

Week 53, Lecture 167.¹ Mordecai Seeks Esther's Help, Esther 4.

Outline is for review purposes. No need to discuss in lecture.

An Outline of the Book of Esther (as found in Catholic Bibles)²

Materials **highlighted in an underlined bold font** appear only in the Greek text, not in the Hebrew text.

I.	Prologue	<u>A: 1-17</u>
II.	Esther Becomes Queen	1:1-2:23
III.	Haman's Plot Against the Jews	3:1-13; <u>B:1-7</u> ; 3:14-15.
IV.	Esther and Mordecai Plead for Help	<u>4:1-16; C:1-30; D:1-16; 5:1-5</u>
V.	Haman's Downfall	5:6-8:2
VI.	The Jewish Victory and the Feast of Purim	8:3-12; <u>E:1-24</u> ; 8:13-9:23
VII.	The Rise of Mordecai	9:24-10:3; <u>F:1-11</u>

4:1-3, Mordecai Reacts to Haman's Decree.³ When Mordecai learned **all that had been done**, Mordecai rent his clothes and put on **sackcloth and ashes**, and went out into the midst of the city, wailing with a loud and bitter cry; ² he went up to the entrance of the king's gate, for no one might enter the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. ³ And in every province, wherever the king's command and his decree came, there was great **mourning** among the Jews, with **fasting** and weeping and lamenting, and most of them lay in **sackcloth and ashes**. (RSV)

All that had been done

This refers to the letter written by Haman in the King's name, and sent throughout the empire (3:13)

The decree has been posted in Susa, the capital. [Greek Addition C contains a copy of the letter]

All Jews -- men, women, and children -- are to be slaughtered in the month of Adar.

The date was picked by "lot" (*pur*) in 3:7. The plural is *purim*, which gives the name to the festival: Purim.

Nisan is a Spring month. The ancient Semitic year began in Spring! Not in Winter.

The **modern** Hebrew year begins in Autumn. The Rosh Hashanah festival will be Sept 29 - Oct 1 in 2109.

Sackcloth and Ashes

These are signs of **mourning** in the scriptures. It is as if Mordecai and the Jews are "mourning in advance."

They can also be signs of **repentance** to turn away God's anger (Matt 11:21 || Luke 10:13; Dan 9:3-5; Jon 3:6-9)

However repentance is never mentioned in Hebrew Esther.

The Jews of Esther show no awareness of **guilt**; only deep **grief / mourning**.

Hebrew Esther portrays the Jewish people as **innocent victims**.

Fasting and Prayer -- These often accompany sackcloth and ashes.

The narrator tells us that many of the Jews **fasted**. Mordecai, however, is **not described as fasting**.

Even more astonishing is that, in this time of absolute danger, **we do not hear that a single Jew prayed**.

Esther & Mordecai, 4:4-17 When Esther's **maids and her eunuchs** came and told her, the queen was deeply distressed; she sent garments to clothe Mordecai, so that he might take off his sackcloth, but he would not accept them. ⁵ Then Esther called for Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs, who had been appointed to attend her, and ordered him to go to Mordecai to **learn what this was and why it was**.

¹ Lectures numbered consecutively. This is this week's 1st lecture, but its number reflects its place in the **total** sequence.

² This outline is part of the introduction to "The Book of Esther" as it is found in all editions of the New American Bible Revised Edition. This introduction has been approved by the USCCB, which holds the copyright to the NABRE.

³ For the most part I will be following the outline divisions of Sidnie White Crawford in vol. 3 of *The New Interpreter's Bible*. However, while she relies on the NRSV and the NIV, I am using the RSV translation of the Hebrew.

Maids and Eunuchs. Now that Esther is a married woman, she lives in a harem. She has no direct contact with men outside the harem. All messages must be passed through her maids or her eunuchs. Esther is trying to keep her Jewish identity secret. She has to have **absolute confidence** in the messengers she uses to communicate with Mordechai, now openly Jewish.

Verse 5, Learn Why This Was. Esther's life in the harem is sheltered. Even though the decree has been published in Susa, where she lives, she has no knowledge of it. Hence she is not aware of the reason for Mordechai's public display of grief.

First Dialogue via Intermediary. ⁶ Hathach went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king's gate, ⁷ and Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the exact sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries for the destruction of the Jews. ⁸ Mordecai also gave him a copy of the written decree issued in Susa for their destruction, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her and **charge her to go to the king** to make supplication to him and entreat him for her people. **[B:2-3 inserted by some Bibles]** ⁹ And Hathach went and told Esther what Mordecai had said. ¹⁰ Then Esther spoke to Hathach and gave him a message for Mordecai, saying, ¹¹ "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, **there is but one law; all alike are to be put to death**, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter that he may live. And I have not been called to come in to the king these thirty days."

4:8, NAB vs. NABRE. 4:8 corresponds to 15:1 in the Vulgate.

The NAB adds 15:2-3 (= B:2-3) to the end of verse 8. The NABRE places the additions in a note to 4:8:

¹ [4:8] The Greek text adds the following to Mordecai's message to Esther:

"Remember the days of your lowly estate, when you were brought up in my charge; for Haman, who is second to the king, has asked for our death. **Invoke the Lord** and speak to the king for us: save us from death" (Accessed via *BibleWorks*).

Note that this addition from **Greek Esther** 1) mentions the **Lord** by name, and 2) counsels **prayer** ("invoke"). Neither of these happen anywhere in Hebrew Esther.

Esther's First Response. Up to this point, Esther has been compliant to Mordecai's commands.

But here she explains that she cannot obey his **charge to go to the king**.

In the scriptures, recall that it is frequent for someone given a special commission -- even by God! -- to decline.

Recall the stories of the calls of people like: Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah.

Even though **God is not mentioned**, the author might be drawing on this theme.

And he might be doing it in a more "realistic" manner!

Most people who are called by God to do something do not actually hear God's voice.

They usually hear only the voices of the suffering; or perhaps a voice of encouragement from someone else.

Another interpretation from Adele Berlin (*Jewish Study Bible*)

Mordecai said nothing about going to the *inner court*; this is Esther's idea. There were other ways to communicate with the king, as we know from 2:2. **Esther is not refusing to plead for the Jews.**

Rather, she is outlining a daring plan to do so. ⁴

"One Law: The Death Penalty!" This is Esther's reason for not complying with Mordecai's instructions. Anyone who appears before the king without being summoned dies -- unless the king extends his scepter.

⁴ Berlin (*JSB*, note to Est 4:11) remarks that Mordecai has said nothing about going to the **inner court**, and that we know from 2:2 that there are other ways to communicate with the king. Berlin's interpretation is that Esther is **not refusing** to plead for the Jews; rather she is **outlining a daring plan** to do precisely that!

Whether or not this detail is historical is debated by scholars. Extra-biblical evidence is ambiguous. It is definitely necessary for the plot.

But since “the plot” is for an unhistorical story, we cannot know for sure if this detail is historical or merely literary.

The 2nd Dialogue via Intermediary. ¹² And they told Mordecai what Esther had said. ¹³ Then Mordecai told them to return answer to Esther, "Think not that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. ¹⁴ For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and **deliverance** will rise for the Jews **from another quarter**, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" ¹⁵ Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, ¹⁶ "Go, **gather** all the Jews to be found in Susa, and **hold a fast** on my behalf, and **neither eat nor drink** for three days, night or day. I and my maids will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law; and **if I perish, I perish.**"

¹⁷ Mordecai then went away and **did everything as Esther had ordered him.** (RSV)

Deliverance from another quarter. This is probably a veiled allusion to the action of God.

This is as close as the author of Hebrew Esther comes to mentioning God.

Adele Berlin has a good note in the *Jewish Study Bible*.

This is as close as the author can get to hinting at divine intervention in a book **where God's name is studiously avoided.**⁵

Esther's Second Response. This time Esther responds as a queen.

She gives three commands: 1) gather the Jews; 2) hold a fast; 3) neither eat nor drink.

And Mordecai, who has given orders to Esther up to this point, **obeys her orders.**

Black Spiritual. “If I perish; I perish. I am going to see the King.”

This choir sings better than I do! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xQ2iF9gnvZk>

Week 53, Lecture 168. The Prayers of Mordecai & Esther, Esther C.

Greek Addition C ⁶ is a scribal addition of prayers, prominent in Jewish piety, to the Esther story.

Two prayers are added: one for Mordecai; one for Esther.

The Prayer of Mordecai.⁷

⁸ But Mordecai besought the **Lord**, remembering all his works, ⁹ And said:

Opening Address, Historical Prologue. O **Lord, Lord**, almighty king, for all things are in your power, and there is none that can resist your will, if you determine to save Israel. ¹⁰ You have made heaven and earth, and all things that are under the cope of heaven. ¹¹ You are **Lord** of all, and there is none that can resist your majesty. ¹² **You know all things.**

Structure of the Prayer. This prayer has a 3-fold structure

1. Opening Address, which recalls the Lord's goodness in the past.
2. The Current Problem, which also includes an “apology” by Mordecai (more in a minute)
3. The Request

⁵ Adele Berlin, note to Esther 4:18, *Jewish Study Bible*.

⁶ Esther C = Vulgate 13:8-18 The Prayer of Mordecai; 14:1-19 The Prayer of Esther.

⁷ Greek Addition C:1-8 = Vulgate 13:8-18. Because I am adapting the Douay, the superscript verse numbers match the Vulgate. For the Greek text I continue to adapt, the outline of S. White Crawford in the *NIB*. For the paragraphing of Esther's prayer I follow *Septuaginta: A Reader's Edition*, ed. by Gregory R. Lanier and William A. Ross (Hendrickson; Deutsche Bible Gesellschaft, 2018) Esther 4:17k -17z.

This is similar to the structure of **Roman “collect prayers.”**

1. O God, who . . .
2. Grant that . . .
3. Conclusion: . . . through our Lord, Jesus Christ, . . .

Usually the “current problem” is not specified in detail, precisely because it is a “collect” prayer.

LORD & Lord. Most of the time in the OT “**LORD**” is placed in all capitals.

This is how modern Bibles show that it represents the divine name in **Hebrew**, YHWH.

Because the parts of Esther than mention “**Lord**” are written in **Greek**, note that it is not written in all capitals!

This is because it represents the **Greek** word *kyrios*, not the Hebrew YHWH.

This is also why “**LORD**” never appears in translations of the NT, which was written in **Greek**.

The words “Lord” and “God,” absent from Hebrew Esther, appear frequently in Greek Addition C.

Recalling God’s Past Goodness. This is a common way for Jews & Christians to begin prayers.

Remark from Aiden Cavanaugh

Sometimes liturgical prayers, which recall God’s saving activity “have a deplorable tendency to lecture the Almighty.”

The Current Problem & “Mordecai’s Apology.” **and you know that** it was not out of pride and contempt, or any desire of glory, that I refused to worship the proud Haman, ¹³ (For I would willingly and readily for the salvation of Israel have kissed even the steps of his feet,) ¹⁴ But I feared lest I should transfer the honor of my **God** to a man, and lest I should adore anyone except my **God**.

And you know that

In the previous section, Mordecai has mentioned that the Lord “knows all things.”

This provides a segue-way into Mordecai’s specific current problem. The same segue-way occurs in Esther’s prayer.

Mordecai’s Problem with Haman (in Greek Esther)

Mordecai claims that he does not want to give a human being the honor that belongs to God.

This is a different motivation than found in Hebrew Esther, where he refuses to honor an enemy of Israel. This practice of (Greek) Haman does not reflect the practice of Jews in the Hebrew scriptures

I gave examples in previous lectures of Jews bowing to human beings.

Also, in the NT, many Jews -- unaware of the divinity of Jesus -- bow to him when making requests.

Is Mordecai feeling defensive? After all, his behavior is the whole reason for the upcoming massacre.

Some commentators have described his behavior as reckless.

The Request. ¹⁵ And now, O **Lord**, O king, O **God** of **Abraham**, have mercy on your people, because our enemies resolve to destroy us, and extinguish your inheritance. ¹⁶ Despise not **your portion**, which you have redeemed for yourself out of Egypt. ¹⁷ Hear my supplication, and be merciful to your lot and inheritance, and turn our mourning into joy, **that we may live and praise your name, O Lord**, and shut not the mouths of them that sing to you.

Editorial Remark. ¹⁸ And all Israel with like mind and supplication cried to the **Lord**, because they saw certain death hanging over their heads.

God of Abraham

This recalls the original covenant with God. It is also possibly an allusion to God’s angel rescuing Isaac.

No Belief in Resurrection. “That we may live and praise your name.”

Mordecai, even in Greek, shows no awareness of belief in resurrection of the dead.

As in many OT prayers, God is asked to save them so that they can praise God.

Dead people cannot praise God. E.g., **Isaiah 38:18-19a**

¹⁸ For Sheol cannot thank thee,
death cannot praise thee;

those who go down to the pit cannot hope for thy faithfulness.
¹⁹ The living, the living, he thanks thee, as I do this day; (RSV)

Esther's Prayer.⁸ Queen Esther also, fearing the danger that was at hand, had recourse to the **Lord**.
² And when she had laid away her royal apparel, she put on garments suitable for weeping and mourning: instead of various precious ointments, she covered her head with ashes and dung, and she humbled her body with fasts: and all the places in which before she was accustomed to rejoice, she filled with her torn hair. ³ And she prayed to the **Lord** the **God** of Israel, saying:

Structure. This is more complex than Mordecai's prayer.

1. Opening Address, with Historical Prologue
2. The Current Problem
3. The Request
4. The Immediate Problem, and Esther's "Apology"
5. Final Petition for the immediate situation.

Opening Address, Historical Prologue. O my **Lord**, who alone are our king, help me a desolate woman, and who have no other helper but you. ⁴ My danger is in my hands. ⁵ I have heard of my father that you, O **Lord**, did take Israel from among all nations, and our fathers from all their predecessors, to possess them as an everlasting inheritance, and you have done to them as you have promised. ⁶ **We have sinned in your sight**, and therefore you have delivered us into the hands of our enemies: ⁷ For **we have worshipped their gods**. You are just, O **Lord**.

Guilt and Repentance. Unlike Hebrew Esther, Greek Esther expresses repentance for guilt.

Esther's prayer is very "Deuteronomistic."

Like the book of Deuteronomy, and the DH⁹, she explains current suffering as the result of past sin.

Specifically, she mentions the worship of other gods.

The Current Problem. ⁸ And now they are not content to oppress us with most hard bondage, but **attributing the strength of their hands to the power of their idols**, ⁹ They design to change your promises, and destroy your inheritance, and shut the mouths of them that praise you, and extinguish the glory of your **temple and altar**, ¹⁰ that they may open the mouths of Gentiles, and praise the strength of idols, and magnify a mortal ["fleshly"] king forever.

Remarks. The pagans are going beyond the just punishment that God intends. Esther prays that God restrain them. She "reminds" the Lord that the pagans are attributing their success to their idols.

Cf. Ezekiel, where God decides to save Israel, "for the sake of my name."

This is the only mention of "temple and altar" in the entire book of Esther. Hebrew Esther never mentions these.

The Request. ¹¹ Give not, O **Lord**, your scepter to them that are not, lest they laugh at our ruin: but turn their counsel upon themselves, and destroy him that hath begun to rage against us.
¹² Remember, O **Lord**, and show yourself to us in the time of our tribulation, and give me boldness, O **Lord**, king of gods, and of all power: ¹³ Give me a well ordered speech in my mouth **in the presence of the lion**, and turn his heart to the hatred of our enemy, that both he himself may perish, and the rest that consent to him. ¹⁴ But deliver us by your hand, and help me, who have no other helper, but you, O **Lord**. **You have the knowledge of all things.**

⁸ Greek Addition C:12-30 = Vulgate 14:1-19. Because I am adapting the Douay, the verse number correspond to the Vulgate.

⁹ The Deuteronomistic History includes: Joshua, Judges, [not Ruth!] 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings

In the Presence of the Lion

This, of course, is a reference to her husband, the king. In the lectionary this passage occurs with no context given. I use the opportunity to tell the story of Esther, beginning with the deposition of Queen Vashti. Basically, my homily is a 10-minute “digest” of the story of Esther. It’s great to be able to go into detail! That’s why I love teaching!

The Immediate Problem & “Esther’s Apology.” ¹⁵ **And you know** that I hate the glory of the wicked, and **abhor the bed of the uncircumcised**, and of every stranger. ¹⁶ You know my necessity, that I abominate the sign of my pride and glory, which is upon my head in the days of my public appearance, and detest it as a polluted rag, and wear it not in the days of my silence, ¹⁷ and that I **have not eaten** at Haman’s table, nor has the king’s banquet pleased me, and that I **have not drunk** the wine of the drink offerings, ¹⁸ and that your handmaid has never rejoiced, since I was brought here unto this day, except in you, O **Lord**, the **God** of Abraham.

Esther’s Apology. The Greek scribe cannot change the fact that Esther is married to a Gentile. The best he can do is to give her a prayer where she says she “abhors the bed of the uncircumcised.” This, of course, provides some “tension” with the Hebrew version!

There Esther is portrayed as having “pleased the king” more than any other woman. White Crawford comments that she appears to have hidden this abhorrence from her husband quite well!

Final Petition, for the Immediate Situation. ¹⁹ O **God**, who are mighty above all, hear the voice of them, that have no other hope, and deliver us from the hand of the wicked, and deliver me from my fear.

Esther’s prayer is more complex than Mordecai’s because she is in more immediate danger. Hence this last specific petition. It leads to the next scene, where Esther approaches the King. That is the topic of the next lecture.

Week 53, Lecture 169. Esther Approaches the King, Esther D & 5.

Esther Approaches the King, Hebrew Version.

5:1-2. On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king’s palace, opposite the king’s hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne inside the palace opposite the entrance to the palace; ² and when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, she found favor in his sight and he held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. Then Esther approached and touched the top of the scepter.

V. 1, Esther put on her royal robes.

We will see that the Greek follows this fairly closely. However, after that, there is considerable “targumizing.” The Hebrew story is simple: Esther appears at court; the king extends his scepter. The Greek will dramatize this moment, introducing elements of romance and feminine stereotype.

Esther Approaches the King, Greek Version. Esther D:1-16 = Vulgate 15:4-19

Esther’s Entry.¹⁰ ⁴ And on the third day she laid away the garments she wore, and put on her glorious apparel. ⁵ And glittering in royal robes, after she had called upon God the ruler and Savior of all, she took two maids with her, ⁶ And upon one of them she leaned, as if for delicateness and overmuch tenderness she were not able to bear up her own body. ⁷ And the other maid followed her lady, bearing up her train flowing on the ground. ⁸ But she with a rosy color in her face, and with gracious

¹⁰ Greek Addition D:1-16 = Vulgate 15:4-19. The translation is the Douay, modified. The verses, therefore, follow the Vulgate numbering, rather than the alternate system which uses “D.” The paragraphing modifies *Septuaginta: A Readers Edition*, 5:1a-1f;

and **bright eyes**, **hid a mind full of anguish, and exceeding great fear**.⁹ So going in she passed through all the doors in order, and stood before the king, where he sat upon his royal throne, clothed with his royal robes, and glittering with gold, and precious stones, he was terrible to behold.

Remarks on Greek Version

Greek Esther **calls upon God** before taking on her dangerous mission.

Like a "**damsel in distress**" in a Hellenistic novel. We might say a "Victorian novel."

The Greek text "targumizes" about **Esther's beauty**.

There is a dramatic contrast between her **external beauty** and **her internal anguish**.

The King's Response; God Acts.¹⁰ And when he had lifted up his countenance, and with burning eyes had shown **the wrath of his heart**, the **queen sunk down, and her color turned pale, and she rested her weary head upon her handmaid**.¹¹ And **God changed the king's spirit** into mildness, and all in haste and in fear he leaped from his throne, and holding her up in his arms till she came to herself, he encouraged her with these words:¹² What is the matter, Esther? I am your brother, fear not.¹³ You shall not die: for this law is not made for you, but for all others.¹⁴ Come near then, and touch the scepter.¹⁵ And as she held her peace, he took the golden scepter, and laid it upon her neck, and kissed her, and said: Why do you not speak to me?

Esther's Danger Emphasized.

Unlike the Hebrew, which is almost anti-climactic, the Greek emphasizes the initial hostility of the king. She responds like a **damsel in distress** in a Hellenistic [Victorian] novel.

God Changed the King's Spirit.

Esther is the heroine of the **Hebrew** book of Esther. **God is the hero** of the **Greek** book of Esther.

God transforms him immediately from a potential wife-abuser to a solicitous husband.

Conclusion.¹⁶ She answered: I saw you, my lord, as **an angel of God** [a Jewish expression!], and my heart was troubled for fear of your majesty.¹⁷ For you, my lord, are very admirable, and your face is full of graces.¹⁸ And while she was speaking, **she fell down again, and was almost in a swoon**.¹⁹ But the king was troubled, and all his servants comforted her. (Douay, modified)

Esther's Second Swoon.

We can ask: Is this emotion real? Or is this "acting" to gain the king's sympathy?

5:3-5a, An Invitation to Dinner.¹¹ And the king said to her, "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given you, even to the half of my kingdom."

⁴ And Esther said, "If it please the king, let the king and Haman come this day to a dinner that I have prepared for the king."

⁵ Then said the king, "Bring Haman quickly, that we may do as Esther desires."

Comic Relief?

We are back in the Hebrew, and Adele Berlin (*JSB*) has stressed the comic dimensions of the Hebrew text.

"This silly woman! Putting her life at risk to have a dinner party!"

But of course the "humor" would be that Esther is pulling the wool over the eyes of "the guys."

However, White Crawford interprets this as "cold calculation" on the part of Esther.

By accepting the invitation the King (and Haman) will "owe" Esther a favor.

In the manner of an oriental diplomat, Esther asks for a small favor before asking for a big one.

¹¹ I continue to follow, for the most part, White Crawford's *NIB* outline, and to use the RSV translation for the Hebrew.

The Beginning of Haman's Downfall.

The NABRE outline¹² includes this story in the next major section of Esther: **Haman's Downfall, 5:6-8:2**

For lecture purposes, I have decided to keep all of chapter 5 together.

Esther's First Banquet, 5b-8. So the king and Haman came to the dinner that Esther had prepared.
⁶ And as they were drinking wine, the king said to Esther, "**What is your petition?** It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the **half of my kingdom**, it shall be fulfilled."

⁷ But Esther said, "**My petition and my request is:**" ⁸ If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition and fulfil my request, let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the dinner which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said."

What is your petition?

By now the king apparently knows that the banquet was not the **real** reason Esther put her life in danger.

Half of my kingdom is hyperbole, not to be taken literally

In Mark 6:23 King Herod makes a similar promise to his step-daughter.

A Second Petition

White Crawford sees Esther as putting the king and Haman "deeper in debt."

She is making it more difficult for him to refuse the "big request" when it comes.

She is also keeping her enemy close, so that he cannot undertake independent action to undermine her.

The Responses.

The King's response is not narrated. Presumably it was positive, as the second banquet will take place.

The narrator focuses immediately on the reaction of Haman.

This inserts a scene that adds dramatic tension.

5:9-14, Haman Builds a Gallows. ⁹ And Haman went out that day joyful and glad of heart. But when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he neither rose nor trembled before him, he was filled with wrath against Mordecai. ¹⁰ Nevertheless Haman restrained himself, and went home.

He sent and fetched his friends and his wife **Zeresh**. ¹¹ And Haman recounted to them the splendor of his riches, the number of his sons, all the promotions with which the king had honored him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and the servants of the king. ¹² And Haman added, "Even Queen Esther let no one come with the king to the banquet she prepared but myself. And tomorrow also I am invited by her together with the king. ¹³ Yet all this does me no good, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."

¹⁴ Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, "Let a gallows fifty cubits high be made, and in the morning tell the king to have Mordecai hanged upon it; then go merrily with the king to the dinner." This counsel pleased Haman, and he had the gallows made. (RSV)

Zeresh

Here we meet Zeresh, the wife of Haman.

She appears to be like Jezebel, a strong woman who helps her weak husband to get what he wants.

In this story the women (on both sides) are smarter than the guys.

Dramatic Tension

Although Esther's plan seems to be working, Mordecai might not live long enough for Esther to carry out her plan.

To be continued . . .

¹² Included at the beginning of the notes for Lecture 167.