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The Chapters of Esther

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Esther

SECTION OUTLINE ONE (ESTHER 1-2)

King Xerxes deposes Queen Vashti for refusing to appear before him at a banquet. A search is made for a new queen, and Esther is selected. Her adoptive father Mordecai becomes a palace official. He overhears a plot to assassinate the king, and he reports it to Esther and saves the king's life.

- I. THE REJECTION OF VASHTI (1:1-22): King Xerxes of Persia is rebuffed by his queen during one of his banquets, so he deposes her.
 - A. A banquet for his provincial officials (1:1-4): King Xerxes gives a banquet for all his princes and officials from his 127 provinces, stretching from India to Ethiopia. The celebration lasts six months!
 - B. A banquet for his palace officials (1:5-22): Apparently as a thank-you for helping with the previous banquet, King Xerxes gives another banquet for his palace officials.
 - 1. The details (1:5-9): The palace is richly decorated; all are allowed to completely gorge themselves for seven days!
 - 2. The drunkenness (1:10): On the final day of the banquet, the king becomes very intoxicated.
 - 3. The demand (1:11): King Xerxes orders Queen Vashti to parade her beauty before his drunken officials.
 - 4. The defiance (1:12): The queen refuses to obey Xerxes' order!
 - 5. The dilemma (1:13-18): The king consults his advisers concerning Vashti's defiance, and they convince him that all other women might rebel against their husbands as well.
 - 6. The decision (1:19-20): The advisers recommend that the king banish his queen.
 - 7. The decree (1:21-22): King Xerxes follows his advisers' counsel and decrees that each man should be the ruler of his own home.
- II. THE SELECTION OF ESTHER (2:1-20): A young Jewish girl named Esther is eventually chosen to replace Vashti as queen.
 - A. The search (2:1-4): In essence a "Miss Persia" beauty contest is now conducted; the winner will become Xerxes' new queen.
 - B. The sending away (2:5-8): A young Jewish girl named Esther is among those who are sent to appear before the king. She has been raised by her cousin Mordecai, who adopted her when her parents died.
 - C. The special favor (2:9): Hegai, the eunuch in charge of the royal harem, is very pleased with Esther and shows her special favor.
 - D. The summons (2:12-19)
 - 1. The process (2:12-14): Each young woman in the harem undergoes one year of beauty treatments before seeing the king. After spending the night with the king, the woman lives in a second harem and never sees the king again unless he requests her specifically.
 - 2. The pleasing (2:15-19): With help from Hegai, Esther delights the king and becomes his new queen. He gives a banquet in Esther's honor.
 - E. The secret (2:10-11, 20): Heeding Mordecai's advice, Esther does not reveal her Jewish nationality to anyone.
- III. THE DETECTION BY MORDECAI (2:21-23): Mordecai becomes a palace official and saves the king's life.
 - A. A plot revealed (2:21-22): Mordecai overhears a plot by some palace guards to assassinate the king. He reports the information to Esther, and she tells the king.
 - B. A plot recorded (2:23): Because of Mordecai's report, the guards are hanged, and the entire episode is duly recorded in the king's archives.

SECTION OUTLINE TWO (ESTHER 3-5)

Because Mordecai refuses to bow before Haman, Haman requests permission to exterminate all the Jews. When this permission is granted, Mordecai urges Esther to intervene on behalf of her people. Esther makes plans to ask King Xerxes to spare the Jews. Haman constructs a gallows to kill Mordecai.

- I. THE PROBLEM (3:1-15): Soon after Esther becomes queen, a wicked man named Haman plots to eliminate all Jews throughout the Persian Empire.
 - A. Haman the haughty (3:1-2): King Xerxes promotes Haman to prime minister; all the royal officials bow down whenever Haman passes by.
 - B. Haman the hateful (3:3-5): Haman becomes furious when Mordecai refuses to bow down before him.
 - C. Haman the heartless (3:6-15)
 - 1. The plot (3:6-9): In his rage Haman seeks the king's permission to destroy all the Jews in the empire. He promises the king 375 tons of silver if he agrees to the plan.
 - 2. The permission (3:10-11): King Xerxes agrees to the cruel purge even without payment.
 - 3. The proclamation (3:12-15): Haman orders letters sent throughout the empire, announcing that all Jews will be killed on a certain day.

- II. THE PLAN (4:1-5:14): Esther and Mordecai carry out a plan to thwart Haman's wicked intentions.
 - A. Mordecai's request (4:1-14)
 - 1. Mordecai's anguish (4:1-4): Upon learning of Haman's cruel decree, Mordecai mourns deeply and refuses to be comforted.
 - 2. Mordecai's advice (4:5-14): Mordecai informs Esther of the plot and urges her to use her royal office to help deliver the Jews.
 - B. Esther's response (4:15-5:14)
 - 1. The faith (4:15-17): Esther plans to visit the king after a three-day fast, even though it is against the law.
 - 2. The fearlessness (5:1): Risking her life, Esther enters the inner court and stands before the king.
 - 3. The favor (5:2-3): To Esther's great relief, King Xerxes welcomes her and offers to grant almost any request she might ask!
 - 4. The feasts (5:4-8)
 - a. Esther's first request (5:4-5): Esther asks that the king and Haman attend a banquet she has prepared, and they do so.
 - b. Esther's second request (5:6-8): At the banquet Esther asks that the king and Haman attend another banquet the next day.
 - 5. The fury (5:9-13): Returning home, Haman sees Mordecai and becomes furious that he still refuses to bow before him. He boasts to his wife and friends about his honors from the king, but he also tells of his anger toward Mordecai.
 - 6. The fatal advice (5:14): Haman's wife and friends advise him to build a gallows and hang Mordecai on it in the morning.

SECTION OUTLINE THREE (ESTHER 6-10)

Mordecai is honored for his loyalty, and Haman is hanged. The Jews are allowed to defend themselves against their enemies, and Mordecai is promoted. The Jews successfully defend themselves, and the Festival of Purim is established to commemorate the event. Mordecai becomes prime minister.

- I. HONORING MORDECAI (6:1-14)
 - A. The discovery (6:1-3): One night King Xerxes listens to an attendant read the historical records to help him fall asleep. He discovers Mordecai's role in saving his life and that Mordecai has never been rewarded for his deed.
 - B. The discussion (6:4-9): The king notices Haman arriving to visit him.
 - 1. Haman's aspirations (6:4-5): Haman is seeking permission to hang Mordecai.
 - 2. Haman's arrogance (6:6): The king asks Haman what should be done for someone who pleases him. Haman wrongly assumes that he is the one the king is talking about.
 - 3. Haman's answer (6:7-9): Haman tells the king to dress the person in royal robes and publicly

honor him.

C. The decision (6:10-14)

1. Haman's assignment (6:10-11): The king commands Haman to organize such an event for Mordecai!
2. Haman's apprehension (6:12-14): The humiliated Haman is warned by his wife and friends that it would be fatal to continue his plot against Mordecai.

II. HANGING HAMAN (7:1-10)

- A. The treachery learned (7:1-6): During the second banquet, Esther tells the king about Haman's plot to kill her and her people.
- B. The tables turned (7:7-10): The furious king orders Haman to be hanged on the very gallows he built for Mordecai!

III. HELPING THE JEWS (8:1-9:16): Esther still must work to save her people from being annihilated on the appointed day.

- A. The anguish of Esther (8:1-6): Esther begs the king to reverse Haman's order to kill all the Jews.
- B. The actions of the king (8:7-17)
 1. The proclamation (8:7-14): The king issues a new decree allowing the Jews to defend themselves against those who try to kill them.
 2. The celebration (8:15-17): Because of this decree, Jews throughout the empire rejoice.
- C. The avenging of the Jews (9:1-16): The Jews kill several hundred people on the appointed day, and the king grants Esther's request to let the Jews defend themselves for another day. Over 75,000 attackers are killed, along with Haman's 10 sons.

IV. HALLOWING THE DAY (9:17-10:3)

- A. The announcing of Purim (9:17-32): A special two-day festival is declared, to be celebrated each year as a reminder of the Jews' deliverance from their enemies.
- B. The advancement of Mordecai (10:1-3): Mordecai is made prime minister over all of Persia, second in power only to the king himself!