

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION TO ESTHER 5

This chapter gives an account of Esther's going in to the king, and of his holding out the golden sceptre to her, on which she invited him and Haman to a banquet of wine that day, and to another the next day, (^{<TARG>}Esther 5:1-8), which highly delighted Haman; and he went to his house and family with great joy, and yet chagrined at Mordecai's not bowing to him; wherefore, at the advice of his wife and friends, he erected a gallows to hang him upon, proposing to get a grant for it from the king the next day, (^{<TARG>}Esther 5:9-14).

Ver. 1. *Now it came to pass on the third day*, etc.] Of the fast; though the former Targum paraphrases it the third day of the passover, the sixteenth of Nisan, (see Gill on "^{<TARG>}Esther 4:17"), though it is probable this was nearer the time fixed for the destruction of the Jews, (see ^{<TARG>}Esther 8:9), yet the Jews have fixed the fast of Esther on that very day, the thirteenth of Adar ^{f132}:

that Esther put on her royal apparel; in order to go in to the king, and appear before him; which to do in a mournful habit, such as she had on when fasting, was not proper; for then she put off her royal crown, as is intimated in the additions to the book of Esther, And upon the third day, when she had ended her prayers, she laid away her mourning garments, and put on her glorious apparel. (Esther 15:1)

and as was usual for princes to do in times of mourning ^{f133}; but now she put it on, as both Ben Gorion ^{f134} and the latter Targum affirm:

and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house; into which none might go but such as were called; yet Esther being queen, the keepers of the door could not forbid her, as Aben Ezra observes:

and the king sat upon his royal throne, in the royal house, over against the gate of the house; so that he could see whoever came in at it, into the inner court.

Ver. 2. *And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight,* etc.] Which no doubt was of God, who has the hearts of kings in his hand, and turns them as he pleases; the king had not called her for thirty days past, or more, which showed coolness of affection to her, and now she transgressed a law by coming uncalled for, which might have provoked his wrath; and for a lesser matter than this was Vashti divorced; but yet his mind was inclined to her, and she appeared very amiable and pleasing to him:

and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand; as a token of his well pleasedness in her, and acceptance of her; and that no harm should come to her for transgressing the law:

so Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre; as acknowledging his kindness, and her thankfulness for it, as well as subjection and obedience to him.

Ver. 3. *Then said the king unto her, what wilt thou, Queen Esther?* etc.] He supposed she had some business with him, some suit to make to him, by her coming in this manner:

and what is thy request? signifying he was ready to grant it, be it what it would:

it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom; as it was usual with the Persian kings to give their wives cities for certain purposes, (see Gill on “⁴¹⁶³Esther 2:18”), here Ahasuerus, out of his great affection to Esther, offers half of his dominions, his one hundred and twenty seven provinces; meaning that he would grant her anything, and everything that was reasonable, and even magnificent; it is an hyperbolical and courtly way of speaking, and which has been used in later times, and in other countries; (see ⁴¹⁶³Mark 6:23).

Ver. 4. *And Esther answered, if it seem good unto the king,* etc.] She humbly submits it to his pleasure, suggesting it would be exceeding grateful to her, could it be granted:

let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him; for the king; and supposing it would be acceptable to him, and the rather engage him to come to it, she invited his favourite; and chiefly, that she might have an opportunity of accusing him before the king to his face, and when alone.

Ver. 5. *Then the king said, cause Haman to make haste, that he may do as Esther hath said,* etc.] That is, he ordered some of his servants to make haste and acquaint Haman with the queen's invitation, and to press him to make haste to comply with it:

so the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared; which was wisely done, to prepare for what she had to say to the king, when cheerful with wine, and when she had her adversary with him alone.

Ver. 6. *And the king said unto Esther at the banquet of wine,* etc.] For such it seems the banquet was she prepared; it was not properly a meal, neither dinner nor supper, but a drinking bout; or, however, it was at that part of the banquet in which wine was drank that the king accosted Esther, when he began to be cheerful with it. The Persians at their meals had two courses: the first consisted of meats, etc. at which they drank water, the other of fruits, when they drank wine; Aelianus^{f135} says, the Persians, after they are filled with food, indulge themselves in drinking wine:

what is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed; by which it appears he retained the same affection for Esther, and the same disposition to show her kindness. (see ^{<TARG>}Esther 5:3).

Ver. 7. *Then answered Esther and said, my petition and my request is.*] What she should for the present make; the principal one she had to ask, for wise reasons, she still deferred.

Ver. 8. *If I have found favour in the sight of the king,* etc.] Or, seeing she had; for it was a clear case she had, both by his holding out the golden sceptre to her, and by accepting her invitation to her banquet:

and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request; as he had been so gracious as to promise in such a large and liberal manner as before expressed:

let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them; the Targum says, in the evening; but from (^{<TARG>}Esther 5:12), it appears to be on the morrow; and which agrees with what follows:

and I will do tomorrow as the king hath said; make her petition and request to him; which she had deferred, partly in hope of still increasing his affection to her, and partly to prepare him to expect something of moment

and importance to be asked of him. Jarchi restrains this to what he supposes the king had often importuned her to tell, namely, who were her people and her kindred.

Ver. 9. *Then went Haman forth that day, joyful, and with a glad heart,* etc.] From court to his own house

but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him; did not show him the least degree even of civil respect; which he refused to do, partly lest it should be interpreted an adoration of him, and partly because it was well known to him he had formed a scheme for the destruction of him and all his people; and the rather he refused it to him, as Esther was about to make intercession with the king to revoke his decree, of the success of which he had no doubt; and therefore had nothing to fear from him, but treated him with the utmost contempt, as he deserved:

he was full of wrath against Mordecai; it was a sad mortification to him, and a great alloy of that joy and elation of mind on account of the favour he was in; not with the king only, but the queen also, as he imagined.

Ver. 10. *Nevertheless Haman refrained himself,* etc.] From showing any outward resentment to Mordecai, from laying hands upon him or taking revenge on him, as being too much below him to avenge himself on a single person, when the whole body of the people Mordecai belonged to would shortly feel the power of his hand for such insolent treatment of him:

and when he came home, he sent and called for his friends, and Zeresh his wife; who, the Targum says, was the daughter of Tatnai, the governor on the other side the river, (^{<1788B>}Ezra 5:3).

Ver. 11. *And Haman told them of the glory of his riches,* etc.] Of the multitude of them; which he did partly in a way of ostentation, and partly, if he could, to make his mind easy under the mortification he received from Mordecai; and, it may be, chiefly to aggravate his rudeness and ill behaviour towards him, a man of so much wealth: and the multitude of his children; he had ten, as we learn from (^{<1790>}Esther 9:10), but the former Targum enlarges them, beyond credit, to the number of two hundred and eight, besides his ten sons, and Shimshai the scribe; such were had in great esteem with the Persians who had many children; to such the king used to send gifts annually^{f136}:

and all the things wherein the king had promoted him; the high offices of honour and trust he had put him into:

and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king. (see ^{<TAB>}Esther 3:1).

Ver. 12. *Haman said, moreover*, etc.] To all which he added, and what seemed to delight him most of all, or however was a new additional honour done him:

yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself; which he judged was doing him singular honour; and, by the joint affection of the king and queen to him, he thought himself established in his dignity and grandeur:

and tomorrow am I invited unto her also with the king; had been invited, not by a messenger, but by the queen herself, which was a double honour.

Ver. 13. *Yet all this availeth me nothing*, etc.] Is not equal or sufficient for me; it gives me no satisfaction and contentment:

so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate: not rising up to bow unto him; this single circumstance spoiled all his joy and pleasure.

Ver. 14. *Then said Zeresh his wife, and all his friends, unto him*, etc.] His wife very probably first moved it, and all his friends present approved of it and united in it:

let a gallows be made, of fifty cubits, high; that the person hanged thereon might be seen at a distance, and so be a greater reproach to him, and a terror to others, to take care they were not guilty of the same offence: Cartalo was ordered by his father to be fixed to the highest cross in the sight of the city ^{f137}; and it was usual for crosses to be erected very high ^{f138} both for that purpose, and for greater infamy and disgrace ^{f139}:

and tomorrow speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon; get a grant from him for it; of which they made no doubt, since Haman had such an interest in him, and had already obtained an order to destroy all Jews in his dominions:

then go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet; eased of the burden of his mind, and honoured to be a guest with the royal pair:

and the thing pleased Haman, and he caused the gallows to be made; but it was for himself, as it proved in the issue. (see ¹⁷⁰⁰Esther 7:10).