

CHAPTER 7

INTRODUCTION TO ESTHER 7

Esther, being solicited by the king to tell him her petition, asks for her life and the lives of her people, who were sold to be destroyed, (^{<T00B>}Esther 7:1-4), the king, amazed at her request, inquires who was the person that dared to do so vile a thing; and was told by her it was Haman there present, (^{<T00B>}Esther 7:5,6) on which the king went out into the garden in wrath, and, returning, found Haman on Esther's bed, which still more incensed him; and being told that Haman had prepared a gallows for Mordecai, the king ordered that he himself should be hanged upon it, which was done accordingly, (^{<T00B>}Esther 7:7-10).

Ver. 1. *So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen.*] Or, "to drink with her"^{f155}, that is, wine; for in the next verse it is called a banquet of wine; so they did according to the invitation the queen had given them, (^{<T00B>}Esther 5:8).

Ver. 2. *And the king said again to Esther on the second day, at the banquet of wine,* etc.] This was the third time he put the following question to her, being very desirous of knowing what she had to ask of him; and it was of God that this was kept upon his mind, and he was moved to solicit her petition, or otherwise it would not have been so easy for her to have introduced it:

what is thy petition, Queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? and it shall be performed, even to the half of my kingdom; (see ^{<T00B>}Esther 5:3,6).

Ver. 3. *Then Esther the queen answered and said,* etc.] Not rolling herself at the king's knees, as Severus^{f156} writes; but rather, as the former Targum, lifting up her eyes to heaven, and perhaps putting up a secret ejaculation for direction and success:

if I have found favour in thy sight, O king; as she certainly had heretofore, and even now:

and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition; not riches, nor honour, nor any place or post at court, or in any of the king's dominions for any friend of her's, was her petition; but for her own life, that that might not be taken away, which was included in the grant the king had made to Haman, though ignorantly, to slay all the Jews, she being one of them:

and my people at my request; that is, the lives of her people also, that was her request; her own life and her people's were all she had to ask.

Ver. 4. *For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish*, etc.] She makes use of these several words, to express the utter destruction of her and her people, without any exception; not only the more to impress the king's mind with it, but she has respect to the precise words of the decree, (^{<7813>}Esther 3:13) as she has also to the 10,000 talents of silver Haman offered to pay the king for the grant of it, when she says, "we are sold", or delivered to be destroyed:

but if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue: should never have asked for deliverance from bondage, but have patiently submitted to it, however unreasonable, unjust, and afflictive it would have been; because it might have been borne, and there might be hope of deliverance from it at one time or another; though it is said, slaves with the Persians were never made free ^{f157}; but that being the case would not have been so great a loss to the king, who would have reaped some advantage by their servitude; whereas, by the death of them, he must sustain a loss which the enemy was not equal to, and which he could not compensate with all his riches; which, according to Ben Melech, is the sense of the next clause:

although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage; or, "for the enemy cannot", etc. the 10,000 talents offered by him, and all the riches that he has, are not an equivalent to the loss the king would sustain by the death of such a multitude of people, from whom he received so large a tribute; but this the enemy regarded not; and so Jarchi interprets it, the enemy took no care of, or was concerned about the king's damage; but there is another sense, which Aben Ezra mentions, and is followed by some learned men, who take the word for "enemy" to signify "distress", trouble, and anguish, as in (^{<3001>}Psalm 4:1 119:143) and read the words, "for this distress would not be reckoned the king's damage" ^{f158}, or loss; though it would have been a distress to the Jews to have been sold for slaves, yet the

loss to the king would not be so great as their death, since he would receive benefit by their service.

Ver. 5. *Then the King Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen*, etc.] The words in the original text lie thus, “and the King Ahasuerus said, and he said to Esther the queen”; which doubling of the word does not signify, as Jarchi suggests, that before he spoke to her by a messenger, or middle person, but, now he knew she was of a royal family, he spoke to her himself; but it is expressive of the ruffle of his mind, and the wrath and fury he was in, that he said it again and again, with a stern countenance and great vehemence of speech:

who is he? and where is he? who is the man? and where does he live?

that durst presume in his heart to do so; that has boldness, impudence, and courage enough to perpetrate so vile an action: or “that has filled his heart”^{f159}; the devil no doubt filled his heart to do it, (see ~~4~~Acts 5:3), but the king had either forgot the decree he had granted, and the countenance he had given him to execute it; or, if he remembered it, he was now enraged that he should be drawn in to such an action by him; and perhaps till now was ignorant of Esther’s descent, and knew not that she would be involved in the decree.

Ver. 6. *And Esther said, the adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman*, etc.] Who was not only an enemy to her and her people, but an adversary to the king, by advising and persuading him to that which was to the loss of his revenues, as well as of his reputation; also, she pointed at him, and gave him his just character; her charge of wickedness upon him, as it was true, it was honourably made to his face before the king, of which, if he could, he had the opportunity of exculpating himself:

then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen; gave visible signs of his confusion, consternation, and trouble of mind, by the fall of his countenance, his pale looks, his trembling limbs, and quivering lips, being struck dumb, and not able to speak one word for himself.

Ver. 7. *And the king, arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath, went into the palace garden*, etc.] Not being able to bear the sight of Haman, who had done such an injury both to himself and to the queen; as also that his wrath might subside, and he become more composed and sedate, and be able coolly to deliberate what was fitting to be done in the present case:

and Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen; hoping that her tender heart might be wrought upon to show mercy to him, and be prevailed on to entreat the king to spare his life; and this request he made in the most submissive manner:

for he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king; he perceived it both by the king's countenance, by the rage he went out in, and by the threatening words which he very probably uttered as he went out.

Ver. 8. *Then the king returned out of the palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine,* etc.] Being a little cooler, and more composed in his mind, see (see Gill on "⁴¹⁰⁷Esther 1:5")

and Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther was; not the bed she lay on to sleep in the night, (for it cannot be thought that it was a bedchamber in which the banquet was,) but on the bed or couch on which she sat or reclined at the banquet, as was the custom in the eastern countries; now, "by", or "near" this, as the word may be rendered, Haman fell down, even at the feet of the queen, begging for mercy; and some think he might embrace her feet or knees, as was the custom of the Greeks and Romans as they were supplicating^{f160}; and so it seems to have been with the Jews, (see ⁴¹⁰⁷2 Kings 4:27), and being in this posture, it might appear the more indecent, and give the king an opportunity to say as follows:

then said the king, will he force the queen also before me in the house?, that is, ravish her; not that he really thought so; it was not a time nor place for such an action; nor can it be thought that Haman, in such terror and confusion he was in, could be so disposed; and besides there were others present, as the next clause shows: but this he said, putting the worst construction on his actions, and plainly declaring his opinion of him, that he thought him a man capable of committing the vilest of crimes, and that his supplications were not to be regarded:

as the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face; the servants present, as a man unworthy to see the light; and they took what the king said to amount to a sentence of condemnation, and that it was his will he should die; and they covered his face, as condemned malefactors used to be; which was a custom among the Greeks and Romans, of which many instances may be given^{f161}; though Aben Ezra says it was the custom of the kings of Persia, that their servants covered the face of him the king

was angry with, that he might not see his face any more, which was well known in the Persian writings.

Ver. 9. *And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king,* etc.] One of the seven chamberlains, (see ^{<7010>}Esther 1:10), his name, with Josephus ^{f162}, is Sabouchadas.

Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. This man, perhaps, had seen it there, when he went with others to fetch Haman to the banquet, (^{<7064>}Esther 6:14). The sin of Haman is aggravated by preparing a gallows for a man before he was accused to the king, or condemned, or had a grant for his execution, and for a man that had well deserved of the king for discovering a conspiracy against him, and whom now the king had delighted to honour:

then the king said, hang him thereon; immediately, being ready prepared, the king's word was enough, being a sovereign and tyrannical prince.

Ver. 10. *So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai,* etc.] Not within his house, (^{<7009>}Esther 7:9), but more probably in his courtyard, in the sight of his family and friends; or, it may be, the gallows was taken from thence, and set up without the city, where he was hanged: for so it is said in the additions of the book of Esther,

“For he that was the worker of these things, is hanged at the gates of Susa with all his family: God, who ruleth all things, speedily rendering vengeance to him according to his deserts.” (Esther 16:18)

that he was hanged without the gates of Shushan; (see ^{<8075>}Psalms 7:15,16),

then was the king's wrath pacified; having inflicted punishment on such a wicked counsellor of his, and the contriver of such mischief.