

CHAPTER 6

INTRODUCTION TO ESTHER 6

Ahasuerus, not being able to sleep in the night, ordered the book of records to be brought and read to him, where a fact of Mordecai's was registered, and, upon inquiry, it appeared that nothing had been done to him for it, (^{<Targ>}Esther 6:1-3) and Haman being in the outward court, was ordered in, with whom the king consulted what should be done to the man the king delighted to honour; to which Haman gave answer, and was bid to do as he said, (^{<Targ>}Esther 6:4-10), which he did, but went home after it confounded and sorrowful, and told his mournful case to his wife and friends, who plainly foresaw his downfall, (^{<Targ>}Esther 6:11-14).

Ver. 1. *On that night could not the king sleep*, etc.] The night after he had been at Esther's banquet, which it might be thought would rather have caused sleep; and therefore Jarchi calls it a miracle; and no doubt it was owing to the overruling providence of God, and not to anxious thoughts about his neglect of Esther so long, nor what should be her request to him, nor jealousy of any amorous intrigue with Haman, nor of any conspiracy of theirs against his life:

and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; the diaries or journal, in which memorable facts were recorded; this he did to divert himself, and pass away time; though here also the providence of God was specially concerned; for otherwise he might have sent for any of his wives and concubines, or singing men and women, to have diverted him:

and they were read before the king; until the morning, until it was time to rise, as appears by what follows.

Ver. 2. *And it was found written*, etc.] Upon reading, and in which there was also a peculiar hand of Providence, directing to the reading of that part of them in which the affair of Mordecai was registered: and if what the latter Targum says is true, it was the more remarkable, that when Shimshai the scribe, who was ordered to bring the book and read, and who, according to the former Targum, was Haman's son, seeing what was

recorded of Mordecai, turned over the leaves of the book, being unwilling to read it; but the leaves rolled back again, and he was obliged to read it:

that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the King Ahasuerus; (see ^{<1702>}Esther 2:21), and it was usual in such diaries to record the names of persons, who, by any actions, had deserved well of the king, that they might be rewarded as there was an opportunity for it; and such, in the Persian language, were called Orosangae, as Herodotus relates ^{f140}.

Ver. 3. *And the king said, what honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this?* etc.] He judged it an action worthy of regard, and what ought to be rewarded, as it was the saving of his life; but had forgot whether any royal favour had been shown to the person for it:

then said the king's servants that ministered unto him; the lords of his bedchamber then in waiting:

there is nothing done for him; not on that account, nothing more than what he had; he had an office at court before, but was not advanced to anything higher on this account.

Ver. 4. *And the king said, who is in the court?* etc.] Being in haste to confer some honour on Mordecai for what he had done:

now Haman was come into the outward court of the king's house; though it was early in the morning, being eager to get to the speech of the king before he was engaged in any business, to obtain a grant from him:

to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him; of which he made no doubt of having, and therefore had prepared for it.

Ver. 5. *And the king's servants said unto him, behold, Haman standeth in the court,* etc.] In the outward court; for into the inward court none might enter without being called, for which he was waiting:

and the king said, let him come in; into his bedchamber; and it was of God, no doubt, that Haman should be on the spot at this very time, when the king was in the humour to do honour to Mordecai, and by him.

Ver. 6. *So Haman came in,* etc.] But was prevented speaking to the king about the business he came upon by the following speech of the king:

what shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? he mentions not the name of any man, that he might the more freely, and unbiasedly, and disinterestedly give his advice; nor might the king know of any resentment of Haman to Mordecai:

(now Haman thought in his heart, to whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?) who had been advanced above all the princes and nobles of the realm, and was now in such high honour both with the king and queen, with whom he was to be at a banquet that day; and he might conclude, that by putting this question to him, he could have in view none but himself: Aben Ezra observes, that some from hence gather, that this book was written by the spirit of prophecy, because none could know the thoughts of the heart but God; but though he believes it to be written by the Holy Ghost, yet, as he observes, Haman might disclose this thought of his heart to his friends afterwards.

Ver. 7. *And Haman answered the king,* etc.] At once, being very prompt to suggest the honours he hoped to have done to himself:

for the man whom the king delighteth to honour; let the following things be done.

Ver. 8. *Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear,* etc.] Not a whole suit of clothes, but a single garment; the purple robe, as both the Targums, such as kings wore; that which Cyrus appeared in public in was half purple, and half white, and no other person besides might wear such an one^{f141}; it was a capital crime with the Persians to wear any of the king's apparel; Trebazus, an intimate of Artaxerxes, having begged an old gown of him, it was granted, on condition that he would not wear it, it being contrary to the laws of Persia; but he, regardless of the order, appeared in it at court; which affront to the king was so resented by the Persians, that they were for punishing him rigorously, according to the law, had not Artaxerxes declared, that he had ordered him to appear in that dress as his fool^{f142}; hence Artabanus, though uncle to Xerxes, was very unwilling to obey his orders, to put on his royal robes, sit on his throne, and sleep on his bed^{f143}; so that this was a daring proposal in Haman, which he would never have ventured to have made, had it not been for the great confidence he had in the king's favour;

and the horse that the king rideth upon: the kings of Persia, as Herodotus^{f144} relates, had horses peculiar to them, and those were Nisaeen horses,

which were brought from Armenia, as Strabo says ^{f145}, and were remarkable for their beauty ^{f146}; and if the same law obtained in Persia as did in Judea, no man might ride on the king's horse any more than sit on his throne, or hold his sceptre ^{f147} and perhaps this horse here was not proposed for the person to ride on, but to be led in state before him; and though it is afterwards said that Mordecai rode on horseback, yet it might not be on the king's horse, which might be only led; and what follows seems to confirm it:

and the crown royal which is set upon his head; or, "let it be set", etc. not the head of the man, but on the head of the horse; and so Aben Ezra; and which sense is countenanced by the Targum, and by the Syriac version, and is approved of by Vatablus and De Dieu; and which the order of the words requires, the horse being the immediate antecedent; and no mention is made of the crown afterwards, as set on the head of Mordecai; nor would Haman have dared to advise to that, nor could it be granted; but this was what was wont to be done, to put the royal crown on the head of a horse led in state; and this we are assured was a custom in Persia ^{f148}, as it is with the Ethiopians to this day ^{f149}; and so, with the Romans, horses drawing triumphal chariots were crowned ^{f150} which Tertullian calls ^{f151} public horses with their crowns.

Ver. 9. *And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes*, etc.] The one,

that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour; and the other to be led in state before him:

and bring him on horseback through the street of the city; on another horse, that all might see what honour was done him:

and proclaim before him; as before Joseph, when advanced next to Pharaoh, (^{<0443>}Genesis 41:43) this was not to be done by an herald, but by a nobleman, to whom the apparel and horse were to be delivered, and was done by Haman, (^{<0701>}Esther 6:11),

thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour; these were the words said in the proclamation, signifying this was the man the king delighted to honour, and this the manner in which he would have it done.

Ver. 10. *Then the king said to Haman, make haste*, etc.] And without delay go into the royal treasury, or wardrobe, as the Targum adds: “and take the apparel”; the royal robe, the purple one, or one of the precious purple robes; and then, as the same Targum, go to the king’s stable, and take thence the king’s “horse”, that stands in the chief place in the stable, whose name is “Shiphregaz”; but how the Targumist came by the name of it, I know not; however it was not unusual for kings to give a name to their favourite horse, as Alexander the great did to his called Bucephalus and even for all kings of Persia, as Darius Hystaspis^{f152}:

as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king’s gate; the person he meant this honour for he describes by name, by nation, and by office, that there might be no mistake:

let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken; the king objected not to anything that had been proposed, and insisted on it that every thing be done punctually by Haman as he had advised, and from which he could not with honour recede; though nothing could be more mortifying to him to do, to a man he came to court to get a grant to hang on a gallows he had prepared.

Ver. 11. *Then took Haman the apparel, and the horse*, etc.] The one out of the wardrobe, the other out of the stable, and the crown also no doubt, though no mention is made of it, since the king made no objection to it, yea, commanded that nothing fail of what had been spoken; but this was included in the pomp and state of the led horse: and brought him on horseback through the street of the city; the most grand and public part of it, thus arrayed, and in this state: and proclaimed before him, thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour; (see Gill on “~~4700~~ Esther 6:9”).

Ver. 12. *And Mordecai came again to the king’s gate*, etc.] To attend his post and office at court; which confirms what has been already hinted, that he was in some office in the court, which this phrase is expressive of, and not a porter at the gate; for it is not probable he should return to such a station, after so much honour had been done him; and much less that he returned to his sackcloth and fasting, as Jarchi and the former Targum; since he might reasonably conclude things were taking a turn in his favour, and that of his people; though as yet he knew not what success Esther had had, to wait for which he returned to court:

but Haman hasted to his house; pushed forward as fast as he could:

mourning; at his sad disappointment:

and having his head covered; through grief and sorrow, confusion and shame; so Demosthenes, being hissed, went home with his head covered ^{f153}, as confounded and ashamed to be seen ^{f154}.

Ver. 13. *And Haman told Zeresh his wife, and all his friends, every thing that had befallen him*, etc.] How he was prevented speaking to the king on this errand he went; instead of which, he had the mortification of being obliged to do the honour to Mordecai which he thought would never have been given to any but himself, and so related the whole affair as above:

then said his wise men; before called his friends; perhaps they were magicians and soothsayers he kept in his house, to advise with about the proper methods and times of advancing himself, and destroying his enemies:

and Zeresh his wife unto him; who joined with the wise men in giving her opinion, and who set up for a knowing woman, and of whom Haman thought highly:

if Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews; as it was said he was; and therefore Haman had vowed and plotted revenge on the people of the Jews for his sake:

before whom thou hast begun to fall; as he did, by being obliged to execute the king's will in doing him so much honour:

thou shall not prevail against him; to get him hanged, or his people destroyed, though he had prepared a gallows for the one, and had got an edict for the other:

but shall surely fall before him: which might be concluded from his being set above him, who would not fail of using his power and interest to crush him, who had showed himself to be such an implacable enemy to him; or they might have some knowledge of the history of the Jews, and of what wonderful things God often did for them, in defeating the designs of their enemies, and in raising them up from a low to an high estate.

Ver. 14. *And while they were yet talking with him,* etc.] About these things, and giving their opinion of the issue of them, upon the present appearance of them:

came the king's chamberlains, and hasted to bring Haman unto the banquet that Esther had prepared; the time appointed for it being very near, or quite up, and Haman being backward and dilatory, having no stomach to go to it, and perhaps fearing worse things were coming upon him he should hear of there.