
ESTHER 6: 1 On that night, the king couldn't sleep. He commanded the book of records of the chronicles to be brought, and they were read to the king.

That night the king, not being able to sleep, orders the chronicles of the kingdom to be read to him; and finds there the record concerning the discovery of the treason of the two eunuchs, made by Mordecai, Est 6:1, Est 6:2. He inquires whether Mordecai had been rewarded, and was answered in the negative, Est 6:3. At this time Haman arrives, in order to request the king's permission to hang Mordecai; and being suddenly asked what should be done to the man whom the king delighted to honor, supposing that himself must be meant, presented the ceremonial, Est 6:4-9. The king orders him to give Mordecai those honors; which he performs, to his extreme mortification, Est 6:10, Est 6:11. He informs his wife Zeresh of these transactions, who predicts his downfall, Est 6:12-13. He is hurried by the eunuchs to the queen's banquet, Est 6:14.

Verse 1

On that night could not the king sleep - The Targum says the king had a dream, which was as follows: - "And the king saw one in the similitude of a man who spoke these words to him: Haman desireth to slay thee, and to make himself king in thy stead. Behold, he will come unto thee early in the morning, to ask from thee the man who rescued thee from death, that he may slay him: but say thou unto Haman, What shall be done for the man whose honor the king studieth? And thou wilt find that he will ask nothing less from thee than the royal vestments, the regal crown, and the horse on which the king is wont to ride."

The records of the chronicles - It may be well asked, Why should the king, in such a perturbed state of mind, wish such a dry detail, as chronicles afford, to be read to him? But the truth is, as chronicles were composed among the Persians, he could not have brought before him any work more instructive, and more entertaining; because they were all written in verse, and were generally the work of the most eminent poets in the empire. They are written in this way to the present time; and the famous epic poem of the finest Persian poet, Ferdusi, the Homer of India, is nothing else than a collection of chronicles brought down from the creation to the reign of Mohammed Ghezny, in the beginning of the tenth century. After thirty years' labor, he finished this poem, which contained one hundred and twenty thousand lines, and presented it to the Sultan Mahmoud, who had promised to give him a dinar (eight shillings and sixpence) for every line. The poem was finished a.d. 984; and was formed out of compositions of a similar nature made by former poets. This chronological poem is written in all the harmony, strength, and elegance of the most beautiful and harmonious language in the universe; and what adds greatly to its worth is, that it has few Arabic words, with which the beautiful Persian tongue was loaded, and in my opinion corrupted, after the conquest of the major part of Asia by the Mohammedans. The pedants of Hindoostan, whether they speak or write, in prose or in verse, affect this commixture of Arabic words; which, though they subjugate them to Persian rules, are producing a ruggedness in a language, which in Ferdusi, flows deep and strong like a river of oil over every kind of channel. Such, I suppose, was the chronicle that was read to Ahasuerus, when his distractions prevented his sleep, and his troubled mind required that soothing repose which the gentle though powerful hand of poetry is alone, in such circumstances, capable of affording. Even our rough English ancestors had their poetic chronicles; and, among many, the chronicle of Robert of Gloucester is proof in point. I need not add, that all that is real in Ossian is of the same complexion.

ESTHER 6: 2 It was found written that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, who were doorkeepers, who had tried to lay hands on the King Ahasuerus.

ESTHER 6: 3 The king said, "What honour and dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?" Then the king's servants who attended him said, "Nothing has been done for him."

Verse 3

What honor and dignity hath been done to Mordecai - It is certain he found nothing in the record; and had any thing been done, that was the most likely place to find it.

ESTHER 6: 4 The king said, "Who is in the court?" Now Haman had come into the outer court of the king's house, to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him.

Verse 4

Who is in the court? - This accords with the dream mentioned by the Targum; and given above.

Now Haman was come - This must have been very early in the morning. Haman's pride and revenge were both on the tenters to be gratified.

ESTHER 6: 5 The king's servants said to him, "Behold, Haman stands in the court." The king said, "Let him come in."

ESTHER 6: 6 So Haman came in. The king said to him, "What shall be done to the man whom the king delights to honour?" Now Haman said in his heart, "Who would the king delight to honour more than myself?"

Verse 6

The king said unto him - He did not give him time to make his request; and put a question to him which, at the first view, promised him all that his heart could wish.

ESTHER 6: 7 Haman said to the king, "For the man whom the king delights to honour,

ESTHER 6: 8 let royal clothing be brought which the king uses to wear, and the horse that the king rides on, and on the head of which a crown royal is set.

Verse 8

Let the royal apparel be brought - Pride and folly ever go hand in hand. What he asked would have been in any ordinary case against his own life: but he wished to reach the pinnacle of honor: never reflecting that the higher he rose, the more terrible would be his fall. The royal apparel was never worn but by the king: even when the king had lain them aside, it was death to put them on. The Targum has purple robes.

And the horse - and the crown royal - Interpreters are greatly divided whether what is called here the crown royal be not rather an ornament worn on the head of the horse, than what may be called the royal crown. The original may be understood both ways; and our version seems to favor the former opinion; but I think it more likely that the royal crown is meant; for why mention the ordinary trappings of the royal steed?

ESTHER 6: 9 Let the clothing and the horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man whom the king delights to honour with them, and have him ride on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him, 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honour!'"

Verse 9

One of the king's most noble princes - Alas, Poor Haman! Never was the fable of the dog and shadow more literally fulfilled. Thou didst gape at the shadow, and didst lose the substance.

ESTHER 6: 10 Then the king said to Haman, "Hurry and take the clothing and the horse, as you have said, and do this for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate. Let nothing fail of all that you have spoken."

Verse 10

Make haste, and take the apparel - and do even so to Mordecai - O mortifying reverse of human fortune! How could Haman bear this? The Targumist might speak according to nature when he said that "Haman besought the king to kill him rather than degrade him so." How astonishing is the conduct of Divine providence in all this business! From it we plainly see that there is neither counsel nor wisdom against the Lord; and that he who digs a pit for his neighbor, is sure to fall into it himself.

ESTHER 6: 11 Then Haman took the clothing and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and had him ride through the city square, and proclaimed before him, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honour!"

ESTHER 6: 12 Mordecai came back to the king's gate, but Haman hurried to his house, mourning and having his head covered.

Verse 12

Mordecai came again to the king's gate - He resumed his former humble state; while Haman, ashamed to look up, covered his face, and ran home to hide himself in his own house. Covering the head and face was a sign of shame and confusion, as well as of grief, among most people of the earth.

ESTHER 6: 13 Haman recounted to Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him. Then his wise men and Zeresh his wife said to him, "If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish descent, you will not prevail against him, but you will surely fall before him."

Verse 13

But shalt surely fall before him - The Septuagint adds, ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς ὁ ζῶν μετ' αὐτοῦ, for the living God is with him. But this is a sentiment that could scarcely be expected to proceed from the mouth of heathens, such as these were.

ESTHER 6: 14 While they were yet talking with him, the king's eunuchs came, and hurried to bring Haman to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

Verse 14

Hasted to bring Haman - There was a dreadful banquet before him, of which he knew nothing: and he could have little appetite to enjoy that which he knew was prepared at the palace of Esther.

One grand design of this history is, to show that he who lays a snare for the life of his neighbor, is most likely to fall into it himself: for, in the course of the Divine providence, men generally meet with those evils in life which they have been the means of inflicting on others: and this is exactly agreeable to the saying of our Lord: "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you withal."