

Queen Esther Saves the Jews

A study in the book of Esther

Andrew Swango

Book of Esther - Introduction

Andrew Swango

AUTHOR

The author is unknown. Tradition (and certain parts of the Septuagint version) says it was written by Mordecai. Because of how the Greek version reads, I believe Mordecai is the author.

DATE

If the author was Mordecai, it was written during the reign of Xerxes I (483-474 BC) or Artaxerxes I (462-453 BC), depending on the identity of King Ahasuerus.

About the name King Ahasuerus, his identity is unknown. This name appears this way in the Hebrew version of Esther, which is the version found in nearly all English Bibles. The name is very similar to the Xerxes. Because of this, most scholars believe that the king of Esther was Xerxes I.

However, there are ancient sources that explicitly identify the king of Esther. The most ancient is the Greek version of Esther which is found in the Septuagint. This is version the Scriptures that Jesus, the apostles, and the early Christians used. It explicitly identifies Ahasuerus as Artaxerxes. The second ancient source is Josephus. He also said that the king was Artaxerxes. Of course, Josephus also used the Septuagint, so he probably agreed with it. It is important to note that Josephus was a well-versed historian who was appointed by the Romans. So he had the credentials as an historian to know which Persian king Esther married. Thirdly, the Syriac translation of the Bible from the second century AD, called the Peshitta, says the king was "Akhshirash" which is far closer to Artaxerxes than Xerxes. Fourthly, in the late 300s AD, Jerome translated the Scriptures into what is called the Latin Vulgate. In his translation, he also identified Ahasuerus as Artaxerxes. Fifthly, the Queen mentioned in Esther, Vashti, is also unidentified. We can compare Esther's description of Vashti with the wives of Xerxes I and Artaxerxes I. The wife of Xerxes I, Amestris, remained in power all the way into the reign of Artaxerxes I, so she cannot be Vashti. The wife of Artaxerxes I, Damaspia, is mostly unknown. She was his wife all the way until they died the same day. Damaspia could be Vashti or even could be Esther. We know so little about this Artaxerxes I's wife, it is hard to say. Really, none of the research into wives helps. Sixthly, Ezra 4:16 lists three kings of Persia. In Scripture, we have events surrounding three kings: Cyrus (Ezra 1), Darius (Ezra 6, Haggai, Zechariah), and Artaxerxes (Ezra, Nehemiah). There isn't a mention of Xerxes. This is a stretch, but I submit that this is because no significant Jewish event happened during the reign of Xerxes. Esther's life happened during Artaxerxes. Up to this point, we have not answered the question of which Artaxerxes. He could have been Artaxerxes I (462-453 BC) or Artaxerxes II (401-392 BC). It cannot be Artaxerxes II because his wife, Stateira, was killed very early in his reign while the events of Esther occurred later. If the king was Artaxerxes II, there would be more evidence to it. For example, if it was Artaxerxes II, then the author would have identified him as "II" and not "I". Since it simply says "Artaxerxes," it is more likely the first Artaxerxes.

Therefore, it is my strong belief that Esther's king is **Artaxerxes I**. This places the events of this book in **462-453 BC**.

AUDIENCE

Since the Hebrew version does not have a single reference to God, it is believed that this version's audience is the Gentiles. The reason for this is to make the book more accepting to them as a book of history and as a promotion for the Jews. But this is speculation. Of course, this is a book of history. Because of that, the audience could be anyone. Most importantly, the book of Esther explains how the Jewish festival of Purim came about. This festival was celebrated by Jews before Jesus' day even until today. Therefore, this book's audience is the Jews, explaining why they celebrate this important festival and how this festival came to be.

STYLE

The style is certainly pro-Jewish. It is written as a Jewish narrative about an historical series of events surrounding Esther.

THIS CLASS

Style

Because the Greek version contains so much more text than the Hebrew version and, in many cases, the Septuagint flows smoother, this class will focus on the Greek version of Esther. But each passage where the versions differ, comments will be provided and will be noted with *LXX*, the abbreviation for the Septuagint. Being a book of history, we will read this book as a historical account and see how God did in fact work in the lives of Jews.

Theme: God's providence under a pagan empire

Though the Hebrew version has nothing to say about God's hand in all this, this appears to be the theme. Est 4:14 famously reads: [Mordecai said,] "Who knows whether it is for this occasion you reign as queen?"

The Greek version is explicit about this theme. At the end of the book, Est 10:3a, 3e-3f, 3i-3j reads: "Mordecai said: These things were from my God.... The nations are the Gentiles gathering together to destroy the name of the Jews. And my nation, which cried out to God and was delivered, is Israel. For the Lord has saved His people, and the Lord has rescued us from all these evils. And God performed signs and great wonders, which have not happened among the Gentiles.... God remembered His people and vindicated his inheritance. And they shall observe these days in the month of Adar, the 14th and 15th day of that month. They shall gather together with joy and gladness before God throughout all generations forever among His people Israel."

Book of Esther - Outline (Greek in italics)

Andrew Swango

- 1:0a-0k** *Mordecai's prophetic dream.*
1:0m-0r *Mordecai foils first plot against the king and is hired by the king.*
1:1-22 Vashti removed as queen
1:1-4 Majesty of the King
1:5-12 Feasts of the king and queen.
1:13-18 Consequences of Vashti's crime.
1:19-22 Solution to Vashti's rebellion.
2:1-14 Esther becomes a candidate for queen.
2:1-4 The king begins search for a new queen.
2:5-11 Mordecai adds Esther to the candidates.
2:12-14 Customs of the candidates.
2:15-20 Esther becomes queen.
2:21-23 Mordecai and Esther expose a conspiracy against the king.
3:1-7:10 Mordecai and Esther versus Haman.
3:1-4 Mordecai refuses to worship Haman.
3:5-11 Haman's plan to kill the Jews.
3:12-15 Haman's decree.
3:13a-13g Transcript of Haman's decree.
4:1-3 Mordecai mourns publicly.
4:4-9 Esther's first message Mordecai.
4:10-14 Esther's second message to Mordecai.
4:15-17 Esther's third message to Mordecai.
4:17a-17i Mordecai's prayer on behalf of the Jews.
4:17j-17x Esther's prayer on behalf of the Jews.
5:1-5 Esther entreats the king.
5:6-8 Esther's first banquet for the king and Haman
5:9-14 Haman and his wife after the first banquet.
6:1-3 The king remembers Mordecai.
6:4-11 The king honors Mordecai.
6:12-14 Haman honors Mordecai.
7:1-6 Esther's second banquet where she exposes Haman.
7:7-10 Haman's demise.
8:1-17 Haman's decree amended by Mordecai's decree.
8:1-2 Mordecai promoted to Haman's position.
8:3-8 Esther and the king discuss Haman's decree.
8:9-14 Mordecai's decree.
8:12a-12k Transcript of Mordecai's decree.
8:15-17 Celebration over Mordecai's decree.
9:1-15 Victory for the Jews.
9:1-10 Victory for the Jews across the empire.
9:11-15 Victory for the Jews in Susa.
9:16-28 Mordecai establishes the holiday of Purim.
9:16-19 Celebrations that led to the holiday.
9:20-26a Mordecai establishes the holiday of Purim in a letter.
9:26b-28 Response of the Jews to this new holiday.
9:29-32 Esther and Mordecai write a second letter.
10:1-3k Epilogue
10:1-3 Mordecai's legacy.
10:3a-3j Mordecai's interpretation of his dream.
10:3k Translator's notes.

Book of Esther - Suggested 7-Week Schedule

Andrew Swango

<u>Week</u>	<u>Scriptures</u>
1	Introduction, 1:0a-1:22
2	2:1-23
3	3:1-4:17
4	Mordecai's and Esther's prayers, 5:1-5
5	5:6-6:14
6	7:1-8:17
7	9:1-10:3, 10:3a-3k

The theme of the book of Esther is God's providence under a pagan empire (Esther 4:14), even when the Hebrew version does not have a single mention of God. [Mordecai said,] "Who knows whether it is for this occasion you reign as queen?" At a time when the Jews had no power, God gives them power and proves that He is always working for His people.

Because of all the differences between the Hebrew and the Greek versions and because the Greek version mentions God often, this commentary will focus on the Greek version found in the Septuagint. The translation I will use is the Orthodox Study Bible (OSB) from 2008. If you wish to read the Septuagint, I recommend Brenton's translation from 1870 which is free and can be found on the Internet.

1:0a-0k Mordecai's prophetic dream.

- *LXX* Second year of King Artaxerxes on the first day of Nisan. A year before the conflict between the king and his wife, Vashti, Mordecai has a prophetic dream. The first day of Nisan would have been New Year's Day for the Jews. Artaxerxes became king in August of 465 BC, so this dream occurred in the spring of 463 BC. Using a Hebrew calendar converter (and I could be wrong!), I believe the date was March 29, 463 BC; it was a Tuesday. (http://www.floridajewish.com/jewish_date_converter.php)
- *LXX* Mordecai, son of Jair, son of Shimei, son of Kish. This listing is repeated in Esther 2:5. I do not believe this is exhaustive. There were more generations between Mordecai and Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Babylon than three. And I believe Kish is the same as King Saul's father.
- *LXX* Susa. Artaxerxes' father, Darius I, had made Susa the capital of the Persian Empire.
- *LXX* Served in the court of the king. Mordecai is employed by the king. This shouldn't be a surprise. Nehemiah was a eunuch, a much higher rank, to this same king. When was Mordecai appointed to the king's court? It could have happened already, or it happened because of the next story when Mordecai foils a plot against the king's life.
- *LXX* [The dream]. Mordecai himself explains his dream at the very end (10:3b-3f). At the end of the book, he wrote, "I recall the dream which I had concerning these things, and not one detail of them has failed. There was a small spring that became a river; there was light and the sun and much water. The river is Esther, whom the king married and made queen. The two serpents are Haman and I. The nations are the Gentiles gathering together to destroy the name of the Jews. And my nation, which cried out to God and was delivered, is Israel. For the Lord has saved His people, and the Lord has rescued us from all these evils. And God performed signs and great wonders, which have not happened among the Gentiles."
- *LXX* Ponder it until night. Mordecai dreamed this the night before, which is the same day according to the Jewish day. He had all day ahead of him to think about this dream. But something else happened that day.

1:0m-0r Mordecai foils first plot against the king and is hired by the king.

- *LXX* Gabatha and Tharra. We know that Nehemiah was the king's cupbearer eunuch. The duty of these men were simply to guard the courtyard.
- *LXX* King commanded Mordecai to serve in the court. In verse 1b, it says that Mordecai served in the court. It seems most likely that this is how he was appointed to this position.
- *LXX* Haman. This is the first mention of Haman. For notes about him, see Esther 3:1.
- *LXX* Bring him harm. The way this verse is worded is that Haman's first hatred toward Mordecai is because Mordecai foiled this murderous plot against the king. It seems to imply that Haman was also part of this plot. In chapter 3, because Mordecai will not obey the king and bow to Haman, it says this made Haman filled with anger. So with this story included in the Greek version, we see how Haman's hatred for Mordecai started here and will grow over time. It was Mordecai's refusal to bow to Haman that was the last straw for Haman.

1:1-4 Majesty of the King

From India to Ethiopia. Depending on the translation, Ethiopia may also read Cush. Cush, being one of Noah's sons, lived in the "land of Cush," which scholars agree was in the area of Ethiopia. At the height of Persia's Empire, which was during the reigns of Darius and Artaxerxes, the empire spanned to the western border of India and to the northern border of Ethiopia. So Cush and Ethiopia are the same.

Throne in the city of Susa. At this time, Susa was the capital of the Persian Empire. It was made the capital during Darius' reign.

Third year of his reign. The year is 462 BC.

He gave a feast. Early in Xerxes' reign, he was fighting the Greeks. Feasts like this usually only happened when the empire was in a time of peace. When Artaxerxes became king, the war between the Greeks and the Persians was at a standstill. This is another reason that the king is Artaxerxes. 180 days. The king is celebrating this feast with his highest commanders for nearly a half-year!

1:5-12 Feasts of the king and queen.

Banquet in the court. Why is there so much detail about the decorations and all the work put into this party that was located in the court? Perhaps because Mordecai worked in the king's court and he was one of the stewards who set all this up. If he is the author of Esther, then it makes sense.

For the people living in the city. Unlike the feast that lasted a half-year for all the high ranking officials, this six-day feast was for all the people who lived in Susa.

LXX Worth thirty thousand talents. The Greek version gives this amount of worth to the items. The Hebrew version says that all the items had a different design.

LXX Not in keeping with the law. The Greek version says that the king went beyond the Persian law. The Hebrew version says that there was no limit to the amount of wine that could be drunk.

LXX He ordered the stewards to do his will. The Greek version says that the stewards were to obey the king, as opposed to the law. The Hebrew version says that the stewards were to serve as much wine as anyone wanted.

LXX Mehuman. (1) The Orthodox Study Bible must follow the Hebrew names here. The first name is Mehuman, but in the actual Greek, the first eunuch listed is Haman! (2) Interestingly, the names of the seven eunuchs do not agree between the Greek version, the Hebrew version, or the Syriac version.

Harbona. Harbona is mentioned again later who tells the king that Haman had made a gallows to hang Mordecai on. In doing this, it is revealed that Harbona is on Mordecai's and Esther's side.

Seven eunuchs. (1) A eunuch is another title for a special person in the service of the king. For example, Nehemiah was a eunuch to the king, specifically, his cupbearer. It does not necessarily mean that the person cannot have any children. But there were times when both were true. (2) Because these men are listed by name, they must have been the top eunuchs. (3) Nehemiah is not listed. Perhaps he was hired at a latter time. Since he was the king's cupbearer, had he been employed at this time, he would have had one of the most important duties at these feasts!

Queen Vashti refused to come. (1) Why would Vashti refuse to go and have a chance to show off her beauty? Perhaps she did not want to abandon her own party with all the women. Perhaps she has always had the attitude of, "I'm queen, so I can do whatever I want."

1:13-18 Consequences of Vashti's crime.

Follow the law. Artaxerxes disobeyed the law by allowing wine to be drunk without limit. But now, he wants the full weight of the law to punish Vashti for disobeying him (Est 1:13). It appears to me that he loved the people and their happiness more than his own wife. (2) Of course, as we will see, the purpose to recording this event is to portray Artaxerxes as a selfish king who is not afraid to punish his own wife. When Esther is queen, will he be merciful or unmerciful to her?

LXX The nobles of the Persians and Medes. (1a) Like with the listing of the seven eunuchs a few verses before, this list does not match at all between the Greek version, the Hebrew version, and the Syriac version. In the Greek version, it does not say there were "seven" officials and it only lists three names. (1b) Also, the man who will deliver the plan to Artaxerxes, Memucan, is not the same name given here. "Memucan" is the name given in the Orthodox Study Bible, but in the actual Greek, the name in verse 14 is Malisear. This seems very strange to me that the actual Greek version, Memucan's first mention is in verse 16. In that version, we do not know anything about Memucan at all—whether he was another eunuch or another nobleman. (2) Ezra 7:14 says that Artaxerxes had seven counselors at that time. Because of all of this, I believe the Hebrew names in verses 10-14 are correct.

LXX She disobeyed the king. The Greek version says twice she disobeyed the king. The Hebrew version says that this event will cause all the women to despise their husbands.

1:19-22 Solution to Vashti's rebellion.

Memucan. See notes about the nobles in the previous section.

LXX [Speak in the language of his people]. This phrase that commands all Persian households to speak the language of the husband's people is not found in the Greek version.

2:1-4 The king begins search for a new queen.

[The events of 2:1-14 happened after chapter 1 from soon after to 3 years.]

LXX Remembered Vashti. The Hebrew version says that the king was thinking about Vashti. The Greek version said that the king never mentioned her and did not remember what she did or how he condemned her. The Hebrew version makes more sense as to why Artaxerxes' servants would offer the idea for a replacement queen, especially since they refer to her by name in verse 4.

All the provinces of his kingdom. (1) Apparently, the Persians did not have a law that said they could only marry other Persians. Here, we see the king will look throughout his entire empire for the most beautiful virgin, even if she isn't Persian. In fact, later we learn that it is not required that his new queen tell him what ethnicity she is. In short, the king isn't racist. Of course, this will work out great for the Jews because he will marry a Jew. (2) This plan is similar to a plan given to King David when he was old and could not keep warm (1King 1:1-4).

2:5-11 Mordecai adds Esther to the candidates.

His father's brother. Mordecai and Esther were cousins, not uncle and niece. This relationship is described again in 2:15. This means that Mordecai and Esther are close in age.

LXX Esther. The Hebrew version gives another name for Esther, Hadassah. The Greek version gives the name of Esther's father and Mordecai's uncle, Abihail, which is also mentioned in both versions in 2:15 and 9:29.

LXX To be his wife and she was beautiful. The Hebrew version says "daughter" while the Greek version says "wife and that she was beautiful." If Esther was Mordecai's cousin, they would have been close in age. How could Esther have been Mordecai's wife? First of all, they did not have sex. Otherwise, Esther would not have been a virgin and accepted as a candidate for the king. This relationship between Mordecai and Esther may have been similar to Joseph and Mary before Jesus was born. They were married in a legal way, but did not have sex. We might say that Esther was Mordecai's foster sibling. In Judaism, there was no legal status for what we call foster care. So being husband and wife would have been the closest way to describe Esther's and Mordecai's relationship.

Seven young maidens. This should show us the attention Esther was getting. Did the other virgins receive more than a handful of helper maidens, or just Esther? Why would one woman need seven other women to help make her beautiful? Seven maidens seems excessive for Esther, but that is exactly the point: she had excessive beauty!

Reveal her people. I doubt that revealing Esther's ethnicity to the king was wrong or unwise. When Esther reveals herself to the king much later, it is not a problem for him. Perhaps the only reason to keep it secret was because of Haman. The Hebrew version does not describe any conflict between Mordecai and Haman at this time, but the Greek version said that Haman already hated Mordecai. If Haman found out that Esther was his foster sibling, Haman might ruin everything. Because of the Greek version, this is the only explanation I have.

Courtyard of the women. This is more important later in chapter 4 when Mordecai and Esther discuss their plan.

2:12-14 Customs of the candidates.

Twelve months. (1) Twelve months of preparation and work just to spend one night with the king sounds way too extreme. And practically speaking, it is. (1a) The first six months involved oil of myrrh. This must have been a very sexual oil in ancient times. Myrrh was used by the seductress in Proverbs 7 (verse 17) and it is mentioned 8 times in the Song of Solomon. From the perspective of medicine, myrrh is an antiseptic and a painkiller. Note that both myrrh and frankincense were given to Mary and Joseph by the wise men. Both have medicinal benefits: frankincense primarily heals skin problems and myrrh primarily heals internal problems such as indigestion, ulcers, colds, asthma, arthritis, and cancer. Lastly, also like frankincense, myrrh is aromatic, being used in perfume and incense. For Esther, the amount of myrrh given to her over this time would cause her to smell very radiantly as well as make her skin very soft. (1b) The second six months involved perfumes and beauty treatments. After myrrh has softened her skin and applied as a sexual foundation of her body, I believe these six months were a time to experiment all kinds of perfumes and treatments to see which beautifications would bring out the most in Esther. Some examples of these experiments may have included: Which perfumes were best for her? Which hairstyles best complimented her hair? Which types of makeup would beautify her face the most which would not cause allergic reactions?

LXX Goes to the king. (1) In the following verse it says she will go in the evening and in the morning would go to the second women's quarters. What does it mean to go to the king in the evening and then leave his place the next morning? Notice this difference between the Greek and Hebrew version is near the end of verse 14: In the Greek it says the women go the keeper of the women. The Hebrew says they go to the keeper of the concubines. The Hebrew is more explicit as to what is happening here, though both are implying the same thing. All these women, one at a time, will go to the king so that he can have sex with

them. As each woman does this, they become a concubine to the king. (2) This practice of having concubines was not foreign to the Jews. Abraham had concubines, it was a normal practice during the time of the judges, and the three first kings of the Jews had them (Saul, David, and Solomon). Solomon disobeyed God's direct command that he should not gain many wives for himself (Deut 17:14-17); Solomon had 1000 wives or concubines (1King 11:3). Here, Artaxerxes is "trying out" women, making them his concubines, in order to find which one will be his wife. In short, the woman who pleased the king most in sleeping with him would become queen. Esther was no exception. She would have known what she was getting into and was willing to become a concubine to the king of Persia. (3) What if these women went into the king's presence but did not have sex with him? This could be possible, but it is not what is implied. This argument would be that the women just sleep in the same bed as the king. I suppose this would be similar to King David and Abishag (1King 1:1-4). And if this argument is true, then the Hebrew version is incorrect in calling them concubines and the Greek version is to be understood in generically calling them women.

LXX Bring whatever she asks. In Brenton's Greek translation, it does not say that the women could bring whatever they wanted with them to the king. It says that the officer over the women would command them to take certain things with them. In the OSB and in the Hebrew, it says that Ester could take whatever she wanted with her. So was she free to take whatever or was she required to take certain things? The answer might be found in verse 15, but the versions are consistent here. The Greek says that Esther neglected nothing they commanded. The Hebrew says she required nothing extra. Because even the Hebrew says that the keeper of the women appointed things for Esther, it seems more likely to me that Esther could only take what was commanded, that should could not bring whatever she wanted. But this difference between the versions can still be up for debate.

LXX Shaashgaz. In Brenton's Greek translation, the name is Gai. In the OSB, the name is Shaashgaz, same as the Hebrew version. Because of this difference and the difference in the previous verse between Brenton's and the OSB, it appears that the copy of the Septuagint Brenton used is different than the one the OSB used. Or, one of them has a very different way of translating. Between the OSB and Brenton's I do not know which one is correct because I do not know Greek nor do I know about the details about the modern history of the Septuagint.

2:15-20 Esther becomes queen.

LXX [Ezra 7-10]. Chronologically, Ezra 7-10 happens before Esther is made queen. The events of Ezra happen during the early parts of Artaxerxes' seventh year, March to April of the following year. The event of Esther being made queen is, according to the Greek version, in February or March of that second year. For more information, see notes at Esther 2:16 and my Chronology.

Abihail. Back in verse 7, the Greek version mentioned Esther's father's name. Here, his name is given in both the Greek and Hebrew versions.

LXX She neglected nothing. See notes at 2:13.

LXX Tenth month in the seventh year. This is another time when Brenton's translation differs from the OSB. The OSB agrees with the Hebrew in that this was in the tenth month (Tebeth). Brenton's says this was in the twelfth month (Adar). The dating of the Hebrew would be December 458 or January 457 BC. The dating in the Greek version would be February 457 to March 457 BC. Because of the reasons listed in the introduction to Esther, I will stay consistent with the Greek version. Therefore, Ezra (chapters 7-10) travelled to Jerusalem and became the governor there immediately before Esther was made queen.

LXX Feast for seven days. The Hebrew version does not specify, but the Greek version says this feast lasted for 7 days. The feast in which Vashti disobeyed the king lasted about as long. The text may be implying that this was the feast that "replaced Vashti," a feast that the queen would not ruin.

LXX [virgins assembled a second time]. This phrase does not appear in the Greek version. The Hebrew version seems to imply that Artaxerxes "tried out" all the virgins that were sent through the harem process. Then, somewhat like a beauty pageant, they appeared before the king all together for him to make his final choice. And this could have been the case in both the Greek and Hebrew versions. However, it seems odd to say this about the virgins AFTER Esther had become queen and include it with a sentence about Mordecai. It is my opinion that this second assembly of virgins did not happen. I believe that when the king spent a night with Esther, he immediately made his decision then.

LXX Fear God and to keep His commandments. The last sentence of verse 20 is different between the versions. The Hebrew version reads, "She obeyed Mordecai's orders, as she always had while he raised her." The Greek reads, "To fear God and to keep His commandments, and Esther did not change her manner of life." As Esther is now queen in a pagan empire, she was probably faced with a lot of temptations such as being served pork and ham and being taught Zoroastrianism, just to name a few. The Greek version said that she still remained faithful to God. This should remind us of Daniel because a very similar thing was said about him when he became one of the highest ranking officials in Babylon.

2:21-23 Mordecai and Esther expose a conspiracy against the king.

LXX Sought to kill King Artaxerxes. This verse is very, very different between the versions. In the Greek, these eunuchs were chiefs of the bodyguard. In the Hebrew, they were guards of the entrance. The Greek does not give their names, but the Hebrew says their names were Bigthan and Teresh and repeats their names in 6:2. In the Greek, the guards were angry that Mordecai had been promoted, which was probably from the assassination plot that he foiled in Esther 1:0 (see above). In the Hebrew, it gives no reason why they were angry.

3:1-4 Mordecai refuses to worship Haman.

Haman. (1) Both the names Haman and Hammedatha are Media/Persian names, not the names of a Canaanite. (2) As we will see, Haman is the villain of the story. Remember, in the Greek version, Haman's introduction is found in a passage before chapter 1 of the Hebrew version.

LXX Agagite/Bugean. (1) The Greek version does not say Haman was an Agagite but a Bugean. The meaning of this word is completely unknown. (2) What is an Agagite? (2a) Many have explain that Haman was an ancestor of Agag, the king of the Amalekites (1Sam 15). Amalek was a city that Saul attacked and took King Agag alive. Then Samuel proclaimed that Saul was removed as king in the sight of God. Then Samuel killed King Agag himself. From the reading 1Sam 15, it seems to be clear that Agag's lineage ended that day, that is, he had no children left. An obscure Jewish tradition said that Agag fathered a child when he was in a captive of Saul before Samuel killed him. But this seems like a stretch to me. When has a captive ever been able to have sex while in shackles? Could Haman have been a descendant of Agag, King of Amalek? I do not believe so. We cannot say it is impossible. (2b) A better explanation of what an Agagite is comes from the Sargon II, King of Assyria. After he had conquered the kingdom of Israel, he attacked the kingdom of Media. In that area, he wrote that there was a country called Agazi, also called Agag. This is more likely the place where Haman was from. Coupled with the origin of Haman's name, this fits. (3) In Mordecai's decree which is found in the Greek version, Mordecai calls Haman a Macedonian. See 8:12j for more information.

3:5-11 Haman's plan to kill the Jews.

Mordecai alone. As we will continually read in Esther, the book really paints Haman as an evil man. This is just the first example of his evilness. Not only does he hate Mordecai, he has also chosen to hate all Jews because of Mordecai.

LXX Artaxerxes' twelfth year. (1) The Hebrew version says that Haman began this in the month Nisan in the king's twelfth year. It also says that the lot was called Pur, which is not mentioned in the Greek version. Using a modern-day Hebrew calendar calculator, the Gregorian date was March, 453 BC. But I could be wrong about this. (2) The Greek version does not mention Nisan but says that the exact day fell on the 14th of Adar. This is strange because it does not seem to agree with the rest of the book--in either version. "Fourteenth" is found in 3:7 and in Haman's letter (3:13) in the Greek version. But all other places, in both versions, it says the day Haman chose was the thirteenth. Thirteenth is correct because in chapter 9 explains that the empire-wide day of conflict was the 13th, an additional day of conflict happened on the 14th only in Susa (in the countryside, the 14th was an additional day of celebration), and there was a day of celebration on the 15th everywhere. (3) Today, Purim is celebrated by fasting on Adar 13th, as Esther did, and feasting on the 14th and 15th. (4) The exact day would have been Adar 13, 453 BC. Using a modern-day Hebrew calendar calculator, the Gregorian date was Feb 19, 452 BC. It will be a Thursday. But I could be wrong about this. (http://www.floridajewish.com/jewish_date_converter.php)

Adar. There are 11 months from Nisan to Adar. All the events of Esther happen within this year (March of 453 to February 452 BC).

Ethnic group. Notice how Haman does not reveal to the king which ethnic group he had in mind. It seems obvious that Haman does not want the king to know. And this make it obvious that what Haman said about the Jews was untrue. He knew the king would not approve if he revealed who he was talking about. The Jews were a law abiding people.

Pay silver. (1) The recognized historian Herodotus write that the king's annual income was 14,560 talents of silver. Here, Haman is pledging 10,000 which is almost 70% of the king's annual income. What wealth that would come to the king! (2) This amount of money also makes Haman's plan suspicious. If he was really doing a good service to the king as he says he is, then the king would see it done without such a large pledge. The fact that Haman believes he has to sweeten the deal by also giving this much money to the king makes his plan that much more devious.

Removed his signet ring. (1) This is the ultimate sign of trust from the king. With the signet ring, Haman could write whatever law he wanted, even if it affected the king. For the king to give Haman his ring, instead of

sealing the law himself, the king shows Haman unlimited trust. By doing this, the king is basically saying, "Make the law. I don't have to approve it or even read it beforehand." So it is abundantly clear: Haman is a man of GREAT standing before the king, not only in rank but also in character. At least, what the king thinks about Haman's character. (2) Pharaoh did the same thing for Joseph (Gen 41:42). Jezebel did the same thing in the name of King Ahab in order to kill Naboth and steal his vineyard (1King 21:1-16). And God had told Zerubbabel that he would be His signet ring for the Jews (Hag 2:23).

Money given to you. The Greek version is more clear showing that Artaxerxes did tell Haman to keep the silver, that he did not have to pay it. Artaxerxes is saying that Haman can keep his pledge.

3:12-15 Haman's decree.

Thirteenth day of the first month. The exact day would have been Nisan 13, 453 BC. Using a modern-day Hebrew calendar calculator, the Gregorian date was Mar 19, 453 BC. It was a Friday. But I could be wrong about this. (http://www.floridajewish.com/jewish_date_converter.php)

LXX Royal satraps, governors. (1) We see that Haman sent this to every province in the empire. The Greek version is more explicit, saying, "from India even to Ethiopia, to a hundred and twenty-seven provinces" (verse 12). (2) Chronologically, Ezra was the governor of the Persian province of Judah at this time. What did Ezra think when this decree showed up at his door!?

LXX 13th day of Adar. (1) See notes regarding this day at Esther 3:7. (2) In a translation of the Greek version, instead of saying the 13th day, says the 1st day. I believe this is a mistranslation because "one" and "first" is not found in the Greek version. I believe "one" is implied, which would make this verse read the same as the Hebrew version.

LXX Haman's decree. Between verses 13 and 14 in the Greek version, the book includes a transcript of Haman's decree. See the next section of notes (3:13a-13g).

Drink, confusion. (1) Why Susa? Susa would have been the first city where the decree was posted. I believe it is implied that the reaction of the people of Susa was the same reaction of the entire empire. (2) What is meant by this last verse? It seems that the city was confused because the Jews were known as people who obeyed the king's laws, not as the threat that Haman made them out to be. This can explain why Susa was confused. Yet at the same time, the king and Haman sat down to drink. Here, the author paints the picture that all of Susa is disturbed by this decree and the only people who are not disturbed are Haman and the king. Obviously, Haman is drinking in celebration, and the king, who is drinking with Haman, has no idea what Haman has done.

3:13a-13g Transcript of Haman's decree.

LXX Artaxerxes. Notice how Haman writes this decree in the third person, writing as if he was the king. This may seem like Haman is going behind the king's back, but the king gave Haman his signet ring. The way Haman is writing this is not out beyond his authority.

LXX Unwavering in good will and unshakeable in fidelity. We see in this letter and throughout the whole book, Haman is so prideful and self-praising in both versions of Esther but even more so in the Greek version.

LXX A race of people full of ill-will. This is part of the reason why the people of Susa were so confused by this. The Jews being people of ill-will? That wouldn't make sense to them. Haman is lying.

LXX Blamelessly administered by us. Another of the many examples of Haman praising himself--and he even does this as if this actually came from the king!

LXX Designated all those made known to you. I believe this means that Haman included an "attachment," letters written by himself, with this decree. It appears that these letters would reveal to the empire which ethnic people "the king" is talking about.

LXX Our second father. This may have been Haman's title that he gave himself. When people would bow to him, it was this title that people gave to him. In Haman's decree, he called himself "our second father." This may be second after the king (most likely) or second after the Zoroastrian god.

LXX Fourteenth day. See notes at 3:7.

4:1-3 Mordecai mourns publicly.

Tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, sprinkled ashes. These were all signs of repentance or of mourning in the Old Testament. Daniel did the same thing when he prayed to God (Dan 9). The king of Nineveh did the same thing when Jonah preached to them (Jonah 3). It was also a common practice to wear sackcloth and ashes when fasting (Is 58:5). Here, Mordecai is doing these three things as a sign of mourning for all to see.

LXX Cried loudly and bitterly. The Greek version tell us what he cried: "A people who have done no wrong are about to be destroyed!"

King's Gate. Mordecai could only go this far. Why mention this? There may be two reasons. First, it shows that Mordecai did not visit the king about this matter. Secondly, it should that Mordecai, being a Jew, DOES follow Persian law, unlike what Haman had written in the decree.

Jewish people. (1) It seems that there were Jews living in every province of Persia. Many did the same thing as Mordecai does here. From this, we see the gravity of what is about to happen. It is a pending empire-wide genocide. And it affects ALL the Jews. (2) When the story is concluded, we see the opposite thing happens across the empire (Est 8:17). We also see that the people's respect for the Jews become even greater than it had been before. God certainly took this horrible ordeal, and turn it around, not only for good, but even for greater good.

4:4-9 Esther's first message Mordecai.

Esther's female servants and eunuchs. Apparently, though Esther had not revealed her ethnicity to Hegai, the keeper of the candidates for queen, or the king himself, her servants knew of her relationship with Mordecai. Either from Esther or because of Mordecai, her servants probably knew her ethnicity also.

Sent clothes for Mordecai. As we see in verse 5, Esther does not understand what Mordecai is doing. Esther has fear because of what Mordecai is doing. As we read on, we learn that Esther was not aware of Haman's decree.

Hathach. Nothing is known about this man except that he is the messenger between Mordecai and Esther through this whole chapter.

LXX [Verse 6.] Verse 6 does not appear in the Greek version.

Copy of the decree. This is how Esther, who has been in the palace, has not heard of this decree. As I noted earlier, Haman never told the king what he wrote or which ethnic people he wanted to destroy. Just as the king has been kept in the dark about this decree, so has Queen Esther.

LXX Mordecai said. In the Greek version, it includes what Mordecai said to Esther in this message, saying, "The days of your low estate and how you were raised by my hand; because Haman, second to the king, spoke against us for our death. Call upon the Lord and speak to the king, concerning us, and to deliver us from death." This is one of the instances where the Greek version mentions God while the Hebrew version never mentioned God anywhere in the book.

4:10-14 Esther's second message to Mordecai.

Who has not been summoned. It appears that the Persia law forbade anyone from approaching the king in the inner courtyard unless summoned. From Esther 5:1, we know that the king's throne was there. Whether this law existed to give the king privacy or to keep the official business of the empire just between the king and his counselors, we see that the punishment was the death penalty. Whatever the reason, this was a very serious crime that applied to EVERYONE except the king himself.

30 days. It has been between 4-5 years since Esther became queen. At least at this moment, it had been about a month since the king brought Esther into the inner courtyard. This does not necessarily mean that Artaxerxes and Esther have not seen each other for that time. The text only indicates that it has been that long since Esther was summoned to the king in the inner courtyard. In Esther's mind, she is thinking, "If the king has no need of me to appear in the inner courtyard with him for a whole month, then it seems that he would have no reason for me to show up now."

LXX Hathach. In the Greek version, Hathach's name appears in verse 12 and in verse 13.

Escape the fate of all the Jews. In other words, Mordecai is saying, "Just because you are in the palace, this does not give you security. You too would die because of Haman's decree."

Liberation and deliverance will come. (1) This is verse is the most powerful verse in the whole book. We see Mordecai's incredible faith that even though Haman has set in motion a plan for all the Jews to die, he believes that God will protect a remnant. Somewhere, somehow, the Jews WILL find liberation and deliverance from all their enemies. (2) This is reminiscent of the thief on the cross. Even though he faced death that he could not escape, he still had the faith to say, "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom" (Luke 23:42).

Father's house will be destroyed. In other words, Mordecai is saying, "The Jews will survive, but you, I, and our household will not survive." Mordecai has such faith that God will protect a remnant of the Jews! He shows great humility is saying that even though his family is wiped from the face of the earth, God will protect a remnant. Mordecai believes in God's promises to keep the Jews safe, even if he is not in that remnant.

For such a time as this. In other words, Mordecai is saying, "Maybe it will be through you and your position that the Jews will be liberated and delivered!" This is opposite of the idea many have today, "Someone else can do what God wants there. I cannot do that." Instead, Mordecai is open to the opportunity that Esther has. And so instead of backing away because of fear, we should be open to the talents and the opportunities

God has given us. Let no one give up because they think they are small. Let God's people say, "God has placed me right here right now so that I can bring liberation and deliverance to others!"

4:15-17 Esther's third message to Mordecai.

LXX The man. The Greek version adds that Esther sent "the man" back to Mordecai. Of course, this was Hathach (see verse 5 and following).

Fast for me. (1) There are a lot of examples of fasting in the Bible. Here, we see the details of how ALL the Jews fasted. For 3 days, day and night, they neither ate or drank. Usually, fasting was only during the day and allowed drink. Here, the Jews are really restricting themselves for three full days. (2) Why would the Jews be so committed to a difficult fast? The Scriptures connect fasting with prayer. When one fasts, it enhances his prayers to God. The Jews are committed to appealing to God as strongly as possible. They know prayer works. They add fasting to their prayers to make their prayers more powerful before God.

Against the law. Up to this point, we weren't told that if Esther approaches the king in the inner court that it is illegal. In verse 11, it just mentions that if the king extends his scepter, the person is not put to death. So what Esther is planning to do is fully illegal. It was the norm that if anyone did this, they would die. The act of the king extending his scepter seems to be a rare exception to the law. In other words, Esther is guilty if she does this, but if the king extends his scepter, she is acquitted from the punishment.

If I perish, I perish. (1) We see that Esther is not afraid to die. Her great faith is leaving the fate of her life in God's hands. Her courage in the face of what is ahead of her is inspiring. (2) Many men of great faith lived under foreign rule. We see this level of faith in Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who publicly refused to bow to Nebuchadnezzar's statue even though they knew the punishment. We see this level of faith in Daniel who left his window open when he prayed, not caring if people saw him even though he knew the punishment. We see this level of faith in Jacob when he finally loosened his grip on keeping his sons alive and allowed them to return to Egypt with Benjamin (Gen 43:14). All these men left their own fate or the fate of their sons to God. They were not afraid of death. (3) The attitude that says, "If I perish, then I perish," is taught in the New Testament also. Paul shares that this same level faith is no different for faithful Christians, "If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. Christ died and came to life for this: that He might rule over both the dead and the living" (Rom 14:8-9). He also said, "My eager expectation and hope is that I will not be ashamed about anything, but that now as always, with all boldness, Christ will be highly honored in my body, whether by life or by death" (Php 1:20). It is clear: it is better to willingly and knowingly and faithfully die for God than to run away from death because of a lack of faith, being ashamed. See also Php 1:21-24.

4:17a-17i Mordecai's prayer on behalf of the Jews.

LXX No one to oppose you. Mordecai knows the true power of God and how His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. No one can oppose God. No one can defeat God. Mordecai knows that there are times when the enemy defeats God's people, but God Himself will remain supreme. So Mordecai doesn't pray for God's sake, but for the sake of the Jews across the Persian Empire.

LXX I not place the glory of men above the glory of God. Notice that Mordecai recognizes glory in mankind. Mankind is never described as glorious in the Old Testament. Fascinatingly, Paul speaks of the glory of man (1Cor 11:7-12). We see how Paul shows three levels of glory: women, then men, then ultimately God. So mankind does have a glory since mankind has been created in God's image. Therefore, it is good to give men glory were appropriate (Rom 13:7). But no person's glory can compare to God's glory. As Mordecai correctly says, the glory of God will always be above the glory of men.

LXX I will not do these things out of arrogance. It is good and holy to put God's glory above men's glory. But Mordecai also states that he will not do this out of arrogance. Many of the Old Testament prophets spoke against the people who tried to do many things God said but did them without a godly attitude. This sinfulness came to its peak with the Pharisees. Mordecai knows the right thing to do, but he also knows the right attitude to have. He's not going to obey God above men because he is proud to be a Jew. Instead, he will obey God above men because God is supreme. Doing the right thing while also having the right attitude is incredibly important. Paul spoke a lot about this when he said that love must be the proper attitude and reason for all the good things we do (1Cor 13:1-7).

LXX Inheritance. From the time of Moses, the Israelites have been called God's inheritance. Here, Mordecai stresses this relationship between the Jews and God. They are God's own possession (Deut 7:6).

LXX Mourning into feasting. It is possible that Mordecai had a certain psalm by David in mind (Ps 30:11-12).

4:17j-17x Esther's prayer on behalf of the Jews.

LXX She humbled her body exceedingly. (1) Why did Esther humble her body? You see, the nice things in life are often the things that distract us from seeing God. But the poor things in life often bring us closer in

touch with God (Luke 16:25). The Scriptures often talk about humbling yourself in order to become closer to God both in nearly every Old Testament prophet to the New Testament (Jam 4:10, 1Pet 5:6-7). Humbling oneself doesn't just come from a change in the mind. The humbling of the body and of the actions is true humility (see example: 2Cor 7:8-11). Esther put her body into humility. Just like fasting, humbling oneself in ways like this brings one closer to God (Ps 34:18). (2) In what ways did Esther humble her body? First, she removed her royal clothing and wore lowly clothing. Second, she abandoned her fragrances and cleanliness and covered herself with filthiness. Third, she removed her possessions which brought her joy. Fourth, she ruined her hair. Esther did all these things because she wanted to be exceedingly humble before God. What did all of those things matter if she was going to die? And what does all of those things matter before God? It is possible that Esther had a certain psalm by David in mind (Ps 51:17).

LXX Make an example of the one who rules against us. Esther prays this to God, and as we see later in the story, God allows Esther to do just that to Haman.

LXX Ruler over every power. Esther knows God's rightful place: King of all kings. She doesn't need a king here on earth. She knows that God is sitting on His throne in a place higher above any manmade thing. This idea wasn't spoken about very often in the Old Testament. But Esther certainly understood what Paul later wrote about (Eph 1:20-23, Col 2:9-10).

LXX He and those agreeing with him may perish. This is also done for Esther as everyone who fights against the Jews on the day Haman choose, they are killed, as are Haman's sons.

LXX Hate the glory of the uncircumcised and foreigner. I don't get the impression that she hates people who are uncircumcised or foreign just because they are that way. Instead, I think she means hate the same way Jesus told His disciples to hate their father and mother. Just as Jesus contrasted Himself to earthly families, Esther is contrasting the Jews, God's inheritance, with the Gentiles who do not know God.

LXX Hate the symbol of my proud station. The wording Esther uses here is much more strong. She says that her queenship is just as ugly as a menstrual rag. This appears to be true hatred. She says she doesn't wear her crown or royal things when she is not in public. Esther the Queen is not the real Esther. Instead, in her mind, she is really "Esther, God's possession."

LXX Deliver me from my fear. Just because Esther is brave enough to do what she is about to do, she is honest with God and herself that she feels fear. She asks God to help her with her fear so that she can have courage before the king.

5:1-5 Esther entreats the king.

LXX Esther comes to the king. In the Hebrew version, Esther's approach to the king is two verses long. In the Greek version, it is 10 verses long.

LXX The queen collapsed. A lot of things could explain what is going on here. The one most obvious to me is that Esther, because of what might happen to her in the next few minutes, is so afraid. She was so scared and it is well known that locking your knees contributes to a lack of blood flowing to the brain. To me, this is the best explanation of what happened here. This would explain why the king held her until she recovered, that is, recovered from fainting.

LXX At the very edge of anger. We see that the king is having a very, very bad day. The Greek version shows us that despite the very bad day, God turns the king's heart around. This should be a striking contrast to what happened when Moses often visited Pharaoh.

LXX She fainted. From the first time she collapsed/fainted, I picture that Esther was already on the floor when she fainted this second time. Fainting a number of times in a row is not uncommon. There are so many factors to why Esther has fainted two times. Firstly, again, I believe she is so fearful, that she has caused irregular blood flow. Of course, compounded with the fact that she hasn't eaten or drunk a single thing for 3 days is also a big factor. In fact, she might have known how weak she felt (physically because of the last 3 days and emotionally because of what might happen in the next few moments) which might explain why she had two of her maids help her with her dress and her walking.

LXX An angel of God. Esther could mean a few things by this. The passage uses such strong language to describe the king's splendor. Esther could be appealing to the king's glory, comparing him to deity... not that Esther would even consider that the king is actually divine. She is either appealing to his glory as king of the world or she is simply implying that he is like a messenger of God (which is another definition of the Greek word). If this is what she means, then she knows that it is God who arranges all rulers of this world (Rom 13:1-2).

She won his approval. (1) This is found only in the Hebrew version. (2) This is the same idea that was expressed in 2:15 with the others in the harem and in 2:17 when the king chose Esther to be queen. The idea is that the king's affection for her right now is the same as the affection he had when he chose her above all other women across the entire empire. He is overwhelmed with special feelings of love for her.

The king extended the scepter. The king knows the law. He knows that if he doesn't do this, Esther will be killed. There really isn't a good reason for the king not to extend his scepter--unless he is having an incredibly bad day. Why does the king extend the scepter for Esther? Of course, he loves Esther. Secondly, he probably remembered Vashti at this time. Vashti refused to come when summoned. Here, Esther comes without being summoned. I'm sure the king much prefers what Esther is doing over Vashti's rebellion. Thirdly, the things that happened to Esther in the Greek version has made the king's heart go out to her. Now, was Esther's life at risk by doing this? Absolutely! But for the king to extend his scepter, this should not come as a complete surprise.

Even to half the kingdom. (1) Herod the Great said the same phrase to Salome who asked for the head of John the Baptist (Mark 6:23). (2) There are two ways to take this phrase. (2a) It could be taken literally. Esther could say, "I want half the kingdom." Then the king would give her half the kingdom and Esther would reign over her own empire. (2b) It could be taken deceitfully. Esther could ask for the half the kingdom and the king would respond, "You already have it because you are my queen." The king could find a loophole in meeting such a request. If this is what Herod meant, he would have married his grandniece to "fulfill" it. (2c) It could be taken figuratively. It is like the king is saying, "I will give you anything as long as it is in my power, and I will not give up my own kingship." (3) However a king might grant such a request may be up for dispute. But regardless of that, what is meant by the phrase is clear: the king wishes to give Esther something and he will do all in his power not to deny her request. He truly wishes to give her whatever she is about to ask for. By using this phrase, the king was bound to fulfill her request.

LXX My great day. In the Greek version, Esther begins her request to the king, saying, "Today is my special day."

Haman. Why would Esther invite Haman to this banquet? It doesn't seem logical that she would do this. I can think of two possible reasons. First, maybe it was the Persian custom for the king to always be accompanied by the second-in-command when it came to parties. Second, which seems to be what the context of the book implies, she is inviting him so that he is not suspicious of what she is doing. That is, she is puffing up Haman's pride to keep him oblivious to her real intentions.

Banquet I have prepared. Esther did not know if she was going to live or die! But we see that she had already prepared a plan. As the story unfolds, we see that Esther has put a lot of effort into her plan. She didn't spend the entire three days in humiliation and lowliness. We see that Esther also spent some time of her humiliation to make a plan to save her people. So when she goes to see the king, this banquet is already waiting for him.

Hurry. It looks like this banquet was prepared at this very time. That is, the king and Haman went to this first banquet the same hour.

5:6-8 Esther's first banquet for the king and Haman

King asked Esther. At the banquet, the king repeats his offer to Esther. Esther already had the king's offer and she could have already received salvation for the Jews. What has changed? There are two possible reasons why Esther is waiting to give her request to the king. First, she may be causing the king to be more intimate with her. That is, having these banquets is building their relationship. Perhaps the king spends all day with Haman and official business, so she is doing this to bring the king and her closer together.

Second, Esther may be doing this to show the king how important her request is to her. The more banquets she prepares, the more she wants the king to know how important this is to her.

LXX [King's words]. In the Greek version, his words to Esther are different. "What is your request, Queen Esther? Speak, and you will have all that you request."

LXX [Esther's words]. In the Greek version, Esther did not say, "And if it pleases the king to grant my petition and to perform my request..."

Tomorrow I will do. Why is Esther putting together another banquet and postponing her request to save the Jews even though the king has already promised her he will do it? See notes at the top of his section.

5:9-14 Haman and his wife after the first banquet.

LXX Mordecai did not stand up or move. This phrase does not appear in the Greek version.

LXX Haman controlled himself. (1) This phrase does not appear in the Greek version. (2) It is interesting that the book says that Haman had to do this. How quickly had his attitude, which was full of joy, turned to an attitude which was full of anger. It was such a drastic switch that Haman's first response to Mordecai would have been to fight him on the spot. However, Haman controlled himself. I'm sure he thought, "I don't have to do this now because later on, the empire will rise up and kill him and all his people later."

Sent for his friends and wife. Why is Haman calling together his friends and wife? It's nothing more than a brag party! Being honored is not enough for this prideful guy. He is so prideful, he's got to tell the world about every little "awesome" thing about himself.

LXX His many sons. This phrase does not appear in the Greek version.

LXX [Verse 12]. This verse is much shorter in the Greek version, reading, "Haman said, 'The queen has called no one to the feast with the king but me, and I am invited tomorrow.'"

Esther invited no one. Haman could probably have had wine with the king at anytime—as he did with the king the day he wrote that decree (in order to keep the king in the dark over the city's confusion). Why was this banquet so special to him? He and king were already best buddies. But this was Esther showing honor to him. Haman gets most excited when someone else honors him. I'm sure that Haman already honors himself completely. In short, he is used to hanging out with the king and giving himself honor. So when someone else shows him honor, like Queen Esther, his pride swells even more! (This might be illustrated best in how the Grinch's heart that grew three sizes in one day. "Haman's pride grew three sizes that day.")

None of this satisfies me. We see how much prideful joy Haman has when someone honors him. But all that pride and joy he feels because he has everything he ever wanted (except for bring the king himself) is nothing compared to the raw, prideful hatred he feels when someone outright refuses to show him any honor. This change from being full of joy to immediately being full of anger might be the most prideful thing in the book of Esther. I wonder, is Haman the most prideful person in all of Scripture??

Build a gallows. This idea from Haman's wife, Zeresh, is essentially saying, "Why wait until the fateful day of the Jews' destruction? Have this Mordecai killed now!

The advice pleased Haman. Knowing Haman pride for himself and hatred for Mordecai, we can ask, "Why wouldn't such an idea please him?" As the story unfolds, we will see that his hateful pride that he has exercised throughout this whole book, from the decree to the gallows, will be his undoing.

6:1-3 The king remembers Mordecai.

LXX The Lord. In the Greek version, it explicitly says that the Lord made the king not fall asleep.

Book of recording daily events. The king cannot sleep. What is a king to do when he needs help falling asleep?

How about reading something really boring like his book of daily records? Certainly, listening to a boring legal document would help him fall asleep. And as this chapter unfolds, it is easy to believe that God's providence caused his insomnia and caused the king to remember how Mordecai foiled another plot against his life.

LXX Bighthana and Teresh. Compare this with Esther 2:21-23. Here, the only difference is that the Greek version does not list the names of these two eunuchs.

Plan to assassinate. This story of their plot to assassinate the king and how Mordecai foiled it is found in Esther 2:21-23.

Nothing has been done. Esther 2:23 noted that this event was recorded in the king's daily records. But as we see here, the king never did anything for Mordecai. The king had already promoted Mordecai because of the first plot he foiled (see Esther 1:0 above). But as for the second time Mordecai saved the king's life, the king let it slip through the cracks. After listening to the boring daily records, this event perked the ears of the king. He probably remembered this occasion and is sad that this great act of Mordecai wasn't rewarded like he had rewarded him the first time.

6:4-11 The king honors Mordecai.

[Next morning]. I believe verse 3 happened late at night when the king was trying to fall asleep to the daily records, and verse 4 happened the next day after Haman had the gallows built.

What should be done. It seems that even since late last night, the king has wanted to honor Mordecai but he cannot think about what to do for him. Now that Haman is here, a man the king trusts more than anyone else, the king will ask him what should be done for Mordecai. (2) Why does the king not say this is for Mordecai? Perhaps it was God's providence to not put Mordecai's name on the king's lips at this time. Perhaps the king is looking for ideas on how to honor anyone who has done a great service for the king. Perhaps the king wants to hear Haman's honest opinion of a reward. Whatever the reason, we see incredible irony at work in the story of Esther from here forward.

Who is honored more than me. Haman, in the exceedingly prideful way he thinks and does everything, assumes that the king is talking about him. His pride is so overwhelming that if anything good is to be done to someone, it deserves to be him. It may seem logical to Haman that the king would think of him. But really, it is just his pride. Out of all the people and officials across the entire empire of 127 provinces, he automatically assumes that he himself is the greatest and that the king **MUST** be talking about him. Haman is human pride at its ugliest.

This is what is done. Look at all this. The king wants to honor someone. What does that look like in Haman's eyes? Having the whole capital city honor him as well! Being honored by the king is not enough for him. He wants to turn honor from the king into honor from the everyone! Haman's idea of being honored is basically parading around like he himself is king--but without actually taking the king's place.

For Mordecai the Jew. (1) The day before, Haman's hatred is already so overwhelming that his hatred for Mordecai overwhelms his abundant joy. Even when the queen and king gave Haman such a great honor, it was trash compared to his hatred for Mordecai. Now that the king commands Haman to do this great, great honor for Mordecai, I would have loved to see Haman's face when the words "Mordecai the Jew" came from the king's mouth! So instead of Haman getting what he really wants, now Haman has to give that very thing to the person he really hates. Oh the irony! Everyone loves a story when the bad guy gets his comeuppance. Esther is such a wonderful book! (2) From what we are told, what was the last thing Mordecai wore? Sackcloth and ashes. Now, Haman himself, who the reason why Mordecai was doing this, is now dressing Mordecai like a king. How pleased was Haman to see Mordecai so utterly lowly? Now, Haman is causing Mordecai to go from that lowly place to a kingly place. (3) Everyone in Susa knows about the coming day when the Jews will be exterminated. Everyone knew Mordecai was a Jew. He has been going through the city in sackcloth and ashes and crying out about the king's decree. Mordecai the Jew, one of the people—who "hated the Persian Empire and should be exterminated"—is parading around being honored by the king and Haman. What would the people think about this incredible sight in light of the decree about how evil the Jews are? How could the Jews be so evil if the king wants to honor Mordecai in such a kingly way? Would the people have their suspicions about the decree? (4) Remember how the king gave his signet ring to Haman to write the decree? Remember how Pharaoh did the same thing for Joseph? There is a big difference between Joseph and Haman. Pharaoh also gave kingly garments and his second chariot to Joseph (Gen 41:42-43). But Artaxerxes never put kingly garments on Haman. The signet ring is a huge sign of trust. But the kingly garments were a huge sign of royalty. How could Haman have Mordecai killed now that he is more highly honored than himself?

Do not leave out anything. Haman's idea of a perfect day is now being given to his most hated enemy. And now the king expects him to do all this for Mordecai with no exceptions. How many times did Haman yell that Mordecai is being honored by the king? I don't know. But with all of these things put together, I cannot put into words the level of emotion Haman had this day.

6:12-14 Haman honors Mordecai.

Overwhelmed with head covered. Literally, it says that Haman was mourning and covered his head. He is ashamed, devastated, and defeated. Instead of his pride, his spirit has broken. How can he show his face to anyone now that his enemy is honored above himself and by himself? How could he ever have Mordecai killed if Mordecai has now been honored as a king?

Downfall is certain. With this war against Mordecai that he has started, he, his wife, and all his friends know that he has lost it. There will be no way for him to recover. Their suggestion about having Mordecai killed on the gallows and all the work Haman did building the gallows will not happen.

Rushed Haman. Haman's family and friends are not helping him. There is nothing he can do now. Because Haman spent all day honoring Mordecai and because of Esther's second banquet, he has had no time to plan his next move in having Mordecai killed on the gallows that had been built sometime in the last 24 hours.

7:1-6 Esther's second banquet where she exposes Haman.

Haman came to the feast. I wonder what Haman's attitude was at this time. He was probably still feeling utterly defeated by Mordecai. His hatred of Mordecai stole his joy. I expect that his defeat by Mordecai has stolen every bit of joy he might possibly have. Or, Haman could be thinking, "At least I still have special honor from the king and the queen, being at a second banquet with them." Either way, Haman doesn't say anything until after he is exposed and the king leaves in anger.

Whatever you seek. A third time, the king asks Esther about her request, again saying even to half the kingdom.

Spare my life, my people. (1) Of all the things the queen could ask for, I'm sure this came as a huge surprise to the king. Surely, the queen would ask for something queenly or womanly. She may even ask for many riches. But to ask that the king spare her life!? What a shock! Esther has hosted two banquets. The king is already aware how serious her request will be. He knows this is no joke. And to request such a simple, unexpected (but important) thing, the king is floored. (2) Is this the first time the king hears that Esther is Jewish? Perhaps not. He may have already known; he just didn't know anything about Haman's decree (see notes at Esther 3:15). But this might be the first day that the king finds out that Esther is a Jew. Esther was able to keep her ethnicity secret when she went through the king's harem. She could have kept this secret from the king also. (3) In any case, this big reveal from Esther causes the king to know about all these things now.

Who is this. The king still does not know about the decree. The king either did not remember that Haman had written a decree to exterminate a race of people, or the king does not realize that the decree had named the Jews as the people to be exterminated.

LXX Adversary, enemy, evil. (1) "Enemy" does not appear in the Greek version. (2) And this is the big reveal to the king about Haman's true nature. Haman is not the trustworthy, loyal second-in-command that the king thought he was. Esther points out that he is the true opponent of the king, the true enemy of the Jews, and the true evil person before God. Esther's language is very strong, very accusatory, very condemning. Afraid. (1) What was the first thought that went through Haman's mind that caused him to be afraid? It was "Queen Esther is a Jew!? How did I not know!?" Haman never had any problem with Esther. In fact, he felt very honored when she invited him to her first banquet. But he had no idea that she would be the one to cause his plan against Mordecai and the Jews to backfire. This was shocking news to him. (2) Second, remember how Haman kept the people to be exterminated a secret? Remember how he did not tell the king that he had the Jews in mind? Remember in the Greek version how he did not mention the Jews in the decree but identified them through separate letters from himself? It seems that he purposefully kept the Jews secret from the king. Now, Haman is afraid for his life because his devious plan, which was filled with secrets, has been revealed to the king. His misuse of the king's signet ring in order to have Mordecai (and even Esther) killed is completely backfiring.

7:7-10 Haman's demise.

Went to the palace garden. The king's incredible favor of Haman has turned to incredible anger. Without saying anything, the king leaves for the palace garden. Haman believes that the king is deciding on what to do with the evil Haman. Also, the king might also be going there in order to calm down.

Beg Queen Esther. Haman knows that his life is now forfeit. Mordecai has won, and the king hates him. He begs Esther to save his life from the king. What could Esther do? Probably not much, but Haman is now very desperate. It is interesting that Haman is pleading for his life now that it is in jeopardy. Would Haman listen to the Jews that pleaded for their lives because Haman put their lives in jeopardy? I strongly doubt that Haman would show them any mercy because of his extreme hatred of Mordecai. If Haman had no mercy for the Jews, should he expect mercy from Esther the Jew? Jesus taught, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy" (Matt 5:7). Haman was not merciful, so he will not be blessed. In fact, God has caused him to be cursed with this turn of events. God has chosen this time to bring about Haman's demise. There is no escape for Haman.

Falling on the couch. Haman pleads with Esther so strongly that he falls on her couch where she reclined for her banquet. I can see him at her feet reaching toward her, pleading for mercy. He's at his wits end.

Violate the queen. But when the king returns, what does he think Haman is doing? He thinks that Haman is trying to rape Esther while he has been gone. This shows that the king no longer trusts Haman as he once did. Now, the king hates Haman and presumes the very worst about him. What a fast and drastic change in the king's opinion of Haman! Of course, Haman was not trying to rape the queen. The book of Esther is a narrative showing how someone as high as Haman could be brought so very low.

Statement left the king's mouth. We see that the king accuses Haman of attempting to rape Esther. If the penalty for entering the king's court unsummoned was death, what was the penalty for attempted rape of the queen? Haman immediately knew that his life was in its final moments.

LXX Haman's face covered. In the Hebrew version, it says that as soon as the king said this, Haman was bagged. In the Greek version, it says that as soon as the king said this, face changed. Both versions make sense based on what is happening.

LXX Harbona. (1) In the Greek version, the name is Bugathan and is one of the eunuchs. I don't know if this person was one of Esther's or the king's eunuchs. In the Hebrew version, the name is Harbona and is one of the king's seven counselors (see Esther 1:10).

Who gave the report that saved the king. What did this person know about Mordecai? First, we see that Haman's hatred of Mordecai was well known and the person knew that Haman had made it to hang Mordecai. Second, we see that this person knows Mordecai for the honor he received by being paraded around town by Haman earlier that day, all because Mordecai had saved the king's life. This has become Mordecai's reputation with everyone. Even the reputation of the Jews has come full circle in Haman's case. In his decree, he wrote that the Jews do not follow the laws of the Persians and are ill-willed people. It is revealed to the king that when it comes to people who followed Persian laws, the Jews are no exception. And it is really Haman who is ill-willed.

Hang him on it. (1) The gallows that Haman had built to kill Mordecai are now being used to kill him. This is the climax of all the irony that has happened as Haman's plan has unraveled. Everything that Haman intended for evil has turned out in the Jews' favor. God certainly is a great story-teller! (2) Ps 7:14-17, 94:12-23.

King's anger subsided. How strongly did the king hate Haman now? He regrets showing Haman that much trust and honor. He changed so drastically that the all the good things he showed Haman has turned into all bad things. That is, however favorably he once viewed Haman has now turned upside down into how hatefully is now views Haman. It wasn't until Haman was killed for the king to feel relief from all that Haman had done.

8:1-2 Mordecai promoted to Haman's position.

Awarded Queen Esther. (1) Why didn't the king put Haman's estate into the royal treasury or something like that? It appears the king recognizes that the Jews were victims here. In the king's mind, an injustice was done to Esther's people, so he gave Haman's estate to Esther. (2) What was included in Haman's estate? Literally, the Hebrew word is "house," and the idea in Greek is that it was everything under Haman. Did this include Haman's position in the empire? Because of the signet ring, yes. Did this include Haman's property with the 10,000 talents of silver Haman had pledged to the king? I believe so. From Mordecai's decree (Esther 8:12q), we learn that Haman's immediate household were hanged with him. As for Haman's 10 sons who died on that fateful day (Esther 9:10), the best way to explain this is that they were already old enough to be on their own. So they were outside of Haman's household. (3) What happened with Haman should remind Jews of [Prov 13:22](#).

Mordecai enters the king's presence. (1) This might be the first time Mordecai sees the king. But since Mordecai was already stationed in the royal court, this did not have to be the first. (2) We know this is the first time the king sees Mordecai knowing that Esther is his foster sibling. The king now sees how loyal Mordecai and Esther have been. Mordecai foiled two plots against the king, the second plot being revealed through Esther. The king realizes that his connection to the Jews is closer than he thought. As of now, he personally knows two outstanding Jews.

Signet ring. The king now trusts Mordecai with Haman's position. Mordecai becomes second-in-command of the Persian Empire.

8:3-8 Esther and the king discuss Haman's decree.

Begged him. First, Haman begged Esther to spare his life. Now, Esther is begging the king to spare hers.

Sadly, just as Esther did not grant Haman's begging, the king cannot grant Esther's.

Gold scepter. In verse 4, we have the king extending his golden scepter to Esther a second time. When she went into ask this of the king, did she go to him unsummoned again?

Let it revoke. Why couldn't the king revoke Haman's decree? Because no Persian law could ever be revoked. The king mentioned this in verse 8. And this is explained three times in Daniel 6 (6:7-8, 12, 15) when king Darius I signed the law that people could only pray to him for 30 days. Darius wanted to let Daniel go free, but he had to throw Daniel into the lion's den because the law could not be revoked.

Write in the king's name. (1) Just like with Haman, the king gives Mordecai and Esther the authority to write a new decree. It seems like the king is very trusting with whomever is second-in-command. Perhaps he realized that he didn't know Haman like he thought. Because of Esther's and Mordecai's proven commitment to the king (such as when Mordecai foiled two plots against his life), he knows he can truly trust Mordecai and Esther. (2) What the king is doing is all he can do for them. He cannot revoke Haman's decree which was written in the king's name. But he can allow them to write a new decree that could help the Jews in spite of Haman's decree. So Mordecai, now second-in-command, will write a decree of his own in the king's name.

8:9-14 Mordecai's decree.

LXX [Greek version]. From 8:9 through the rest of Esther, there are many, many differences between the Greek version and the Hebrew version.

LXX Month. When did Mordecai write his decree? From Esther 3:7 in the Hebrew version, we see that Haman began his plot and the writing of his decree in the first month of the year, Nisan. In the Hebrew version here, it says that Mordecai's decree was written about two months later, on the 23rd day of Sivan, the third month. However, in the Greek version, it says that this was the 23rd day of same month, Nisan. So either all the events from Esther 3 until now happened within a week or two, as the Greek version says, or these events happened over two months, as the Hebrew version says. If the Hebrew version is correct, where did those 2 months come from? It seems most likely that the two months would have passed between 8:2 and 8:3 or between 8:8 and 8:9. From the way the book of Esther is written, I believe the Greek version is correct... that all the events of chapter 3 through chapter 8 happened within one month's time.

LXX Mordecai commanded. (1) In the Greek version, it says the king commanded, not Mordecai. (2) The meaning of this verse is that the decree was written down by the royal scribes, but the command came from Mordecai and was written in the king's name.

LXX 127 provinces. Instead of giving that number, the Greek version says, "several provinces." The 127 provinces is mentioned in the first sentence of Mordecai's decree (Esther 8:12b)

LXX According. "The edict was written for each province in its own script, for each ethnic group in his own language, and to the Jews," is not found in the Greek version which simply reads, "According to their dialects."

LXX Horses. "Who rode fast horses bred from the royal racing mares," does not appear in the Greek version. Jews. As we see from Mordecai's decree, he did not revoke Haman's decree. He couldn't. What he wrote was to allow the Jews to defend themselves against anyone who still wishes to follow Haman's evil decree. For a copy of the decree see the next section (8:12a-12k).

LXX Every city. The Hebrew version reads, "The right to assemble and defend themselves, to destroy, kill, and annihilate every ethnic and provincial army hostile to them, including women and children, and to take their possessions as spoils of war." The Greek version reads, "And to help each other, and to treat their adversaries, and those who attacked them, as they pleased."

LXX Copy of the text. In the Greek version, it has a copy of Mordecai's decree (see 8:12a-12k). In the Hebrew version, verse 13 simply reads, "Issued as law throughout every province, was distributed to all the peoples so the Jews could be ready to avenge themselves against their enemies on that day."

Couriers rode in haste. Why mention that the couriers rode in haste to share Mordecai's decree? (It was mentioned again in the Hebrew version in verse 10.) The Hebrew version says there are still 9 months until the day Haman chose. The Greek version says there are still 11 months until that day. The only reason I can think of is that this decree from Mordecai would bring HOPE to all the Jews across the empire. What would have Ezra thought of this decree when it arrived in his province of Judah? Perhaps this is why we don't hear anything from Ezra about this. It was either the same month or two months that these two decrees arrived. The Jews in Judah would certainly have mourned over Haman's decree. But from the arrival of Mordecai's decree, they knew they had nothing to worry about.

Issued in the fortress of Susa. Why mention this? I can imagine that it was Mordecai himself who posted this decree in Susa. As Haman's decree was posted and caused Mordecai to grieve so much in sackcloth and ashes, he probably felt very good and blessed to be able to post his own decree right next to Haman's.

8:12a-12k Transcript of Mordecai's decree.

LXX Plot against their own benefactors. Mordecai is saying that Haman was given his position by the king. This caused him to become prideful in it. He eventually plotted against the king who had given him his high position. Remember when Mordecai foiled the first plot (Esther 1:0m-0r)? When Mordecai did this, it was the first mention of Haman hating Mordecai. The implication there, and here, is that Haman really did want to see the king assassinated. It is not farfetched to believe that Haman also organized the assassination plot of Bigthana and Teresh (Esther 2:21-13).

LXX All-seeing God. Here, Mordecai, being a very holy man of God, is not afraid to speak about his God to all of the empire. Perhaps the king or the people would assume that Mordecai is talking about the god of Zoroastrianism. But as we see later when many of the people convert to Judaism, I believe many Gentiles across the empire saw something special in this "all-seeing God" Mordecai speaks of. See further down.

LXX Haman. Here is Mordecai's chance to reveal the true nature of Haman to the empire. Instead of keeping things somewhat secret as Haman had done, Mordecai is not afraid to tell the empire the truth about all that has happened.

LXX Macedonian. Mordecai calls Haman a Macedonian. Haman's name is a Medio-Persian name, so it seems unlikely that he would have actually been Greek. But as Mordecai shows, he said that Haman was not a native Persian. He must have been a Mede ethnically. Given this time in history, if the Persian had a single enemy, it would have been the Greek, namely Athens. Calling Haman a Macedonian may be the same thing as calling him a foreign traitor. It is not that Haman was Greek, but "Macedonian" was probably a Persian insult that the whole empire would understand.

LXX Our father. See notes from Esther 3:13f.

LXX Guide Macedonians to victory. I do not know if what Mordecai is saying is true or not. If false, Mordecai would be writing lies which does not fit with his character. Instead, it makes more sense that what Mordecai is saying is true. Perhaps when Esther and Mordecai received Haman's estate, they learned that Haman was also organizing another assassination of the king so that he would become king. In this way, what Mordecai is saying is true, the throne would no longer belong to a Persian but a foreign Mede. He again calls him Macedonian to drive home the idea that Haman is a traitor.

- *LXX* Most High, Most Mighty, Living God. This is a bold thing for Mordecai to write. The official religion of Persia was Zoroastrianism. Here, he is saying that the God of the Jews is the true, great God. He does not hide that he is a Jew and that his God is not the god of the Persians. So again, this is quite bold of Mordecai. What faithful courage!
- *LXX* Disregard the letters of Haman. Mordecai cannot revoke Haman's letter. What Haman wrote is protected by law and will happen. Mordecai hopes that by his decree, Haman's decree is made voluntary. Not only does Mordecai make Haman's decree voluntary but shares that it is better not to follow it. We see later that there are some across the empire that still take up arms against the Jews on that day.
- *LXX* Along with his whole household. Now, it is not until Esther 9:10 that Haman's sons are killed. The best way to explain this is that Haman's children were old enough to already be on their own. If this was the case, Haman's household that was killed with him would have included Zeresh, his wife, and any servants he had. This would explain how Haman's estate was given to Mordecai and Esther... because Haman's immediate household had died with him.
- *LXX* Join in supporting them. Mordecai even encourages the people to assist the Jews against anyone who attacks them. Because many of the Gentiles converted to Judaism, many of them probably stood beside them on this day. No wonder the Jews won a huge victory against their enemies. They had gained a lot of friends (and proselyte brothers) on that day!
- *LXX* Celebrate this outstanding day. Mordecai knew that God would deliver the Jews just as God has delivered Esther and himself. Mordecai knows beyond any doubt that God's protection is on him and God's people. So even before the fateful day, Mordecai tells the empire to prepare for a new national holiday. However, historically, there is no historical evidence that Purim was celebrated by the Persian people.

8:15-17 Celebration over Mordecai's decree.

Clothed in royalty. Haman never received this. But now, we see that Mordecai is even more honored by the king than the king had honored Haman.

LXX Blue and white. These colors are not given in the Greek version.

LXX Find purple linen. The Hebrew version says this was a robe. The Greek version says this was a diadem. Mordecai is already wearing a golden crown. For him to also wear a diadem made of linen seems weird. I believe the Hebrew version is correct here.

Susa shouted and rejoiced. Remember how Susa responded when Haman posted his decree? Because of the capital city's response with Mordecai's decree, we see that what Mordecai had to say about the Jews made much more sense to the people. The people are glad that the wrong has now been set right.

LXX And joy and honor. This phrase does not appear in the Greek version.

LXX Became Jews. The Greek version explicitly said that the Gentiles were circumcised.

Professed to be Jews. (1) Because of all the things that have happened because of Haman and Mordecai, the whole empire sees what the God of the Jews can do. Many gained a fear of God and became Jews. As with all the events of the book of Esther, the most important passage was Mordecai's words to Esther about being put in her place by God. But this verse is the most important purpose behind everything that has happened. We see that God saved the Jews, yes. But we also see that through God's providence, God's actual glory got to shine through to the whole empire under Artaxerxes I. (2) God is certainly all about causing events to happen so that people will bring more glory to Him. Sometimes, God will cause His people to go into captivity so that they do not bring reproach on God's glory. Other times, God will cause His people to ascend to the leadership of empires (like Daniel) so that everyone will see God's incredible glory. And many of those people will see it for the very first time.

9:1-10 Victory for the Jews across the empire.

LXX [Verse 1-10]. (1) This whole passage is very, very different in the Greek. This is the Greek version of Esther 1:1-10. "For in the twelfth month, on the thirteenth day of the month which is Adar, the letters written by the king arrived. In that day the adversaries of the Jews perished, for no one resisted [them], through fear of them. For the chiefs of the satraps, and the princes and the royal scribes, honored the Jews, for the fear of Mordecai lay upon them. [Verse 5 not there.] And in the city of Susa the Jews slew five hundred men: both Pharsannes, and Delphon and Phasga, and Pharadatha, and Barea, and Sarbaca, and Marmasima, and Ruphaeus, and Arsaesus, and Zabuthaeus, the ten sons of Haman the son of Amadatha the Bugaeon, the enemy of the Jews, and they plundered their property on the same day." (2) "The letters written by the king arrived." The letters arrived in Adar? But Mordecai sent them out either 9 months or 11 months before this day. It would NOT have taken that long for the letters to arrive, especially since Haman's letters had arrived across the whole empire in a matter of days. The LXX is cannot be correct here. (3) "Order of the king." In verse 4 of the Greek version, it says that the king was honored in this way. The Hebrew version says that Mordecai was honored in this way. (4) "They plundered." In verse 10 of the

Greek version, it says that the Jews plundered their enemies that day. In the Hebrew version, it says the Jews did not take any of the spoils from the people they killed.

Thirteenth day of Adar. The exact day would have been Adar 13, 453 BC. Using a modern-day Hebrew calendar calculator, the Gregorian date was Feb 19, 452 BC. It was a Thursday. But I could be wrong about this. (http://www.floridajewish.com/jewish_date_converter.php)

The opposite happened. The fateful day of the Jews have arrived! Haman's decree is in effect. And Mordecai's decree is in effect. Here we see what happened. The Jews are victorious! Through God's providence, Esther and Mordecai have saved the Jews!

Afraid of Mordecai. Well, Mordecai is now second in command. Of course all the governors would not want to become an enemy of Mordecai. If they did fight the Jews, then perhaps Mordecai or the king would see that as an act of rebellion and send an army to that province.

They did what they pleased. What could this mean? Maybe it means that the Jews took pleasure in killing their enemies. Maybe it means that the Jews did whatever they wanted to their enemies, whether killing them, allowing them to run away, or capturing and humiliating them. I don't know what this means. Because the whole context is about killing their enemies, my best guess is that this verse means, "The Jews had the results they wanted against their enemies: full victory."

Ten sons of Haman. The Jews killed Haman's children with their names listed. Apparently, they had so much hate for the Jews, perhaps because of Mordecai or perhaps because of the Jews getting their father killed or both.

LXX They did not seize any plunder. The Greek version says that they did seize all the plunder. It carries the same idea as when the Israelites left Egypt, when they plundered the Egyptians. Here, they plundered those who hated them and attacked them. It is worth noting that verses 15 and 16 in the Greek version say that the Jews did not plunder their enemies at that time. However in the Hebrew version, it says they did NOT take any plunder in all three of these verses. Why wouldn't the Jews plunder their fallen enemies? After all, Esther and Mordecai plundered Haman's household after he died. Because the Jews did not take any plunder on the next day (10:15) and because the Jews outside of Susa did not take any plunder (10:16), I believe the Hebrew is correct here.

9:11-15 Victory for the Jews in Susa.

The rest of the provinces. The king cares for Esther and her people. He knows how the fight has gone in the city. He wants to know if the Jews have had the same success throughout the rest of the empire.

May the Jews have tomorrow. I find this section interesting. Did Esther know that there would be another uprising against the Jews on the next day? Was the hanging of Haman's 10 sons what caused more men to attack the Jews the next day? We see in verse 17 that the Jews throughout the rest of the empire did not have a second day of fighting, only Susa. So I believe it was the second reason... that the hanging of Haman's sons brought out more rage in those who hated the Jews and it caused a second uprising on that second day.

The king gave the orders. Why would the king give this order? We can see from how he has treated Esther that he knows that Esther was going to be the victim here. He is trying to make things right. We also know that Haman's evil character caused the king incredible hatred. If Haman's sons still want to follow in their father's plan, then the king is going to hang them to. He is trying to make things right.

Fourteenth of Adar. Susa was unique and had a second day of fighting between the Jews and their enemies.

We see later that this becomes part of the Purim festivities. Today, Purim is celebrated on Adar 14 by all and for those who live in ancient, walled cities, they celebrate an additional day on Adar 15.

They did not seize any plunder. See note in the previous section.

9:16-19 Celebrations that led to the holiday.

The rest of the Jews assembled. This is the report that came back to Susa from all over the empire. We see that all the Jews had the same success as the Jews in Susa.

LXX 75,000. The Greek version reads 15,000. There are two ways to look at this. First, the Jews killed 75,000 which meant the Jews were really victorious over their enemies! Second, the Jews did not kill that many because most people across the empire became sympathetic toward the Jews! Most scholars say that 15,000 (Greek version) is more in proportion. I agree.

They did not seize any plunder. Just like with the Jews in Susa, the Jews across the empire did not take any spoils from the people they killed.

LXX Assembled on the fourteenth. In the Greek version, verse 18 is shorter. It reads, "And the Jews in the city Susa assembled also on the fourteenth day and rested; and they kept also the fifteenth with joy and gladness." This says that the Jews rested on the 14th. However, we just saw in verse 15 that they did not rest but assembled to fight a second day. The Greek is incorrect.

Rested on the 14th. It was only in Susa that a second day of fighting occurred (probably because Esther had Haman's 10 sons hanged). This became the day that the Jews outside of Susa celebrated Purim. This difference is explained in verse 19.

Rested on the 15th. This became the day that the Jews in Susa celebrated Purim.
Send gifts to one another. See note in next section.

9:20-26a Mordecai establishes the holiday of Purim in a letter.

Fourteenth and fifteenth days. Today, all Jews celebrate Purim on the 14th day. Jews who lived in an ancient, walled city celebrate the 15th also.

Send gifts to one another and the poor. Today, Jews share food and drink with each other. As for their gifts to the poor, these acts of charity are not viewed as voluntary but an obligation (tzedakah) as part of this holiday.

Mordecai had written them to do. Sure, this holiday is called Purim. In 2Maccabees 15:36, which occurred about 290 years later, this day is called Mordecai Day.

LXX Macedonian. In the Greek version, it calls Haman the Macadonian where the Hebrew version has Agagite. See note at 8:12j for more information.

LXX Hang Mordecai. In the Hebrew version, verse 25 reads, "But when the matter was brought before the king, he commanded by letter that the evil plan...." The Greek reads, "Also how he went in to the king, telling him to hang Mordecai, but the evil plan...."

LXX Pur, the lot. This is the second time it is mentioned, along with Est 3:7. This is not mentioned in the Greek version.

9:26b-28 Response of the Jews to this new holiday.

They would not fail to celebrate. There is no mention of Purim in the New Testament, but we see that Jews still celebrate this great holiday today.

9:29-32 Esther and Mordecai write a second letter.

Wrote this second letter. The first letter Mordecai wrote was the letter asking all the Jews to fast and lament for Esther as she was about to go into the king's inner court and ask for redemption. This second letter, which is from 9:20-26a. Because the Greek version has copies of Haman's and Mordecai's decrees, I'm surprised that it doesn't have a copy of Mordecai's letter to the Jews, commanding them to observe Purim.

Fasting and Lamentation. This was for the three days before Esther went to see the king.

LXX [Verse 30-32]. Verse 30-32 is completely different in the Greek version. The OSB's translation reads, "And Mordecai and Queen Esther established it for themselves, establishing it at that time according to their soundness of mind and their purpose. Esther established it by a command forever, and it was written for a memorial."

10:1-3 Mordecai's legacy.

Historical records of the Kings of Media and Persia. There are many instances of a Mordecai (Marduka or Marduku) in Persian records, starting from the time of Darius I. They span enough time that there could have been up to four men named Mordecai in the service of Persian kings.

10:3a-3j Mordecai's interpretation of his dream.

LXX [Interpretation]. Mordecai writes this as the interpretation of his dream from the beginning of the Greek version. It is [1:0a-1:01l](#).

LXX God made two lots. Where Haman threw one lot for the day on which he would destroy the Jews, God threw two lots. The lot for the Jews brought them vindication. The lot for the Gentiles brought to see the Jews as the people of God.

10:3k Translator's notes.

LXX Fourth year of Ptolemy and Cleopatra. When one looks at who this might be, it quickly becomes confusing. There are seven different couples who ruled Egypt who had the names Ptolemy and Cleopatra. The possible years that this book was translated from Hebrew to Greek are: 200 BC with Ptolemy V, 176 BC with Ptolemy VI, 140 or 122 BC with Ptolemy VIII, 103 BC with Ptolemy X, or 76 BC with Ptolemy XII.