

## Hanging Haman

- When we last saw Haman, he was being hurried to the feast that had been prepared for him and the King. The second feast. You remember that the king gave Esther favor when she appeared in the inner court uninvited, even telling her that he would give her whatever she wanted, even up to half of his kingdom. Esther said that if it pleased the king, which she knew it would, she would like for him to come and buffet his body at a sumptuous feast she had already prepared. Oh, and bring Haman along as well. The king was delighted to do just that, and Haman was beside himself with excitement. They ate and drank and then the king said, Esther, my lovely queen, now you must tell me what your request is. I want to give you something to show you my love. Esther said, "If I have found favor in your sight, please come to another feast that I will prepare for you tomorrow. And then I will share my request. Oh, and bring dear Haman long as well, if you would!" Haman could not believe it. Another feast. With just him. He was surely the guest of honor, and tomorrow he would get what was coming to him. He celebrated his good fortune by going home and building a gallows, 75 feet high, and made plans to hang Mordecai on it the very next morning, so that HE would get what was coming to him. He would teach that pesky Jew that those who refuse to bow to Haman pay the highest price. When he appeared the next morning to ask the King's permission, who did the king want to see right away?! Haman! The king hadn't slept a wink all night, so excited about being able to show honor to the man in whom he delights, and called Haman to ask how best to do that. Haman, thinking the king wanted to honor him (who else?!), laid it on thick: royal robes for the man's back, a royal crown for the man's head, a royal horse for the man to ride on, and a royal servant who will yell out, "THIS is what is done for the man whom the king delights to honor!" The king's face lit up and told Haman that was perfect. What a good Prime Minister you are, Haman. You really know how to help your king. Now, go and do all of that for Mordecai. Haman the humiliated did just that, and then slunk (slinked?) back to his house where, no sooner had he told the story of what had happened, the servants of the king were there to take him to the second feast. Well, at least he had THAT. He was still the only man in the empire who was being invited to dinner with the king and queen. He would go there and drown his sorrows. "Sorrows be hanged! It is a day to be lifted up!"
- So, here we are. Did you think this day would ever get here? I'm not talking about the day after the wedding, but the day when Haman is finally taken out. I'm not sure we are supposed to think of it that way, to be gleeful about someone's death, but it points to an innate sense of justice, or right and wrong that each of us was given at conception. God is just, and we are created in His image.
- Let's look at this story today, it is very straightforward, under these headings: Esther's plot, the king's fit, and Haman's fate.
- **Esther's plot**
- Esther went from clueless to resistant to downright shrewd in the space of just a few days. Remember? When she first heard that Mordecai was in sackcloth and ashes, (chapter 4) she sent him a change of clothes. She had no idea what was going on, so isolated she was within her own kingdom. Then when she heard of the wicked plot to have every Jew in the kingdom eliminated, and Mordecai's desire that she go make an appeal to the king, she was resistant. "Don't you know it is against the law to go into the inner court without an invitation? I will be killed!" Then **when she decided that her obedience was more important than her life, she made a plan**. And she obviously plotted a strategy. Esther was not just a pretty face! She was a brilliant strategist. Think about it. Why did Esther wait until the second feast before she told the king what was on her heart? As soon as he held out the golden scepter to her in chapter 5, she could have told him everything. But she didn't. She asked him to a feast. And then to a second feast. Two reasons that I can see, at least I think they might be part of her strategy.
- First, she knew that the king was the one who issued this decree in the first place. Haman was guilty, but Ahaseurus was responsible. And now there have been three times the king has said before

witnesses, “Whatever you ask, I will do it. Even up to half my kingdom.” Second, she has served her husband and honored him two days in a row, given him good food and drink. This was not manipulation, it was wisdom. Manipulation is from a heart of deception, and Esther has no intention of deceiving her husband. Rather, she is helping her people by helping the king see what has been done through Haman’s deception.

- Notice also how skillful Esther is, even in the way she announces the request. She has a selfless approach, humble and gentle: “If I have found favor, and if it please the king.” She doesn’t come to tell the king but to ask. Next, she appeals to his protective instincts as a man and as her husband: “Let my life be granted me for my wish.” (My request, dear king? That I be allowed to live!) Next, she reveals who she is and who her people are, and that they have been sold to be destroyed. What does she mean that they had been sold? It was a skillful way of letting Haman know what was going on. Remember he had assured the king when he was selling him the idea that the Jews needed to be eliminated that to offset the loss of tax revenues that would happen when the Jews were destroyed, Haman would pay into the king’s treasury a large sum of money. He bought the king’s agreement and the Jews’ annihilation. Finally, Esther appeals to the shred of decency the king still had left in his heart when she said that if she and her people were just going to be sold into slavery, she would have kept silent, “for our affliction is not to be compared with the loss to the king.” A final blow to the heart of the king, who was already beginning to seethe at the thought that someone had plotted to kill his queen. That’s when it happens. The story reaches its climax with the king spitting out in anger, “Who is he, and where is he, who has dared to do this?” (verse 5)
- Again you see the wisdom of Esther, who could actually have responded to that question with something like, “Slide up close, King, and let me get a selfie with the person who is responsible for this.” Right? She could have said, “What do you mean, who did this? It’s your decree, your plan, your signature. You are the king, after all. Are you serious with the question?” Esther was much smarter than that. She knew who was behind the plot and pointed to him. (verse 6) “A foe and enemy! This wicked Haman!” This is another clip I want to see in heaven. Just to see Haman’s face at that moment.
- **King’s fit**
- Verse 7: “And the king arose in his wrath.” There are different opinions as to why the king got up and went into the garden. He had just been told that the man sitting in the easy chair across from him had plotted to have his wife and her people killed. Rather than throwing himself on the man in anger, perhaps he wanted to calm down and be in control. And THEN throw himself on the man. No, then he would have his servants put Haman to death. Others believe that the king went out because he knew he was in the crosshairs. He had signed the decree that would lead to his wife’s death. If he had his number two man executed, the reason would have to be stated, and that would implicate the king as well.
- **Haman’s fate**
- The truth is, we don’t know what the king was going to do when he walked back in from the garden. But when he did, what did he find? Verse 8: “Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was.” The king interpreted that as Haman was trying to assault the queen. That’s all the reason he needed to have the man put to death. What do you think was happening? I think there are two possibilities. First, we can be certain that as soon as the words came out of the Queen’s mouth, “This wicked Haman,” he knew he was a dead man. So either Haman either threw himself at the queen, as soon as the king walked out, in order to beg her for mercy. Or, he simply fell down, paralyzed with fear over what he knew was going to happen.
- The final two ironies. When the king saw what Haman was doing, he exploded again and the eunuchs immediately covered Haman’s face. Remember the day before? That’s when Haman had hurried home with his head covered, after having to parade his enemy Mordecai around town. Now here he is again, except someone else is covering his head. Irony number two: One of the eunuchs, Harbona, says to the king, “You know, King, Haman just prepared a gallows, 75 feet high, to hang Mordecai on.” Harbona

was making sure the king knew that Haman was planning to execute the man who had saved the king's life. The king said, "Hang him on that."

- A few thoughts by way of application about this chapter. First, there's a saying in the book of Numbers that is on display here: "be sure your sin will find you out." Proverbs 1: 31 says of the wicked, "therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices." Haman ate more than the food prepared for him at the feast. He ate the fruit of his own way, and it was bitter.
- Second, be careful not to make a plan to do harm to someone else. Proverbs 26:27 says "Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, and a stone will come back on him who starts it rolling." You may not ever plan to hurt someone like Haman did, by taking their life, but we all have plotted in our hearts against someone who hurt us, haven't we? Rather than forgive, we harbor resentment. And it shrivels up our hearts. Holding onto bitterness, someone said, is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die. If you dig a pit for someone else, the Bible says you *will* fall into it.
- Third, know that God will balance the scales either in this life or the next, so we don't have to. Psalm 73 could have been written about Haman before his downfall. (verses 3-9). But look at verse 16-17. Asaph couldn't understand...until he went to the Lord . Then he said, "Truly You set them in slippery places; you make them fall to ruin. How they are destroyed in a moment, swept away utterly by terrors!"
- Once again we are reminded in this wonderful narrative illustration of the providence of God. We know that though we may not see Him, He is there. When we cannot feel His hand, we can always trust His heart. The eternal God is our dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms.