

JULY 17, 2022



SUMMER SERIES: STORYTELLING

HADASSAH & MORDECAI

ESTHER 7:1-6, 9-10; 9:20-22

When do you want to just blend in—maybe in your days of youth or in your career? What if something happens to make you question the compromises you're making with yourself? All human relations call for compromise. The book of Esther contains an amazing story of assimilation, resistance, vengeance, violence, and uneasy victory. We enter the story that the Jewish holiday of Purim comes from to further understand why the church keeps this book in our collection of inspired texts.

Esther 7:1-6, 9-10; 9:20-22

SETTING

CHARACTERS

- **CULTURALLY VULNERABLE - THREE WAYS**
 - Orphan in a family/clan-identity world
 - Woman in a man's world
 - Minority Jew in the Persian Empire

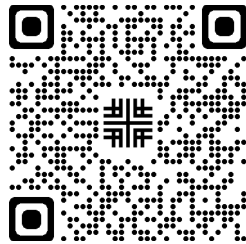
Those that have experienced being a minority, ethnic, religious, sexual, etc. can learn from this Jewish struggle throughout the ages. "Living as a minority community, dependent on the attitude and actions of the majority, has kept Jews always in a precarious position" (Eugene F. Roop, Esther, 161).

TENSIONS? CONTROVERSY AND CONCERNS

- Interpreters have questioned almost everything about Esther.

CONNECT

- Need Prayer?
- Ask Questions
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- Make Comments
- Meet with Pastor Shel
- Sign-up for our weekly e-newsletter
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STRUCTURE AND OUTLINE (Roop; <https://bibleproject.com/blog/esther-secular-sacred/>)

- A Glance at the Whole
 - Narrative movement: problem - action - resolution
 - Dominant plot Folk lit: clash between Mordecai and Haman.
 - Two royal officials' fight escalates to a war against a whole people.
 - Violence of the violent is turned on its head
 - Chiastic structure. Full of symmetrical elements , except one central pivot element. (See 169).
 - Bible Project: "A chiasm is a literary technique in a piece of literature (narrative or poetry) designed with a symmetrical pattern that highlights certain themes and points of detail as being really significant."

A The splendor of the Persian king + Two banquets [*Esther 1:1-8*]

B Esther becomes Queen + Mordecai saves the king [*Esther 1:9-2:20 + 2:21-23*]

C Haman elevated to power [*Esther 3:1-6*]

D Haman's decree to destroy the Jewish people [*Esther 3:7-15*]

E Esther and Mordecai's plan to reverse the decree [*Esther 4:1-17*]

F Esther's first banquet + Haman plans Mordecai's execution [*Esther 5:1-8 + 5:9-14*]

X - PIVOT: Haman humiliated & Mordecai exalted [*Esther 6:1-14*]

F' Esther's second banquet + Haman executed instead of Mordecai [*Esther 7:1-10*]

E' Esther and Mordecai plan to reverse the decree [*Esther 8:1-8*]

D' Mordecai's counter-decree to save the Jewish people [*Esther 8:9-14*]

C' Mordecai elevated to power [*Esther 8:15-17*]

B' Queen Esther and Mordecai save the Jewish people [*Esther 9:1-19*]

A' Two feasts + The splendor of Mordecai [*Esther 9:20-32 + 10:1-3*]

SCENE 1: Tension in the Royal Court *Esther 1:1-3:6/Opening 1:1-3:6*

- **Episode 1** *Esther 1:1-2:20*: Conflict in the family
 - Crisis of Queen Vashti *Esther 1:1-22*
 - Esther Selected *Esther 2:1-20*
- **Episode 2** *Esther 2:21-3:6*: Clash of two royal courtiers: Mordecai and Haman
 - Conspiracy Exposed *Esther 2:21-23*
 - Conflict Mordecai and Haman *Esther 3:1-6*
- **Esther 3:6** Pivot with Haman's decision to destroy all the Jews

SCENE 2: Action/Reaction *Esther 3:7-7:10*

- Palace events caused by the crisis
 - *Esther 3:7* "in the first month"
- **Episode 1** *Esther 3:7-4:17* Haman and Mordecai are recruiting support in the Royal family to destroy each other.
 - *Esther 3:7-15* Haman's Plot
 - *Esther 4:1-17* Response of Mordecai
- **Episode 2** *Esther 5:1-14* with another time stamp: "On the third day, Esther put on her royal robes"
 - Esther's initial intervention in the crisis

- Concludes with Haman believing he will win *Esther 5:9-14*
- **Episode 3** *Esther 6:1-13* "On that night, the king could not sleep" *Esther 6:1*
 - Parade to honour Mordecai
 - Haman's wife, Zeresh, believes Haman has lost.
- **Episode 4** *Esther 6:14-7:10* confirms Zeresh's fear *Esther 6:14* "while they were still talking"
 - Esther's second and decisive intervention
 - *Esther 7:10* Haman is executed

SCENE 3: Resolution + Celebrations *Esther 8:1-9:32 "on that day"*

- Edict is issued to destroy
- But second audience of Esther with the king directly
- Self-defense against all enemies
- Elevation of Mordecai to Haman's former position
- *Esther 9* "now in the twelfth month" Jewish self-defense and Purim
- **Epilogue** *Esther 10:1-3*: Esther fades, Ahasuerus and Mordecai stand side-by-side "For Mordecai, the Jew was next in rank to King Ahasuerus"
 - Victory

TELLING AND ZOOMING IN

Esther 7:1-6 (New English Translation, 2ed)

Esther 7:9-10 (New English Translation)

Esther 9:20-22 (New English Translation)

MEANING AND MESSAGE

"...*Esther cannot be read simply as a story of human foibles and political cunning (Clines, 1984a: 270). The narrative does not see the world as a place where God intervenes to reverse misfortune, nor as a place where God is absent or uninterested. In Esther, the drama of life is the realm where God's will works itself out in the course of human events and in cooperation with all those of goodwill" (Roop, 167).*

- **Power Dynamics**
- **Executive Leadership Failures**
- **What makes for good leadership?**
 - Esther and Haman - both are skilled political operators
- The Biblical tradition generally holds up decentred nodes of power over and against centralized power in kingdom or king. Yet we are still challenged to live and operate in and around all kinds of political arrangements.
- **Strategies of Use of and Subversion/Resistance to Power**
- **Minority Politics**