Girl with Guts – the Book of Esther

If we watch a movie for entertainment, we like to see a happy end. Before the plot reaches this happy end, the hero has to overcome obstacles, disappointments and opponents. The Book of Esther is not an exception. It sounds like a fairy tale. Additionally this book stands out from the rest of the Bible because God is not mentioned. But still we see His hand at work inasmuch as justice prevails in the end.

Fairy tales happen still in our times. An example is added at the end.

Before guiding the reader through the plot the historical background will place the book in context with the overall history of the Jewish nation. All years are to be understood as B.C.

Jewish exile – 70 years

605	battle at Carchemish, beginning of exile
539	Medes&Persians overthrow Babylonian empire
536	end of exile
538	Cyrus the Great: decree about rebuilding the temple (2.Chr. 36:22-23) return of the Israelites started (Ezra 1:1-4,5:13)
520	Darius I: confirming previous decree (Ezra 6:1,6-12)

Kings of the Achaemenid (Medo-Persian) Empire

king	year BC	succession
Cyrus II the Great	539-530	conquered Babylon
Cambyses II	530-522	son of Cyrus II
Bardiya	522	son of Cyrus II or impostor
Nebuchadnezzar III	522	Babylonian rebel, (son of Nabonidus?)
Darius I the Great,	522-521	1. reign, distant relative of Cyrus II
Nebuchadnezzar IV	521	Babylonian rebel (Armenian), (son of Nabonidus?)
Darius I the Great	521-486	2. reign, retook Babylon, Greco-Persian war
Xerxes I the Great	486-484	1. reign, son of Darius I
Shamash-eriba	484	Babylonian rebel
Bel-shimanni	484	Babylonian rebel
Xerxes I the Great	484-465	retook Babylon, Greco-Persian war
Artaxerxes I	465-424	son of Xerxes I
Xerxes II	424	son of Artaxerxes I
Sogdianus	424-423	King
Darius II	423-404	illegitimate son of Artaxerxes I
Artaxerxes II	404-359	son of Darius II
Artaxerxes III	359-338	son of Artaxerxes II
Artaxerxes IV	338-336	son of Artaxerxes III
Darius III	336-331	grandson of Artaxerxes II

Medo Persian Empire

- Absolute monarchy
- The king‘s word was law, even he himself could not revoke a decree
- Organized in 127 provinces
- He had a queen and a harem
- About 50,000 Jews returned during Darius (522-486) recorded in Ezra 1-6, some stayed

The Achaemenid (Medo-Persian) Empire at its greatest territorial extent, under the rule of Darius I (522 BC–486 BC)
https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=113179532

499-449 Greco – Persian wars (G = Greece, P = Persia)

Only Greek sources – the victors write the history, Herodotus (484-425) Historia

	time	battle grounds	G leader	P leader	events
Ionian revolt	499-493	Naxos, Sardis, Ephesos, Pedaus, Lade		Darius	supported by Athens and Eritrea
1st Persian invasion	492-490	Thrace		Mardonius	against Athens &Sparta P fleet shipwrecked
Interbellum	490-480	Marathon	Miltiades	Datis and Artaphernes	Euboa taken by P, P defeated at Marathon P landing at Athens
2nd Persian invasion	480-479			Xerxes I	Sparta leading
	early 480	Thrace, Macedonia, Thessaly	Themistocles	Xerxes I	
	Aug. 480	Thermopylae (land) Artemisium (sea)	Leonidas I	Xerxes I	G defeated G retreated
	480	Salamis (sea)	Themistocles	Xerxes I	P defeated, retreated
	June 479	Plataea (land)	Pausanias	Mardonius	P defeated, retreated
	June 479	Mycale (sea)			
Delian League	460ies	Eurymedon Pamphylia			Athens leading G victory, peace

Wikipedia Commons: Map Greco-Persian Wars-en.svg

This was a decisive time of the Persian attacks on Greece. Xerxes I the Great (484-465) was in power and he wanted finally to subdue Greece, because the first invasion did not reach its goal (Marathon 490 AD). It took several years to prepare. A huge war machine was assembled. It was initially successful. Victories at the Thermopylae in 480 and Cape Artemision in the same year were achieved. The turning point though was the naval battle at Salamis. After the defeat, Xerxes sailed to the Hellespont, leaving a small portion of his army under Mardonius to stay in Boeotia over winter. The following year it was defeated.

The main characters of the Book of Esther:

- **Ahasuerus** (Hebrew) = khshayarsha (Persian) = hsy'rš (Aramaic) = Xerxes I (Greek), the king.
- **Esther** (biblical root "str" = to hide, to conceal), Hadassah (Hebrew = Myrtle), Stara (Persian = star), Ishtar (Babylonian goddess of love) – she is the star of the story.
- **Mordecai** (mrdk) changed from Mardukaya (Babylonian). He was from the tribe of Kish, Saul's tribe. He is Esther's manager.
- **Haman the Agagite**, was a descendant of Agag, the king of the Amalekites. Amalek was Esau's grandson (Gen.36:12). In Ex. 17:14 God pronounced their doom because they tried to block Israel's entry into the Promised Land. In the conflict between the Israelites and the Amalekites, they were all killed (1.Sam. 15:6-8) except Agag their king whom Saul spared. Hence the hatred of Haman towards the Jews. A natural or logical "bad guy".

The feast of King Ahasuerus for the nobility (1:1-4)

The book of Esther starts in the third year of Ahasuerus (Xerxes) reign (483), in the years of preparation for his Expedition to Greece. Persia was at the climax of its power. Xerxes assembled all important people (princes, army officers, nobles and princes of the provinces) for 180 days.

Seven-day banquet for people in the capital, Queen Vashti deposed (1:5-22)

A seven-day banquet (drinking feast) for all nobles in Susa was given at the end of the 6 months by the king in which he wanted to present his beautiful queen to the nobility. He wanted to show off his riches and called for his queen.

Queen Vashti refused; she had her own party. She sends out the message: Do not take orders from your husband! In order to prevent similar disobediences of wives to their husbands, the king divorced Vashti.

Search for a queen, Esther (2:1-20)

Scouts spread out to find worthy candidates to replace Vashti. The nobles did not offer their daughters because they might experience the king's dislike. Potential candidates were brought into the wellness center and beauty-farm, the harem. All means to appear beautiful were at their disposal: six months of treatments with myrrh and spices, jewelry and cosmetics.

Search for candidates in the empire (2:2-10) and a queen among the candidates (2:11-20)

Mordecai was the guardian of Esther, the daughter of his uncle and an orphan. Esther was selected for the beauty contest, not revealing her ethnic background. Mordecai checked on her from outside the walls of the harem. Ahasuerus tested one candidate after another, calling them in one after the other each evening and sending them back to the harem in the morning.

One day it was Esther's turn; she would select her ornaments, relying completely on the advice of a eunuch. Her presentation to the king can be dated to 479, where she found favor in the king's eyes. She became queen four years after Queen Vashti was dethroned. During the "queenless" time King Ahasuerus launched a massive attack on Greece but returned home with a bloody nose. Probably to boost his mood and finally to take a queen, the king gave a banquet.

A plot (2:21-23)

Opposition in court manifested itself not only through queen Vashti (2:1), but also among the personnel. Mordecai was always found outside the walls or at the gate. There he overheard the planning

of a plot to kill the king. Mordecai informed Esther, who passed the information on to the king. The planners were executed.

Esther's feasts

Rise of Haman (3:1-5)

Haman became #2 in the empire. Why and how unknown. He received the signet ring from the king and with it came the authority to sign edicts in his name. People should bow down before him, but Mordecai refused. Bowing down before the king, like before a divine being was for Jews inacceptable (remember Dan.3:12).

Edict for destruction of the Jews (3:6-7)

Antisemitism was not a felony yet, so Haman sought to destroy the Jews and settle an open bill. This meant all the Jews in the empire, including those in Palestine, one of the provinces. (Does this sound familiar? There was Ahmadinejad, Iranian conservative politician who served as the sixth president of Iran from 2005 to 2013. He wanted to throw the Israelites into the Mediterranean Sea. History repeats itself, because people do not learn from history). Lots were cast (April-May 474) to find out the best time to carry out the destruction (February-March 474). In the local language "Pur" was the word for lots. Haman asked the king to decree the destruction of the Jews since they did not obey the king's law. Haman offered the king the 10,000 talents of silver. The king gave permission by handing over his signet ring to Haman to do what he pleases. "Keep the money", the king said. It sounds like nowadays "keep the change." It implies how rich the king was that he did not need the 10,000 talents of silver. The death sentence for the Jews was sent out sealed by the signet ring.

Mordecai's appeal to Esther (4:1-17)

The Jews were now on death row. Mordecai was in sack and ashes at the gates. He was completely informed what went on in the palace. Esther learned about the campaign through her eunuch Hathach. What Mordecai told Esther is not recorded. Some believe it was a request to step in for their people. Esther pointed out the danger to approach the king without being summoned. Mordecai reminded her that it might be her calling to save the Jews by risking going to an audience without invitation. She would face death in any case, either by not being allowed to approach the king or by Haman's fury. Esther agreed to see the king in three days.

"Go, assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa, and fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens also will fast in the same way. And thus I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish." This verse (4:16) is the most well-known of the book, but it is not the climax. The tension is still rising.

Meanwhile the Jews should be fasting for three days for her. She left it to God (not mentioned) to protect her. A footnote: I believe her eunuch Hathach must have known that Esther was Jewish.

Esther's 1st audience with Ahasuerus (5:1-4)

After three days Esther took courage and went to the king unannounced. The king extended his scepter to her and she was safe. This procedure was common in that region so that the ruler could stop unwanted people from coming too close to him. Esther invited the king and Haman to her banquet. Both were flabbergasted and accepted the invitation. The idea behind was to present her request to a limited audience.

The 1st banquet (5:5-8)

Haman‘s decree to kill the Jews is in effect. It is obvious that Haman did not know about Esther’s relationship with Mordecai and that she was Jewish. Otherwise he would have refused to come to the banquet. Esther proposed a 2nd banquet for discussing her proposal/request.

Haman’s arrogance, Mordecai’s humiliation (5:9-14)

When leaving the palace, Haman passed Mordecai at the gate. He recognized Mordecai’s determination not to pay homage to him and his self-humiliation by sitting in sack and ashes. One may wonder how Haman looked at Mordecai. Coming home, Haman boasts about being the only additional guest at the 1st and at the 2nd banquet. Haman prepares Mordechai’s public humiliation, which should culminate in Mordecai being hanged. Gallows were set up.

King investigating about the plot against him (6:1-3)

The King has a sleepless night. Did he eat or drink too much? Was he worried what Esther might request at her second banquet? No, he remembered Mordecai and sent for the records of the plot against him, in which he learned that Mordecai did not receive any reward for saving him from an assassination. The plot happened five years earlier. He heard how the gallows were set up. Haman was anxious for the execution of Mordecai and therefore was early at court. Ahasuerus was insecure about how to reward Mordecai who was a Jew on death row! He needed counsel. Fortunately Haman was at hand.

Reward Mordechai suggested (6:4-9)

When Haman was asked what reward he would give to a man the king wants to honor he was immediately thinking of himself: a royal robe, sitting on the king’s horse and being paraded through the city so that everybody would know about the honor the king bestowed on him.

Reward for Mordechai carried out (6:10-12)

The turning point in Haman’s life. (Prov. 16:18 - *Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall*). The honor Haman suggested, was now given to Mordecai. The respect Haman demanded from Mordecai, was now given to Mordecai. After the city tour, both Mordecai and Haman returned to their places – Mordecai to the city gate and Haman went home.

Doom of Haman prophesied (6:13-14)

Haman needed a sounding board, he had to get rid of what he had just experienced, especially his humiliation (did people see it as such?) by talking to his wife and friends who earlier supported him in setting up the gallows. Haman probably did not like their comment: If Mordecai is a Jew, you cannot win. Hitler is a modern day example who went after the apple of God’s eye, His people, and failed. He wanted to end their life but what ended, was his own life. Did Ahasuerus forget the decree to kill the Jews?

2nd banquet (7:1-10)

First day was filled with drinking. On the second day, Esther’s request – not to kill the Jews – surprised the king. He had too much confidence in Haman and let him use his authority without being accountable to the king. When Esther revealed the culprit, Haman froze. The king tried to calm down in the garden by himself. When he returned to the banquet, he saw Haman pleading with Esther for his life. Ahasuerus assumed a more dramatic situation and finally had Haman hanged on the spot on the gallows that were meant for Mordecai. What an irony!

Mordecai promoted (8:1-2)

Haman's house, his property, was given to Esther who passed it on to Mordecai who received the king's signet ring that was taken from Haman. Esther disclosed her nationality to the king.

Esther's 2nd audience with Ahasuerus (8:3-7)

Haman's decree was still in effect. Therefore Esther went again to the king uncalled. King Ahasuerus extended his scepter and Esther pleaded for her people and asked king Ahasuerus to revoke Haman's letters of destruction of the Jews.

A new decree sent out (8:8-17)

But according to Persian law the letters were sealed with the king's signet ring and therefore may not be revoked. But a new decree would override a former one (said the "Supreme Court" = the king). Letters signed by Mordecai, sealed with the ring, went out. The content of the letters granted the Jews to defend themselves against people who attack them on the basis of Haman's letter. The second decree would not revoke a former one, but allow the Jews to counteract, to defend themselves (June-July 474 B.C.). They were allowed to kill the attackers and take their spoils on a specific day (March 7), which was set by Haman's decree. People in the capital rejoiced, feasts were celebrated and many became Jews. The letters of salvation were quickly distributed.

Tables turned – Jews persecuting their enemies (9:1-19)

On the day when Haman's letter came into effect, the Jews could overcome their enemies. Among the people being killed according to Mordechai's edict were Haman's 10 sons on request of Esther. Lives were taken on a specific day, but no property. The governors of the provinces supported the Jews probably in fear of Mordecai. The day of fight was in March 473. Esther pleaded for a second day of defense, because she might have had reason for it that was not mentioned. The day after these executions stopped, a feast started with giving food and presents to each other. Is this an OT Christmas celebration? Presents, food and joy!

The feast of Purim initiated (9:20-32)

The feast of Purim was initiated by Mordechai commemorating the casting of the lots (473). It was an obligation for the Jews confirmed by a letter from Mordechai and Esther. The king recognized that Haman's edict has fallen on Haman and his house.

Mordecai's achievements were recorded in the Books (Ch. 10)

Summary

This book is about

- The fall and rise of one man – Mordecai;
- The rise and fall of another man – Haman;
- The courage of the queen – to break boundaries to save her people;
- The undecided king – who needs counsel, he easily delegates and his lack of information, his unawareness of events in his empire;
- The unnamed genie – the director of history, the One who orchestrates events.

What we learn from this passage?

- "The Taming of the Shrew". A comedy with Shakespeare, a tragedy at the court of Persia. Vashti, though beautiful, forgot her role and overestimated her position and lost her position. God put people in places for a reason. It may not be obvious to us at first. Esther took Vashti's place, for a reason.
- Esther needed a mentor – Mordechai. A second one showed up in the form of a eunuch in the palace.
- Show civil courage – 5:1-8, 6:9, 8:3. Be ready to sacrifice for your people – 4:16. The Jews were under attack and Ester did not react. Her mentor Mordechai had to wake her up and she agreed to step in it was a situation of life and death. Esther goes into the king's court against the law, ready to perish and does not. I just imagine a similar situation: One day we will be in God's courtroom. Our faith in Christ makes us survive. The scepter of God will point at us and we will hear His voice: "Step forward son, step forward daughter."
- People in power always have enemies. But there are people – in our case Mordechai - who have discernment who the enemies are. Haman was one of them. He also became corrupted by the position and power. Lucifer comes to mind. And Haman fell as well later in the story. Enemies usually are approaching in disguise, like Satan in the form of an angel of light (2Cor.11:14).
- Do not isolate yourself from your environment, rather seek the counsel of those outside your house, as well:
  - good counsel: 1:19-20, 2:15;
  - bad counsel: 3:8-9
- Arrogance does not help you win - 5:9-14. Enemies are slick. That means for us to approach the battle with a plan. Esther had two banquets planned. The first one lulled Haman in and made him more proud than he already was. But at the second one he was uncovered. He had to reap what he sowed: the gallows.
- Recognition may come late 6:10-11, 8:1-2
- God holds His hand over His people – 6:13
- Celebrate your salvation – 9:20-21. Doom was turned into joy, out of which they gave each other presents. Isn't that like we as sinners, doomed to death are saved and celebrate this at Christmas with gifts?
- Although God is not mentioned, He is still active

Have you ever had the chance to step in for someone who is treated in an unfair manner? If not be ready and take courage.

Klaus,
In but not of the field.

The structure of the book

Abbreviations:

A – Ahasverus

E – Esther

H – Haman

M – Mordecai

The text is taken from NASB

X_1	X_2	X_3	X_4	X_5	ch:v	interpretation	text
0					1:1-2	prologue	[1]Now it took place in the days of Ahasuerus, the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia over 127 provinces: [2] in those days as King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne which was at the citadel in Susa,
1					1:3-22	the feasts of King **A**	
	1				1:3-4	180d feast for the nobility	[3]in the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for all his princes and attendants, the army officers of Persia and Media, the nobles and the princes of his provinces being in his presence. [4]And he displayed the riches of his royal glory and the splendor of his great majesty for many days, 180 days.
	2				1:5-2:1	7d feast for the people in Susa	
		1			1:5-8	luxury, **V** not on the scene	[5]When these days were completed, the king gave a banquet lasting seven days for all the people who were present at the citadel in Susa, from the greatest to the least, in the court of the garden of the king's palace. [6]There were hangings of fine white and violet linen held by cords of fine purple linen on silver rings and marble columns, and couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl and precious stones. [7]Drinks were served in golden vessels of various kinds, and the royal wine was plentiful according to the king's bounty. [8]The drinking was done according to the law, there was no compulsion, for so the king had given orders to each official of his household that he should do according to the desires of each person.
		2			1:9	**V**'s feast	[9]Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women in the palace which belonged to King Ahasuerus.
		3			1:10-11	**A** orders **V** to appear	[10]On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar and Carkas, the seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus, [11]to bring Queen Vashti before the king with her royal crown in order to display her beauty to the people and the princes, for she was beautiful.
		2'			1:12-15	**V** removes herself from court	[12]But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command delivered by the eunuchs. Then the king became very angry and his wrath burned within him. [13]Then the king said to the wise men who understood the times -for it was the custom of the king so to speak before all who knew law and justice [14]and were close to him: Carshena,

							Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media who had access to the king's presence and sat in the first place in the kingdom - [15] "According to law, what is to be done with Queen Vashti, because she did not obey the command of King Ahasuerus delivered by the eunuchs?"
		1'			1:16-22	**V** removed by the king	[16]In the presence of the king and the princes, Memucan said, "Queen Vashti has wronged not only the king but also all the princes and all the peoples who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. [17]"For the queen's conduct will become known to all the women causing them to look with contempt on their husbands by saying, 'King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought in to his presence, but she did not come.' [18]"This day the ladies of Persia and Media who have heard of the queen's conduct will speak in the same way to all the king's princes, and there will be plenty of contempt and anger. [19]"If it pleases the king, let a royal edict be issued by him and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media so that it cannot be repealed, that Vashti may no longer come into the presence of King Ahasuerus, and let the king give her royal position to another who is more worthy than she. [20]"When the king's edict which he will make is heard throughout all his kingdom, great as it is, then all women will give honor to their husbands, great and small." [21]This word pleased the king and the princes, and the king did as Memucan proposed. [22]So he sent letters to all the king's provinces, to each province according to its script and to every people according to their language, that every man should be the master in his own house and the one who speaks in the language of his own people.
	3				2:1-20	Queen **E** selected, installed	
		1			2:1	**V**'s opposition at court	[1]After these things when the anger of King Ahasuerus had subsided, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her.
		2			2:2-10	search for queen candidates in the empire	
			1		2:2-4	search committee	[2]Then the king's attendants, who served him, said, "Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king. [3]"Let the king appoint overseers in all the provinces of his kingdom that they may gather every beautiful young virgin to the citadel of Susa, to the harem, into the custody of Hegai, the king's eunuch, who is in charge of the women; and let their cosmetics be given them. [4]"Then let the young lady who pleases the king be queen in place of Vashti." And the matter pleased the king, and he did accordingly.

			2		2:5-7	**M** promoting **E**	[5]Now there was at the citadel in Susa a Jew whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite, [6]who had been taken into exile from Jerusalem with the captives who had been exiled with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had exiled. [7]He was bringing up Hadassah, that is Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had no father or mother. Now the young lady was beautiful of form and face, and when her father and her mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.
			3		2:8	**E** selected into the candidates	[8]So it came about when the command and decree of the king were heard and many young ladies were gathered to the citadel of Susa into the custody of Hegai, that Esther was taken to the king's palace into the custody of Hegai, who was in charge of the women.
			4		2:9	**E** brought to the court	[9]Now the young lady pleased him and found favor with him. So he quickly provided her with her cosmetics and food, gave her seven choice maids from the king's palace and transferred her and her maids to the best place in the harem.
			5		2:10	**E** not revealing her origin	[10]Esther did not make known her people or her kindred, for Mordecai had instructed her that she should not make them known.
		2'			2:11-15	search for queen among the candidates	
			1'		2:11	**M** checking on **E**	[11]Every day Mordecai walked back and forth in front of the court of the harem to learn how Esther was and how she fared.
			2'		2:12-14	candidates prepared for the trial visit	[12]Now when the turn of each young lady came to go in to King Ahasuerus, after the end of her twelve months under the regulations for the women -for the days of their beautification were completed as follows: six months with oil of myrrh and six months with spices and the cosmetics for women - [13]the young lady would go in to the king in this way: anything that she desired was given her to take with her from the harem to the king's palace. [14]In the evening she would go in and in the morning she would return to the second harem, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the concubines. She would not again go in to the king unless the king delighted in her and she was summoned by name.
			3'		2:15-16	**E** brought to the king	[15]Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai who had taken her as his daughter, came to go in to the king, she did not request anything except what Hegai, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the women, advised. And

							Esther found favor in the eyes of all who saw her. [16]So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus to his royal palace in the tenth month which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.
			4'		2:17-18	**E** finding favor with the king	[17]The king loved Esther more than all the women, and she found favor and kindness with him more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. [18]Then the king gave a great banquet, Esther's banquet, for all his princes and his servants; he also made a holiday for the provinces and gave gifts according to the king's bounty.
			5'		2:19	**M** watching	[19]When the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate.
			6'		2:20	**E** not revealing her origin	[20]Esther had not yet made known her kindred or her people, even as Mordecai had commanded her; for Esther did what Mordecai told her as she had done when under his care.
		1'			2:21-23	opposition of two officials	[21]In those days, while Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's officials from those who guarded the door, became angry and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. [22]But the plot became known to Mordecai and he told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name. [23]Now when the plot was investigated and found to be so, they were both hanged on a gallows; and it was written in the Book of the Chronicles * in the king's presence.
2					3:1-9:18	the feasts of **E**	
	1				3:1-15	**H**'s authority	
		1			3:1	**H** receives authority from the king	[1]After these events King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him and established his authority over all the princes who were with him.
		2			3:2	authority recognized by all	[2]All the king's servants who were at the king's gate bowed down and paid homage to Haman; for so the king had commanded concerning him. But Mordecai neither bowed down nor paid homage.
		3			3:3-5	**M** refuses to recognize **H**'s authority	[3]Then the king's servants who were at the king's gate said to Mordecai, "Why are you transgressing the king's command?" [4]Now it was when they had spoken daily to him and he would not listen to them, that they told Haman to see whether Mordecai's reason would stand; for he had told them that he was a Jew. [5]When Haman saw that Mordecai neither bowed down nor paid homage to him, Haman was filled with rage.

		2'			3:6	**H** exercises authority: destroy the Jews	[6]But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him who the people of Mordecai were; therefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus. [7]In the first month, which is the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, Pur, that is the lot, was cast before Haman from day to day and from month to month, until the twelfth month, that is the month Adar.
		1'			3:7	**H**: authority of the right time	
	2				3:8-15	decree of destruction	[8]Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from those of all other people and they do not observe the king's laws, so it is not in the king's interest to let them remain. [9]"If it is pleasing to the king, let it be decreed that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who carry on the king's business, to put into the king's treasuries." [10]Then the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. [11]The king said to Haman, "The silver is yours, and the people also, to do with them as you please." [12]Then the king's scribes were summoned on the thirteenth day of the first month, and it was written just as Haman commanded to the king's satraps, to the governors who were over each province and to the princes of each people, each province according to its script, each people according to its language, being written in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the king's signet ring. [13]Letters were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces to destroy, to kill and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to seize their possessions as plunder. [14]A copy of the edict to be issued as law in every province was published to all the peoples so that they should be ready for this day. [15]The couriers went out impelled by the king's command while the decree was issued at the citadel in Susa; and while the king and Haman sat down to drink, the city of Susa was in confusion.
	3				4:1-17	**M**'s appeal to **E**, Jews in danger	
		1			4:1-3	**M** mourning	[1]When Mordecai learned all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city and wailed loudly and bitterly. [2]He

							went as far as the king's gate, for no one was to enter the king's gate clothed in sackcloth. [3]In each and every province where the command and decree of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing; and many lay on sackcloth and ashes.
		2			4:4-8	**E** inquiring about **M**'s morning	[4]Then Esther's maidens and her eunuchs came and told her, and the queen writhed in great anguish. And she sent garments to clothe Mordecai that he might remove his sackcloth from him, but he did not accept them. [5]Then Esther summoned Hathach from the king's eunuchs, whom the king had appointed to attend her, and ordered him to go to Mordecai to learn what this was and why it was. [6]So Hathach went out to Mordecai to the city square in front of the king's gate. [7]Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the exact amount of money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the destruction of the Jews. [8]He also gave him a copy of the text of the edict which had been issued in Susa for their destruction, that he might show Esther and inform her, and to order her to go in to the king to implore his favor and to plead with him for her people.
		3			4:9-12	**E**'s reply	[9] Hathach came back and related Mordecai's words to Esther. [10] Then Esther spoke to Hathach and ordered him to reply to Mordecai: [11] "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that for any man or woman who comes to the king to the inner court who is not summoned, he has but one law, that he be put to death, unless the king holds out to him the golden scepter so that he may live. And I have not been summoned to come to the king for these thirty days." [12]They related Esther's words to Mordecai.
		2'			4:13-14	**M**: **E**'s dilemma, she has no choice	[13]Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, "Do not imagine that you in the king's palace can escape any more than all the Jews. [14]"For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?"
		1'			4:15-17	help found with **E**	[15]Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, [16]"Go, assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa, and fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens also will fast in the same way. And thus I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish." [17]So Mordecai went away and did just as Esther had commanded him.
	4				5:1-4	**E**'s 1st audience with **A**	

		1			5:1-2	scepter extended, **E** invited to the audience	[1]Now it came about on the third day that Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace in front of the king's rooms, and the king was sitting on his royal throne in the throne room, opposite the entrance to the palace. [2]When the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, she obtained favor in his sight; and the king extended to Esther the golden scepter which was in his hand. So Esther came near and touched the top of the scepter.
		2			5:3	inquiry of **E**'s reason for the audience	[3]Then the king said to her, "What is troubling you, Queen Esther? And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be given to you."
		3			5:4	**E**'s invitation to the 1st banquet	[4]Esther said, "If it pleases the king, may the king and Haman come this day to the banquet that I have prepared for him."
	5				5:5-8	1st banquet	
		1			5:5	1st banquet starting	[5]Then the king said, "Bring Haman quickly that we may do as Esther desires." So the king and Haman came to the banquet which Esther had prepared.
		2			5:6	inquiry of **E**'s reason for the banquet	[6]As they drank their wine at the banquet, the king said to Esther, "What is your petition, for it shall be granted to you. And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be done."
		3			5:7-8	invitation for a 2nd banquet	[7]So Esther replied, "My petition and my request is: [8]if I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and do what I request, may the king and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king says."
	6				5:9-6:14	between the banquets	
		1			5:9-14	**M**'s humiliation, **H**'s exultation	
			1		5:9	**M**'s self-humiliation.	[9]Then Haman went out that day glad and pleased of heart; but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate and that he did not stand up or tremble before him, Haman was filled with anger against Mordecai.
			2		5:10-13	**H**'s boasting	[10]Haman controlled himself, however, went to his house and sent for his friends and his wife Zeresh. [11]Then Haman recounted to them the glory of his riches, and the number of his sons, and every instance where the king had magnified him and how he had promoted him above the princes and servants of the king. [12]Haman also said, "Even Esther the queen let no one but me come with the king to the banquet which she had

							prepared; and tomorrow also I am invited by her with the king. [13]"Yet all of this does not satisfy me every time I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."
			1'		5:14	preparation for **M**'s public humiliation, gallows set up	[14]Then Zeresh his wife and all his friends said to him, "Have a gallows fifty cubits high made and in the morning ask the king to have Mordecai hanged on it; then go joyfully with the king to the banquet." And the advice pleased Haman, so he had the gallows made.
		1'			6:1-14	**H**'s humiliation, **M**'s exultation	
			1		6:1-3	**M** never honored	[1]During that night the king could not sleep so he gave an order to bring the book of records, the chronicles, and they were read before the king. [2]It was found written what Mordecai had reported concerning Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs who were doorkeepers, that they had sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. [3]The king said, "What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?" Then the king's servants who attended him said, "Nothing has been done for him."
			2		6:4-5	**M** doomed	[4]So the king said, "Who is in the court?" Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king's palace in order to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows which he had prepared for him. [5]The king's servants said to him, "Behold, Haman is standing in the court." And the king said, "Let him come in."
			3		6:6-9	honor conceptualized	[6]So Haman came in and the king said to him, "What is to be done for the man whom the king desires to honor?" And Haman said to himself, "Whom would the king desire to honor more than me?" [7]Then Haman said to the king, "For the man whom the king desires to honor, [8]let them bring a royal robe which the king has worn, and the horse on which the king has ridden, and on whose head a royal crown has been placed; [9]and let the robe and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble princes and let them array the man whom the king desires to honor and lead him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him, 'Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor.' "
			3'		6:10-12	honor realized	[10]Then the king said to Haman, "Take quickly the robes and the horse as you have said, and do so for Mordecai the Jew, who is sitting at the king's gate; do not fall short in anything of all that you have said." [11]So Haman took the robe and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city square, and proclaimed before him, "Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor." [12]Then

							Mordecai returned to the king's gate. But Haman hurried home, mourning, with his head covered.
			2'		6:13	**H** doomed	[13]Haman recounted to Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him. Then his wise men and Zeresh his wife said to him, "If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish origin, you will not overcome him, but will surely fall before him."
			1'		6:14	**H** never honored	[14]While they were still talking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hastily brought Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared.
	5'				7:1-7:10	2nd banquet	
		1			7:1	2nd banquet starting, **E** and **M** still alive	[1]Now the king and Haman came to drink wine with Esther the queen.
		2			7:2-6	**A**'s curiosity	
			1		7:2	inquiry of **E**'s reason for the banquet	[2]And the king said to Esther on the second day also as they drank their wine at the banquet, "What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be done."
			1'		7:3-4	the victims revealed, **E** begging for her life	[3]Then Queen Esther replied, "If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me as my petition, and my people as my request; [4]for we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed and to be annihilated. Now if we had only been sold as slaves, men and women, I would have remained silent, for the trouble would not be commensurate with the annoyance to the king."
			2		7:5	**A** inquiring about the oppressor	[5]Then King Ahasuerus asked Queen Esther, "Who is he, and where is he, who would presume to do thus?"
			2'		7:6	oppressor revealed	[6]Esther said, "A foe and an enemy is this wicked Haman!" Then Haman became terrified before * the king and queen.
		2'			7:7-10	**A**'s anger	
			1		7:7-8	**H** in trouble	[7]The king arose in his anger from drinking wine and went into the palace garden; but Haman stayed to beg for his life from Queen Esther, for he saw that harm had been determined against him by the king. [8]Now when the king returned from the palace garden into the place where they were drinking wine, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was. Then the king said, "Will he even assault the queen with me in the house?" As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face.

			2		7:9-10	**H**'s punishment	[9]Then Harbonah, one of the eunuchs who were before the king said, "Behold indeed, the gallows standing at Haman's house fifty cubits high, which Haman made for Mordecai who spoke well on behalf of the king!" And the king said, "Hang him on it." [10]So they hanged Haman on the gallows which he had prepared for Mordecai, and the king's anger subsided.
		1'			8:1-2	**E** and **M** safe	[1]On that day King Ahasuerus gave the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews, to Queen Esther; and Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had disclosed what he was to her. [2]The king took off his signet ring which he had taken away from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.
	4'				8:3-6	**E**'s 2nd audience with **A**	
		1			8:3	**E** approached the king uncalled	[3]Then Esther spoke again to the king, fell at his feet, wept and implored him to avert the evil scheme of Haman the Agagite and his plot which he had devised against the Jews.
		2			8:4	**A** extended his scepter	[4]The king extended the golden scepter to Esther. So Esther arose and stood before the king.
		1'			8:5-6	**E**'s petition	[5]Then she said, "If it pleases * the king and if I have found favor before him and the matter seems proper to the king and I am pleasing in his sight, let it be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews who are in all the king's provinces. [6]"For how can I endure to see the calamity which will befall my people, and how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?"
	3'				8:7	danger for the Jews is dealt with	[7]So King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, "Behold, I have given the house of Haman to Esther, and him they have hanged on the gallows because he had stretched out his hands against the Jews.
	2'				8:8-17	**A** ordered a new decree (of defense)	
		1			8:8-14	writing of the letter	
			1		8:8	**A** commands the letter to be written	[8]"Now you write to the Jews as you see fit, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's signet ring; for a decree which is written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's signet ring may not be revoked."
			2		8:9	recipients of the letter	[9]So the king's scribes were called at that time in the third month (that is, the month Sivan), on the twenty-third day; and it was written according to all that Mordecai

							commanded to the Jews, the satraps, the governors and the princes of the provinces which extended from India to Ethiopia, 127 provinces, to every province according to its script, and to every people according to their language as well as to the Jews according to their script and their language.
	1'				8:10-9:16	**M**'s authority	
		1			8:10-14	letter	
			1		8:10	written and sealed	[10]He wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus, and sealed it with the king's signet ring, and sent letters by couriers on horses, riding on steeds sired by the royal stud.
			2		8:11	content of the letter	[11]In them the king granted the Jews who were in each and every city the right to assemble and to defend their lives, to destroy, to kill and to annihilate the entire army of any people or province which might attack them, including children and women, and to plunder their spoil,
			3		8:12-13	time of publication	[12]on one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month (that is, the month Adar). [13]A copy of the edict to be issued as law in each and every province was published to all the peoples, so that the Jews would be ready for this day to avenge themselves on their enemies.
			4		8:14	couriers went out	[14]The couriers, hastened and impelled by the king's command, went out, riding on the royal steeds; and the decree was given out at the citadel in Susa.
		2			8:15-17	response to the letter, joy	[15]Then Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal robes of blue and white, with a large crown of gold and a garment of fine linen and purple; and the city of Susa shouted and rejoiced. [16]For the Jews there was light and gladness and joy and honor. [17]In each and every province and in each and every city, wherever the king's commandment and his decree arrived, there was gladness and joy for the Jews, a feast and a holiday And many among the peoples of the land became Jews, for the dread of the Jews had fallen on them.
		3			9:1-16	execution of the letter	
			1		9:1-5	in the provinces	[1]Now in the twelfth month (that is, the month Adar), on the thirteenth day when the king's command and edict were about to be executed, on the day when the enemies of the Jews hoped to gain the mastery over them, it was turned to the contrary so that the Jews themselves gained the mastery over those who hated them. [2]The Jews assembled in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to lay hands on those who sought their harm; and no one could stand before them, for the dread

							of them had fallen on all the peoples. [3]Even all the princes of the provinces, the satraps, the governors and those who were doing the king's business assisted the Jews, because the dread of Mordecai had fallen on them. [4]Indeed, Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces; for the man Mordecai became greater and greater. [5]Thus the Jews struck all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying; and they did what they pleased to those who hated them.
			2		9:6-10	**H**'s sons executed	[6]At the citadel in Susa the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men, [7]and Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, [8]Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, [9]Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai and Vaizatha, [10]the ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Jews' enemy; but they did not lay their hands on the plunder.
			2’		9:11-15	in the capital	
				1	9:11	in the capital	[11]On that day the number of those who were killed at the citadel in Susa was reported to the king.
				2	9:12-14	one day extension	[12]The king said to Queen Esther, "The Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men and the ten sons of Haman at the citadel in Susa. What then have they done in the rest of the king's provinces! Now what is your petition? It shall even be granted you. And what is your further request? It shall also be done." [13]Then said Esther, "If it pleases the king, let tomorrow also be granted to the Jews who are in Susa to do according to the edict of today; and let Haman's ten sons be hanged on the gallows." [14]So the king commanded that it should be done so; and an edict was issued in Susa, and Haman's ten sons were hanged.
				1'	9:15	in the capital	[15]The Jews who were in Susa assembled also on the fourteenth day of the month Adar and killed three hundred men in Susa, but they did not lay their hands on the plunder.
			1'		9:16	in the provinces	[16]Now the rest of the Jews who were in the king's provinces assembled, to defend their lives and rid themselves of their enemies, and kill 75,000 of those who hated them; but they did not lay their hands on the plunder.
3					9:17-32	feast of the Jews, summary of the events	
	1				9:17-19	day of feasting and rejoicing	[17]This was done on the thirteenth day of the month Adar, and on the fourteenth day they rested and made it a day of feasting and rejoicing. [18] But the Jews who were in Susa assembled on the thirteenth and the fourteenth of the same month, and they

							rested on the fifteenth day and made it a day of feasting and rejoicing. [19]Therefore the Jews of the rural areas, who live in the rural towns, make the fourteenth day of the month Adar a holiday for rejoicing and feasting and sending portions of food to one another.
	2				9:20-23	obligation to celebrate	[20]Then Mordecai recorded these events, and he sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far, [21]obliging them to celebrate the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same month, annually, [22]because on those days the Jews rid themselves of their enemies, and it was a month which was turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and rejoicing and sending portions of food to one another and gifts to the poor. [23]Thus the Jews undertook what they had started to do, and what Mordecai had written to them.
	3				9:24	**H**'s scheme	[24]For Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the adversary of all the Jews, had schemed against the Jews to destroy them and had cast Pur, that is the lot, to disturb them and destroy them.
	3'				9:25-26	**H**'s scheme overturned by **A**	[25]But when it came to the king's attention, he commanded by letter that his wicked scheme which he had devised against the Jews, should return on his own head and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. [26]Therefore they called these days Purim after the name of Pur. And because of the instructions in this letter, both what they had seen in this regard and what had happened to them,
	2'				9:27-28	feast established	[27]the Jews established and made a custom for themselves and for their descendants and for all those who allied themselves with them, so that they would not fail to celebrate these two days according to their regulation and according to their appointed time annually. [28]So these days were to be remembered and celebrated throughout every generation, every family, every province and every city; and these days of Purim were not to fail from among the Jews, or their memory fade from their descendants.
	1'				9:29-32	**E** and **M** confirm the establishment of the feast Purim	[29]Then Queen Esther, daughter of Abihail, with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter about Purim. [30]He sent letters to all the Jews, to the 127 provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, namely, words of peace and truth, [31]to establish these days of Purim at their appointed times, just as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had established for them, and just as they had established for themselves and for their descendants with instructions for their times of fasting and their

							lamentations. [32]The command of Esther established these customs for Purim, and it was written in the book.
0					10:1-3	epilogue	[1]Now King Ahasuerus laid a tribute on the land and on the coastlands of the sea. [2]And all the accomplishments of his authority and strength, and the full account of the greatness of Mordecai to which the king advanced him, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia? [3]For Mordecai the Jew was second only to King Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews and in favor with his many kinsmen, one who sought the good of his people and one who spoke for the welfare of his whole nation.