

Esther's Two Banquets – Why Two Esther 5 & 6

The first banquet was with the king and Haman which would have been seen by Haman to be a great honor and would have put him at ease and emboldened him to not only proceed with the grand plan to eliminate all the Jews but also to immediately take his revenge against Mordecai for failing to show him the respect he (Haman) thought he deserved. In fact, immediately upon leaving the first banquet Haman encountered Mordecai who refused to show “rise or tremble” before him. This incident appears to be providentially planned to get Haman to show his hatred of the Jews and of Mordecai specifically and it caused him to make an emotionally based decision to build a gallows and hang Mordecai the next day. This would have required the consent of the king for Haman to actually carry out the execution of Mordecai. That may explain why Haman went to see the king early in the morning on the day after the first banquet.

Switch now to the impact of the first banquet on the king. Some commentaries mention that the king realized that Esther would not have planned and carried out a banquet for no other reason than to invite the same two people to a second banquet. That caused him to be disturbed enough that he had difficulty sleeping that night following the first banquet. So what does a person do if he or she can't readily go to sleep? You read (or have someone read to you) something that is fairly mundane like a history chronicle. This happened and the account that was read to him was about what Mordecai had done several years before to thwart an assassination plot against the king. Upon hearing this, the king wanted to know if Mordecai had ever been rewarded for what he did. Since nothing had been done, the king decided he would do something to recognize and honor the person who had saved the king's life.

Early the next morning the king was still thinking about “what could be done for Mordecai” when Haman shows up to ask the king for permission to hang Mordecai on a gallows that he was having built for that purpose. The king allowed Haman to see him and since he was the king, he directed the conversation to what was on his mind and did not even ask Haman why he was there. Obviously, the king respected Haman and his opinion; therefore, he asked Haman what should be done to a person who the king wanted to show great honor. Because Haman had been to the first banquet and was invited to a second banquet, he thought that the person to be honored was he (Haman). In his wildest imagination, Haman could not ever have thought that Mordecai was to be the honoree. So the stage is set for Haman to experience the worst emotional pain and embarrassment.

In his elation at the thought of him (Haman) being honored, Haman did not even bring up the execution permission that was the purpose of his visit. Haman came up with an elaborate series of actions that he thought he would enjoy and laid it all out to the king. The king accepted it all and ordered that those “honoring actions” be immediately be carried for Mordecai and Haman was given the job of making it happen. That would have been the most galling thing that could have happened to Haman and yet there was more that was to come in the upcoming second banquet. With all this happening, Haman still had to “put on a happy face” and show up at the banquet where the rest of the story would unfold which would eventually result in rescuing the Jews from death.