

ESTHER

Conversational Version

King Xerxes' Banquet

1:¹Ahasuerus/*Xerxes* ruled from India to Nubia over 127 provinces [486-65 B.C.]. ²In **his third year** on his throne in Susa the capital, ³he held a banquet for his nobles and officials, the army chiefs of Persia and Media, and the nobles and governors of the provinces. ⁴For 180 days he showed the wealth of his royal glory and the splendor and pomp of his majesty. ⁵After that, he gave everybody there—least and greatest—a banquet that lasted a week in the court of his palace garden. ⁶There were white cotton curtains and blue hangings held up by cords of fine purple linen on silver rings and marble pillars. There were gold and silver couches on a mosaic pavement made out of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl, and precious stones. ⁷Drinks were served in gold cups of different kinds, and the royal wine was plentiful according to the king's bounty. ⁸The drinking was done by law: attendees were not compelled, because the king had ordered each official of his household to follow each person's wishes. ⁹Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women in the king's palace.

Esther 1:1-9

Queen Vashti Deposed

¹⁰On the seventh day, when the king was half drunk from wine, he told Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carkas—the seven eunuchs serving in his presence—¹¹to bring him Queen Vashti with her royal crown to show the people and princes how beautiful she was. ¹²But she wouldn't come. He was mad and it smoldered in him. ¹³He consulted the wise men who understood customs. It was his custom so to speak to everybody that knew law and justice. ¹⁴Those close to him were Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media who had access to him and sat in first place in the kingdom. ¹⁵He asked *them*, “By law, what should be done with Queen Vashti? She didn't obey my command sent through the eunuchs.” ¹⁶In the presence of the king and princes, Memucan said,

Esther 1:10-16a

“She has not only wronged you but your officials and the people groups in your provinces. ¹⁷Women will find out what she's done and look with contempt on their husbands and say King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought into his presence, but she didn't come. ¹⁸Today the ladies of Persia and Media who have heard about what she did will speak the same way to your officials, and there'll be plenty of contempt and anger. ¹⁹If it pleases you, issue a royal edict—written in the laws of Persia and Media so it can't be altered—that Vashti should not come into your presence anymore. Give her royal position to someone more

worthy. ²⁰*When they hear your edict throughout your great kingdom, women will respect their husbands, great^m and small.*”

²¹The king and the officials liked the idea, and he did what Memucan proposed. ²²He sent letters to all his provinces, to each province in its script and to every people in their language, that every man should be the master in his house and speak in the language of his own people.

Esther 1:16b-22

Esther Becomes Queen

2:¹After that, when King Ahasuerus calmed down, he remembered what Vashti had done and what he’d decreed against her. ²Then the king’s advisors that attended him said,

“Have beautiful young virgins be sought for you. ³Appoint officers in all the provinces to gather them to the harem in Susa under the custody of Hegai, the king’s eunuch in charge of the women. Give them ointments, ⁴and have the young woman that pleases you replace Vashti as queen.”

He liked that; so that’s what he did.

Esther 2:1-4

⁵There was a Jew in Susa named Mordecai son of Jair (son of Shimei son of Kish), a Benjamite. ⁶He was among the captives Nebuchadnezzar took from Jerusalem with Jeconiah, king of Judah. ⁷He’d raised Hadassah (Esther), his uncle’s daughter, because she didn’t have any parents. She was beautiful and lovely. Mordecai adopted her when her parents died. ⁸When the king declared his edict and many young women were brought to Susa and put in Hegai’s custody, Esther was also taken to his palace. ⁹The young woman pleased him and won his approval. Right away he provided her with her ointments, her portion of food, and seven chosen maids from the king’s palace. He advanced her and her maids to the best place in the harem. ¹⁰Esther hadn’t told anybody who her people or relatives were; Mordecai had charged her not to. ¹¹Every day he walked past the court of the harem to find out how she was doing.

Esther 2:5-11

¹²Each young woman’s turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus after the end of her twelve months under the regulations for the women. Their time of beautification lasted six months with oil of myrrh and six months with spices and women’s cosmetics. ¹³She’d go in to the king with anything she wanted to take from the harem to his palace. ¹⁴In the evening she’d go in, and in the morning she’d go to the second harem, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king’s eunuch in charge of the concubines. She wouldn’t go in to the king again unless he delighted in her and summoned her by name. ¹⁵When Esther’s turn came—the daughter of Abihail, Mordecai’s uncle—she didn’t ask for anything except what Hegai advised. She was pleasing to everybody that saw her. ¹⁶She was taken to the king’s royal palace in the **tenth month (Tebeth), seventh year of his reign**. ¹⁷He liked Esther more than any of the *other* women. He showed her more kindness, and she was more pleasing to him than the *other* virgins. So he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen in place of Vashti. ¹⁸Then he held a grand banquet, Esther’s banquet, for all his nobles and officials. He made a holiday for the provinces and gave gifts with royal liberality.

Esther 2:12-18

Mordecai's Uncovers a Conspiracy

¹⁹When the virgins had become part of the second harem, Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate. ²⁰Esther hadn't yet told anybody about her relatives and what her nationality was. She did what Mordecai told her like she'd done under his care. ²¹During that time, while Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's officials that guarded the door, got mad and tried to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. ²²But Mordecai found out about it and told Queen Esther. She informed the king in Mordecai's name. ²³When the plot was investigated and found to be true, they were both hung on gallows. It was recorded in *The Book of Chronicles* in the king's presence.

Esther 2:19-23

Haman's Plot to Destroy the Jews

3:¹After that, King Ahasuerus promoted Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and made his authority secure over his fellow officials. ²The king's aides at the king's gate bowed in homage to Haman because that's what the king commanded. But Mordecai didn't bow. ³The king's aides at the king's gate said, "*Why aren't you obeying the king?*" ⁴When they'd spoken every day to him and he ignored them they told Haman to see if he would tolerate Mordecai's reason for not bowing to him: he'd told them he was a Jew. ⁵When Haman saw that Mordecai didn't bow in homage, it made him mad. ⁶But he thought it was beneath his station to arrest only Mordecai. Since they'd told him what Mordecai's nationality was, he made an effort to destroy all the Jews in the kingdom.

Esther 3:1-6

⁷In the **first month (Nisan), twelfth year of King Ahasuerus**, they cast Pur (the lot) in front of Haman daily and from month to month, till the twelfth month (Adar). ⁸Then Haman told King Ahasuerus,

"There's a nation scattered around the provinces whose laws are different from other people's laws. They don't observe your laws; so it's not in your interest to let them stay. ⁹If it pleases you, issue a decree to destroy them. I'll pay 377½ tons ^{10,000 talents} of silver to the ones that carry out your business, and I'll put it in your treasuries."

Esther 3:7-9

¹⁰The king took off his signet ring and gave it to **Haman, enemy of the Jews**. ¹¹He told him, "*The silver is yours, and the people too. Do what you want to with them.*" ¹²Then the king's scribes were summoned the **thirteenth day, first month**. They wrote what Haman told the king's satraps, the governors in each province, the rulers of each people group—each province in its script, each people in its language—in the king's name, sealed with his signet ring. ¹³Letters went out by couriers to the king's provinces to destroy, kill, and annihilate the Jews, young and old, women and children, in one day, the **thirteenth day, twelfth month (Adar)**, and to confiscate their possessions. ¹⁴A copy of the edict was issued in every province and published to all the people so

they'd be ready on that day. ¹⁵The couriers went out, urged by the king's command, while the decree was issued in Susa. While the king and Haman sat down to drink, Susa was in confusion.

Esther 3:10-15

Mordecai Persuades Esther to Help

^{4:1}When Mordecai found out what had happened, he tore his clothes, put on burlap and ashes, and went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly. ²He went as far as the king's gate, because nobody was supposed to enter the king's gate dressed in burlap. ³In every province where the decree had gone, the Jews were mourning greatly with fasting, crying, wailing. Many were lying on burlap and ashes.

⁴Then Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her, and she writhed in anguish. She sent clothes to Mordecai so he'd take off his burlap, but he didn't accept them. ⁵Then she summoned Hathach from the king's eunuchs, whom the king had appointed to attend her, and told him to go to Mordecai and find out why *he was in mourning*. ⁶He went out to Mordecai in the city square in front of the king's gate. ⁷Mordecai told him what had happened, and the amount of money Haman promised to pay the king's treasuries for destroying the Jews. ⁸He gave Hathach a copy of the edict issued in Susa for their destruction. That way he could show Esther and have her go in to the king and implore his help and plead with him for her people.

Esther 4:1-8

⁹Hathach came back with Mordecai's message. ¹⁰She told him to answer Mordecai.

¹¹*"All the king's aides and the people in his provinces know that he has just one law for any man or woman who comes to his inner court without being summoned: he's to be executed unless the king extends the gold scepter to him. I haven't been summoned to him for 30 days."*

¹²They relayed that message to Mordecai.

¹³He told them to tell her,

"Don't imagine that in the king's palace you can escape any more than the other Jews. ¹⁴If you don't speak up, deliverance will come from someplace else. You and your father's family will perish. Who knows if you haven't come to the kingdom for a time like this."

¹⁵She told them to answer Mordecai,

¹⁶"Get the Jews together that are in Susa and fast for me. Don't eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will do the same. I'll go in to the king, which is against the law. If I die, I die."

¹⁷Mordecai did what she said.

Esther 4:9-17

Esther's Request to the King

^{5:1}On the third day, Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace by his rooms. He was sitting on his throne across from the entrance to the palace. ²When

he saw her, he was pleased and extended the gold scepter that was in his hand. She came and touched the top of it.

³He asked her,

“What’s troubling you, Queen Esther?”

What’s your request? I’ll give it to you up to half the kingdom.”

⁴She said, *“If it pleases you, may you and Haman come to the banquet I’ve prepared for you”⁸ today.”*

⁵He said, *“Bring Haman right away so we can do what Esther wants.”* The king and Haman went to the banquet she’d prepared. ⁶As they drank their wine, the king asked her,

“What’s your petition; I’ll grant it.

What’s your request? I’ll do it up to half the kingdom.” Esther 5:1-6

⁷Esther answered,

“My petition is: ⁸if I’ve found favor with you, if it pleases you to grant my petition, may you and Haman come to the banquet I’ll prepare for you, and tomorrow I’ll do like you ask.”

Haman Plans to Hang Mordecai

⁹Haman went out happy and pleased. But when he saw Mordecai in the king’s gate not standing up or nervous in his presence, it made him mad. ¹⁰He controlled himself, though, went home and sent for his friends and his wife Zeresh. ¹¹He recounted his glorious wealth, how many sons he had, every instance where the king had honored him and promoted him above the king’s other nobles and officials. ¹²He added,

“Even Queen Esther didn’t have anybody but me come with the king to the banquet she’d prepared. She’s also invited me with him tomorrow. ¹³Yet none of this satisfies me whenever I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king’s gate.”

¹⁴Zeresh and his friends said, *“Have gallows built 75ft high. In the morning, ask the king to have Mordecai hanged on it. Then go happy with him to the banquet.”*

Haman liked that, so he had them built.

Esther 5:7-14

The King Honors Mordecai

^{6:1}That night the king couldn’t get to sleep, so he had them bring the record book and read it to him. ²*The Chronicles* wrote that Mordecai had reported about Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s eunuchs, the doorkeepers that had tried to lay hands on King Ahasuerus.

³The king asked, *“What honor’s been given to him for that?”*

His attendants said, *“Nothing.”*

⁴The king said, *“Who’s in the court?”* Haman had just come into the outer court of the king’s palace to speak to him about hanging Mordecai on the gallows he’d built.

⁵The king's aides said, *"Haman's standing in the court."*

"Let him come in."

Esther 6:1-5

⁶When Haman came in, the king asked him, *"What should be done for a man the king wants to honor?"*

Haman said to himself, *"Who would he want to honor more than me?"* ⁷He said,

⁸*"Have them bring a royal robe you've worn, a horse you have ridden, and a royal crown that's been on your head. ⁹Hand the robe and the horse to one of your most noble princes and have them array him. Have them lead him on horseback through the city square and proclaim, 'This is what should be done for a man the king wants to honor.'"*

Esther 6:6-9

¹⁰The king told Haman,

"Hurry and take the robes and the horse like you said, and do that for Mordecai the Jew that's sitting at my gate. That's what I'll do for the man I want to honor."

¹¹Haman took the robe and horse and arrayed Mordecai. He led him on horseback through the city square and proclaimed, *"This is what's done for the man the king wants to honor."* ¹²Then Mordecai went back to the king's gate, but Haman hurried home, mourning with his head covered. ¹³He told Zeresh and his friends what happened. His wise men and Zeresh said, *"If Mordecai is a Jew that you've begun to fall in front of, you won't overcome him. You'll fall to him."* ¹⁴While they were still talking, the king's eunuchs arrived and took him to the banquet Esther had prepared.

Esther 6:10-14

Esther Reveals Haman's Plot

^{7:1}The king and Haman came to drink wine with Queen Esther. ²The king asked her that second day as they drank their wine,

"What's your petition, Queen Esther; I'll grant it.

What's your request? Up to half the kingdom I'll do it."

³She answered,

"If I'm pleasing to you, my king,

if it pleases you,

have my life given to me as my petition,

and my people as my request.

⁴*My people and I have been sold to be destroyed, killed, annihilated. If we'd only been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet; the trouble wouldn't compare with the annoyance to the king."*

⁵King Ahasuerus asked her, *"Who is he and where is he, that would presume to do such a thing?"*

⁶She said, *"A foe and enemy, this wicked Haman!"* Haman panicked.

Esther 7:1-6

Haman Hanged

⁷The king got up angry and went to the palace garden; but Haman stayed to beg for his life from Queen Esther. He saw that the king had determined to harm him. ⁸When the king came back, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was. The king said, *“Will he even assault the queen with me in the palace?”* As the word left his mouth, they covered Haman’s face. ⁹Harbonah, one of the king’s eunuchs, said, *“Look at the gallows by Haman’s house standing 75ft high that he made for Mordecai, who spoke good on behalf of the king!”*

The king said, *“Hang him on it!”*

¹⁰They hanged Haman on the gallows he’d built for Mordecai, and the king calmed down.

Esther 7:6-10

Esther Saves the Jews

^{8:1}That day King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther the house of **Haman, enemy of the Jews**. Mordecai came into the king’s presence because she revealed how he was related to her. ²The king took off the signet ring he’d taken away from Haman and gave it to Mordecai. Esther put Mordecai over Haman’s house.

³She spoke again to the king, fell at his feet, cried, and implored him to overturn the plot Haman had devised against the Jews. ⁴He extended the gold scepter to her. She got up and stood in front of him,

⁵*“If it pleases you,
if I’ve found favor with you,
if the matter seems proper to you,
if I’m pleasing to you,*

have it written to revoke the letters Haman wrote in his plot to destroy the Jews in your provinces. ⁶How can I endure to see the misfortune that will fall on my people and the destruction of my kin?”

⁷He told her and Mordecai,

“I’ve given Haman’s house to Esther. They’ve hanged him on the gallows because he reached out against the Jews. ⁸Now write to the Jews as you see fit in my name and seal it with my signet ring; a decree written in the king’s name and sealed with his seal can’t be revoked.”

Esther 8:1-8

⁹They called in the king’s scribes on the **twenty-third day, third month (Sivan)**. They wrote what Mordecai commanded the Jews, satraps, governors, and rulers of the 127 provinces from India to Nubia. *They wrote* to every province in its script and every people group in their language as well as to the Jews in their script and language. ¹⁰Mordecai wrote in the name of Ahasuerus, sealed it with his signet ring, and sent letters by couriers on horses sired by the royal stud. ¹¹In the letters the king allowed the Jews in every city to gather and defend themselves, to destroy, kill, and annihilate the entire army of any people or province that would attack them, including women and children, and to plunder their spoil. ¹²That could happen on one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus: the **thirteenth day, twelfth month (Adar)**. ¹³A copy of the edict

was issued as law in every province so the Jews would be ready that day to avenge themselves on their enemies. ¹⁴The couriers, hurried by the king's command, went out, riding on steeds used for the king's service. The decree circulated in Susa as well.

¹⁵Then Mordecai went out from the king in blue and white royal robes, a large gold crown, and a purple, fine-linen cloak. ¹⁶The Jews had light and honor. ¹⁷In every province and city where the king's decree went, they had happiness and joy, a festival and holiday. Many people in the empire became Jews because they had come to dread them. Esther 8:9-17

The Jews Destroy Their Enemies

^{9:1}The **thirteenth day, twelfth month**, when the king's edict was about to be carried out and the Jews' enemies hoped to gain mastery over them, fortunes reversed. The Jews gained mastery over those who hated them. ²They gathered in their towns throughout the provinces to seize the ones that tried to harm them. Nobody could stand up against them, because the dread of the Jews had fallen on the people. ³Even the rulers of the provinces, the satraps, the governors, and the ones that were doing the king's business helped the Jews, because the dread of Mordecai had fallen on them. ⁴He became greater and greater in the king's palace, and his fame spread throughout the provinces. ⁵The Jews struck their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying, and doing what they pleased to the ones that hated them.

⁶They killed 500 men in Susa, ^{7, 10a}including Haman's 10 sons:

Parshandatha,

Dalphon,

Aspatha,

⁸Poratha,

Adalia,

Aridatha,

⁹Parmashta,

Arisai,

Aridai, and

Vaizatha. ^{10b}But they didn't take any plunder.

Esther 9:1-10

¹¹That day, the number killed in Susa was reported to the king. ¹²He told Queen Esther,

"The Jews have killed 500 men in Susa plus Haman's 10 sons.

What have they done in the rest of the provinces!?

What's your petition? I'll grant it.

What's your added request; I'll do it."

¹³She said, *"If it pleases the king, have the Jews in Susa do tomorrow what the edict said for today. Have the dead bodies of Haman's 10 sons hanged on the gallows."*

¹⁴So he had it done. He issued the edict in Susa, and they hanged Haman's 10 sons. ¹⁵The Jews in Susa gathered on the **fourteenth of Adar** and killed 300 men. But they didn't take plunder.

¹⁶The Jews in the provinces came together to defend themselves and rid themselves of their enemies. They killed 75,000 that hated them, but they didn't take plunder. ¹⁷They did that on the **thirteenth of Adar** and rested on the fourteenth with feasting and celebrating. ¹⁸The Jews in Susa gathered on both days and rested on the fifteenth with feasting and celebrating. ¹⁹The Jews in the rural towns made the fourteenth day of Adar a holiday for feasting and celebrating and sending dishes *of food* to one another.

Esther 9:11-19

The Festival of Purim Inaugurated

²⁰Mordecai recorded those events and sent letters to all the Jews in the provinces of King Ahasuerus, near and far. ²¹He obliged them to celebrate the **fourteenth and fifteenth of Adar** each year, ²²the days the Jews had rid themselves of their enemies. It was a month for them that turned sorrow into happiness, mourning into a holiday. They were to make them days of feasting and celebrating and sending dishes *of food* to one another and gifts to the poor. ²³The Jews undertook to do what Mordecai had written. ²⁴**Haman** son of Hammedatha the Agagite, **enemy of the Jews**, had schemed to destroy them. He'd cast Pur (the lot) to disturb them and destroy them. ²⁵But when it came to the king's attention, he commanded by letter that *Haman's* scheme should come back on his own head; he and his sons would be hanged on the gallows. ²⁶They called those days Purim after the Pur. Because of the instruction in this letter—what they'd seen in this regard and what had happened to them—²⁷the Jews established a custom for themselves, their descendants, and their allies: to celebrate those two days according to their regulation at the appointed time each year. ²⁸Those days were to be remembered and celebrated throughout every generation, family, province, and city. The days of Purim were not to fail from among the Jews or their memory from their descendants.

Esther 9:20-28

²⁹Queen Esther, daughter of Abihail, along with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter about Purim. ³⁰*Mordecai* sent letters to the Jews in the 127 provinces, a message of peace and truth, ³¹to establish those days of Purim at their appointed times, like Mordecai and Esther had set for themselves and their descendants with instructions for their times of fasting and mourning. ³²Esther's command established those customs for Purim, and it was written in the records.

Esther 9:29-32

The Greatness of Mordecai

10:1King Ahasuerus put under tribute the territory and lands by the Sea. ²His accomplishments by his authority and strength—as well as the full account of Mordecai's status that the king advanced him to—are recorded in *The Chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia*. ³Mordecai the Jew was second to King Ahasuerus, great among the Jews, and favored by his host of relatives. He sought the good of his people and spoke for the welfare of his whole nation.

Esther 10:1-3

