

7. "For Such a Time as This." (4:1-14)

¹² Compare 3:15 with 8:15.

¹³ Josephus, Antiquities, 11.6.5; Unger, Merrill F.: "Unger's Bible Dictionary," (Agagite), p 26.

Mordechai, who sees clearly what is afoot, puts on sackcloth and ashes and grieves very publicly, before the King's Gate. When Esther hears of it, and learns of Haman's decree, she exchanges messages with Mordecai, who urges her to speak to the king. She reminds him of Persian law, whereby anyone who approaches the king without being sent for, risks death. Mordecai, responding, points out to her that if all Jews are put to death, she also will die. And then he challenges her with a suggestion that perhaps God has put her in her position as queen "for such a time as this," a phrase which has become familiar in Christian and Jewish cultures throughout the World.

8. "If I Perish, I Perish."

Esther decides to take the risk, and sends word to Mordecai to have all the Jews in the city fast and pray for three days. She and her attendants will also fast and pray for the three-day period, after which she will accept the risk of death and approach the king. She closes her message with another statement that has become familiar in Christian and Jewish cultures throughout the World: "...if I perish, I perish." (4:15-17)

9. A Gallows for Mordecai. (Chapter 5)

After the three days of fasting, Esther is adorned in regal apparel and steps into the king's inner court. Rather than death, she finds favor; the king stretches forth his golden scepter toward her, and she approaches him and touches it. The king offers her any request, "to the half of the kingdom," and her request is that the king and Haman come that day to a banquet, which she has prepared. Now Haman is even more puffed up with pride, being the only one so honored as to be invited to dine with the king and queen.

At the private banquet the king again offers her anything she asks, and Esther invites the king and Haman to another banquet the next day; she promises that she will then tell the king what she requests. Haman goes home walking on air, wondering how things could get any better for him. On the way home, however, he passes Mordecai in the king's gate, and Mordecai refuses to stand and honor him.

Haman's joy is ruined, and he goes home fuming. He tells his wife and friends that he cannot enjoy all his honors and riches because of Mordecai's disdain, so his wife and friends give him some advice they will all have cause to regret. On their suggestion, Haman causes to be built in his own courtyard a gallows, 75 feet high, for hanging Mordecai. Haman wants him not only to die, but to hang so high that everyone in the city will see what happens to those who refuse to honor Haman. On the next day, at the banquet, Haman will ask the king to condemn Mordecai to death; and he is smiling again.

***NOTE:** The terms "hang" and "hanged," as used here, do not have the meaning that they have for us today. This was not a reference to being hanged by the neck until dead, for this form of execution was not used until the Anglo-Saxon period of history (beginning ca 400 AD). What is referred to here as hanging means that, after execution, the bodies were hung up, put on public display, as a lesson to others. Thus the dead bodies of Haman and his 10 sons will soon be, as we shall see, hanged on Haman's own gallows, 75 feet in the air where all can see them; and they will probably be left there until they have decomposed. This displaying of the bodies of executed criminals as a lesson to others was not abolished in England until 1843.*

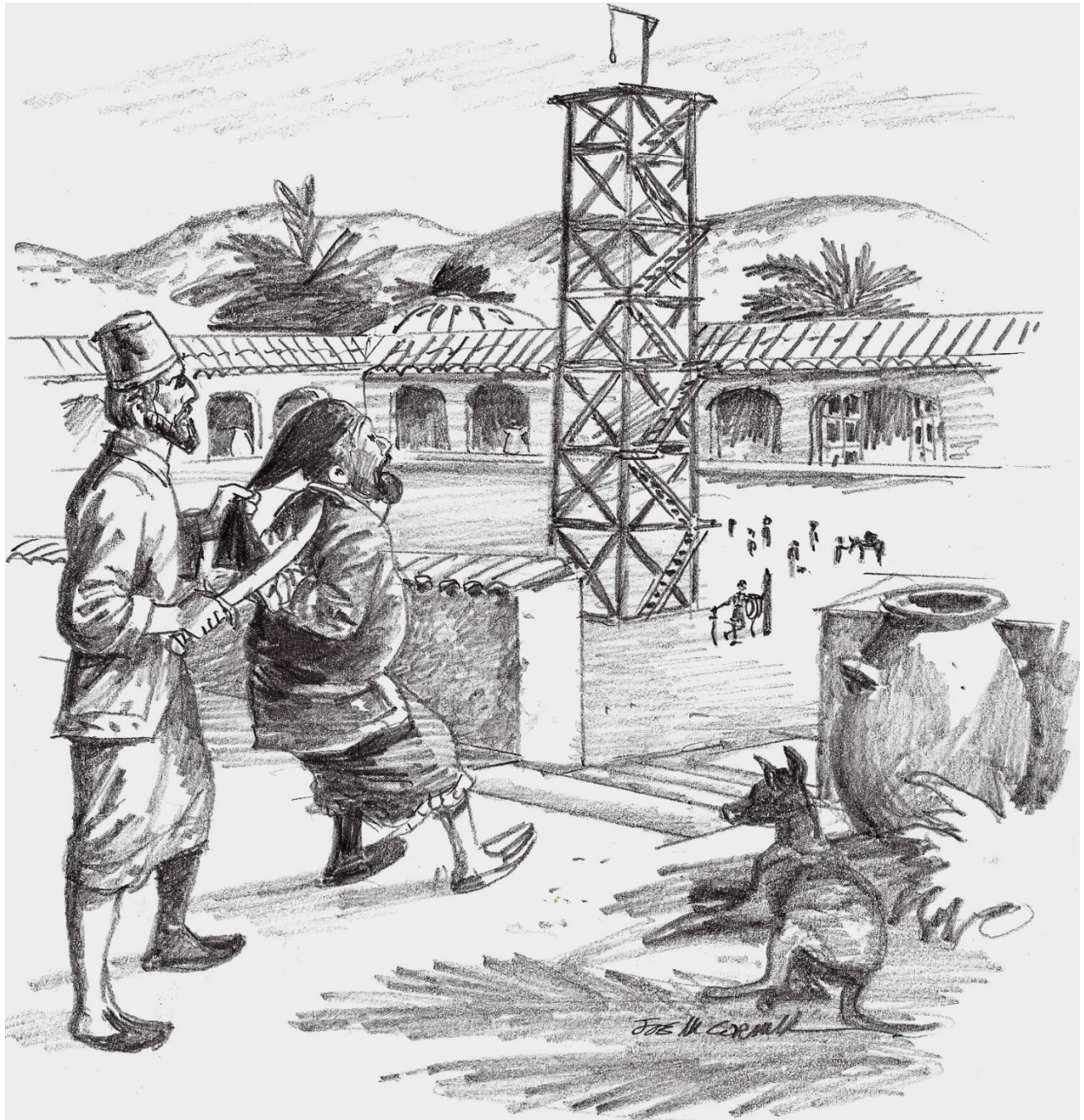
10. Bad News for Haman. (Chapter 6)

On that night, following the first banquet, the king cannot sleep. As a sleep aid, the king has the chronicles of his kingdom read to him; as he listens he learns that when his two chamberlains had conspired to kill him, it was Mordecai who had saved his life. When he learns that Mordecai has received no reward for saving his life, the king has an idea: the next morning he calls for Haman and asks him what should be done for a man the king very much desires to honor. Haman, of course, thinks that the king must be speaking of him, and suggests honors exceeded only by the king himself. He suggests that the man be clothed in robes the king has himself worn, that the king's crown be placed on his head, and that he ride the king's own horse in a majestic procession through the city, preceded and proclaimed by an honor guard.

Just when Haman is thinking that his heart might not stand any more joy, the king tells him that the man of whom he speaks is Mordecai; and, not only that, but that Haman must himself oversee these honors for the man he hates. At home, when Haman tells his wife and counselors what is happening, they observe that he is doomed; then, while they are still saying this, he is summoned to Esther's second banquet, one for which he now has no appetite. Things are not only going sour for Haman, but at mind-boggling speed.

11. Hanged on His Own Gallows. (Chapter 7)

The king and a troubled Haman arrive at Esther's quarters for her banquet, and the king immediately asks Esther to name her request, which he promises to grant, "even to the half of the kingdom." Esther asks for her life, and the lives of her people, and tells him of the coming pogrom. The king, who was not aware that she and her people are the intended victims of Haman's plan, asks in growing anger who is responsible for it, and where he is. Esther answers simply "...this wicked Haman." The king leaps up in fury and walks out into the garden to think about it, and Haman knows that only Esther can save him from death. In desperation he falls, weeping and begging for mercy, on the pallet where Esther is reclining.



So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai.

Esther 7:10

The king, re-entering the room, thinks that Haman is trying to rape Esther! The king can't believe his eyes, and Haman can't believe how wrong things have gone! This may have been the ultimate example of "I know this looks bad, but let me explain." The king orders Haman's immediate execution, and he is hanged on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai¹⁴. As he had planned for Mordecai, Haman is hanged so high that all in the city can see his ignominious end¹⁵. This has been a really bad day for Haman. In the morning he was smiling at the thought of kingly robes and honors for himself, and the high gallows for Mordecai; that evening it was the gallows for Haman and the robes and honors for Mordecai.

12. Things Get Even Better, but a Problem Remains. (8:1-8)

On the same day, while Haman's body hangs high above the city, twisting in the wind, his home (actually a minor palace) is given to Esther, and Esther passes it on to Mordecai. Truly, Haman has fallen "himself into his own pit [trap], but the upright shall have good things in possession¹⁶." Esther tells the king that she is Mordecai's cousin and adopted daughter, and the King gives Mordecai the ring of authority, placing him in Haman's former position. But a problem remains: all Jews are still scheduled to die. Esther once more risks her life by approaching the king; and, once more, he stretches forth his golden scepter, giving her liberty to speak. With tears, she begs the king to reverse the death decree and he tells her, with Mordecai, to do whatever they like to remedy the situation. He gives advance approval to whatever they decide to do.

13. The Crisis Is Reversed.

The death decree cannot simply be revoked, so Mordecai and Esther issue a second decree, authorizing a pro-active solution. Nine months hence, on the 13th day of the month Adar, all Jews are authorized to rise up and kill those who have threatened or made plans to kill them, and to appropriate their property. Thus, as with Haman and his gallows, on the very same day that all the Jews are scheduled to be killed, the opposite will occur. The decree is written in every language, sent out by the king's messengers to all the kingdom, from India to Ethiopia, and as the news spreads, so does rejoicing among the Jews. The king has Mordecai clothed in blue and white, with an outer garment of purple and white, and gives him a

¹⁴ In v 8 the king's guards covered Haman's face in preparation for his execution. It seems to have symbolized that the condemned person was no longer fit to look upon the king's face.

¹⁵ Haman is a dramatic example of the truth of Proverbs 16:18, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

¹⁶ Proverbs 28:10.

crown of gold¹⁷. There is general rejoicing among the Jews; and, for fear of them, many gentiles become proselytes to the Jews' religion. (8:9-17)

14. The Would-Be Killers of the Jews Are Killed. (9:1-16)

As the month Adar approaches, the Jews in every province, city and village gather and prepare to preempt their slaughter on the day chosen by Haman. With the help of the Persian officials at all levels, they rise up on the 13th day and kill those who intended to slaughter them. In the Shushan palace alone, the Jews kill 500 on the 13th, including the 10 sons of Haman. The king, who is observing matters in the palace, asks Esther if there is anything else she would ask. Apparently the problem in the palace is not quite dealt with, for she asks that the killing be extended locally to the following day. And, apparently wishing to make a final statement, she asks that the dead bodies of Haman's sons be hanged on the high gallows with their father. The king approves, and 300 more of the enemies of the Jews in the palace are slain on the 14th, as 10 more bodies hang from Haman's gallows. In all, the Jews kill 75,000 of their would-be murderers, from Ethiopia to India, and the crisis is resolved.

NOTE: It is interesting to note that the proclamation of Mordecai and Esther permitted not only the killing of the men who planned to murder the Jews, but also to kill their women and children, and to seize all their property. Yet the Jews not only spared the women and children, but "laid not their hands on the prey (property/plunder)"; in this gracious act, apparently spontaneous throughout the kingdom, the women and children were not only allowed to live, but were not left destitute. Here is a glimpse of the grace of God, which will become the theme of the New Covenant, established 500 years later by the coming Messiah.

15. The Feast of Purim. (9:17-10:3)

On the 14th day of the month Adar, there is celebration throughout the kingdom, except in Shushan, where the fighting goes on into the 14th; thus, in the palace, the celebrating is done on the 15th day. There is general rejoicing, feasting, and the exchanging of gifts. Mordecai then issues a decree that Jews, throughout the kingdom, should thenceforth keep the 14th and 15th days of the month Adar as a feast every year, with days of rejoicing and thanksgiving, exchanging gifts, and giving to the poor, to remember how the Israelite people were saved from extinction through the goodness of God, and the courage and wisdom of Esther and Mordecai. Mordecai, in selfless leadership, works for the prosperity and peace of his people, not his own. Yet, in the wonderful economy of God, he also has the great prosperity and riches that he has declined to seek for himself.

¹⁷ Thus Mordecai was placed in a position of honor and power second only to the king. Blue and white garments generally represent deity, and purple generally represents royalty, as they do today; thus, his position could not be more exalted. These were perhaps robes the king himself had worn.

***NOTE:** The phrase, “matters of the fastings and their cry,” in 9:31 refers to the spontaneous fasting and crying out to God throughout the land when news of Haman’s decree to exterminate the Jews had reached them. But now the fasting and crying out to God for help has been replaced with feasting and cries of joy.*

Thus end the 12 Books of History

* * * * *

And thus ends Part I: the Law and the History

DRAFT