

Greek Esther 1 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

ADDITION A

Mordecai's Dream

11 ^[a] ² In the second year of the reign of **Artaxerxes the Great**, on the first day of Nisan, Mordecai son of Jair son of Shimei^[b] son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, **had a dream**. ³ He was a Jew living in the city of Susa, a great man, serving in the court of the king. ⁴ **He was one of the captives whom King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had brought from Jerusalem with King Jeconiah of Judea**. And this was his dream: ⁵ Noises^[c] and confusion, thunders and earthquake, tumult on the earth! ⁶ Then two great dragons came forward, both ready to fight, and they roared terribly. ⁷ At their roaring every nation prepared for war, to fight against the righteous nation. ⁸ It was a day of darkness and gloom, of tribulation and distress, affliction and great tumult on the earth! ⁹ And the whole righteous nation was troubled; they feared the evils that threatened them,^[d] and were ready to perish. ¹⁰ **Then they cried out to God**; and at their outcry, as though from a tiny spring, there came a great river, with abundant water; ¹¹ light came, and the sun rose, and the lowly were exalted and devoured those held in honor.

¹² Mordecai saw in this dream **what God had determined to do**, and after he awoke he had it on his mind, seeking all day to understand it in every detail.

A Plot against the King

12 Now Mordecai took his rest in the courtyard with Gabatha and Tharra, the two eunuchs of the king who kept watch in the courtyard. ² He overheard their conversation and inquired into their purposes, and learned that they were preparing to lay hands on King Artaxerxes; and he informed the king concerning them. ³ Then the king examined the two eunuchs, and after they had confessed it, they were led away to execution. ⁴ The king made a permanent record of these things, and Mordecai wrote an account of them. ⁵ And the king ordered Mordecai to serve in the court, and rewarded him for these things. ⁶ **But Haman son of Hammedatha, a Bougean**, who was in great honor with the king, **determined to injure Mordecai and his people because of the two eunuchs of the king**.

END OF ADDITION A

ADDITION B

The King's Letter

13 ^[g] This is a copy of the letter: "**The Great King, Artaxerxes**, writes the following to the governors of the hundred twenty-seven provinces from India to Ethiopia and to the officials under them:

² "Having become ruler of many nations and master of the whole **world (not elated with presumption of authority but always acting reasonably and with kindness)**, I have determined to settle the lives of my subjects in lasting tranquility and, in order to make my kingdom peaceable and open to travel throughout all its extent, to restore the peace desired by all people.

³“When I asked my counselors how this might be accomplished, Haman—who excels among us in sound judgment, and is distinguished for his unchanging goodwill and steadfast fidelity, and has attained the second place in the kingdom—⁴ pointed out to us that among all the nations in the world there is scattered a certain hostile people, who have laws contrary to those of every nation and continually disregard the ordinances of kings, so that the unifying of the kingdom that we honorably intend cannot be brought about. ⁵ **We understand that this people, and it alone, stands constantly in opposition to every nation,** perversely following a strange manner of life and laws, and is ill-disposed to our government, doing all the harm they can so that our kingdom may not attain stability.

⁶“Therefore we have decreed that those indicated to you in the letters written **by Haman, who is in charge of affairs and is our second father, shall all—wives and children included—be utterly destroyed by the swords of their enemies,** without pity or restraint, on the fourteenth day of the twelfth month, Adar, of this present year, ⁷ so that those who have long been hostile and remain so may in a single day go down in violence to Hades, and leave our government completely secure and untroubled hereafter.”

END OF ADDITION B

ADDITION C

Mordecai’s Prayer

13 ⁸ [a] Then Mordecai^[b] **prayed to the Lord, calling to remembrance all the works of the Lord.**

⁹ He said, “O Lord, Lord, you rule as King over all things, for the universe is in your power and there is **no one who can oppose you when it is your will to save Israel,** ¹⁰ **for you have made heaven and earth and every wonderful thing under heaven.** ¹¹ **You are Lord of all, and there is no one who can resist you, the Lord.** ¹² **You know all things; you know, O Lord,** that it was **not** in insolence or pride or for any love of glory that I did this, and refused to bow down to this proud Haman; ¹³ **for** I would have been willing to kiss the soles of his feet to save Israel! ¹⁴ **But I did this so that I might not set human glory above the glory of God,** and I will **not** bow down to anyone but you, who are my Lord; and I will not do these things in pride. ¹⁵ And now, **O Lord God and King, God of Abraham,** spare your people; for the eyes of our foes are upon us^[c] to annihilate us, and they desire to destroy the inheritance that has been yours from the beginning. ¹⁶ Do not neglect your portion, which you redeemed for yourself out of the land of Egypt. ¹⁷ Hear my prayer, and have mercy upon your inheritance; turn our mourning into feasting that we may live and sing praise to your name, O Lord; do not destroy **the lips^[d] of those who praise you.**”

¹⁸ And all Israel cried out mightily, for their death was before their eyes.

Esther’s Prayer

14 Then Queen Esther, seized with deadly anxiety, fled to the Lord. ² She took off her splendid apparel and put on the garments of distress and mourning, and instead of costly perfumes she covered her head with ashes and dung, and she utterly humbled her body; every part that she loved to adorn she covered with her tangled hair. ³ **She prayed to the Lord God of Israel, and said: “O my Lord, you only are our king; help me, who**

am alone and have no helper but you, ⁴ for my danger is in my hand. ⁵ Ever since I was born I have heard in the tribe of my family that you, O Lord, took Israel out of all the nations, and our ancestors from among all their forebears, for an everlasting inheritance, and that you did for them all that you promised. ⁶ And now we have sinned before you, and you have handed us over to our enemies ⁷ because we glorified their gods. **You are righteous, O Lord!** ⁸ **And now they are not satisfied that we are in bitter slavery,** but they have covenanted with their idols ⁹ to abolish what your mouth has ordained, and to destroy your inheritance, to stop the mouths of those who praise you and to quench your altar and the glory of your house, ¹⁰ to open the mouths of the nations for the praise of vain idols, and to magnify forever a mortal king.

¹¹ “O Lord, do not surrender your scepter to what has no being; and do not let them laugh at our downfall; but turn their plan against them, and make an example of him who began this against us. ¹² **Remember, O Lord; make yourself known in this time of our affliction, and give me courage, O King of the gods and Master of all dominion!** ¹³ Put eloquent speech in my mouth before the lion, and turn his heart to hate the man who is fighting against us, so that there may be an end of him and those who agree with him. ¹⁴ **But save us by your hand, and help me, who am alone and have no helper but you, O Lord.** ¹⁵ You have knowledge of all things, and you know that I hate the splendor of the wicked and abhor the bed of the uncircumcised and of any alien. ¹⁶ You know my necessity—that I abhor the sign of my proud position, which is upon my head on days when I appear in public. I abhor it like a filthy rag, and I do not wear it on the days when I am at leisure. ¹⁷ And your servant has **not** eaten at Haman’s table, and I have **not** honored the king’s feast or drunk the wine of libations. ¹⁸ **Your servant has had no joy since the day that I was brought here until now, except in you, O Lord God of Abraham.** ¹⁹ O God, whose might is over all, hear the voice of the despairing, and save us from the hands of evildoers. And save me from my fear!”

END OF ADDITION C

ADDITION D

Esther Is Received by the King

15 On the third day, **when she ended her prayer**, she took off the garments in which she had worshiped, and arrayed herself in splendid attire. ² Then, majestically adorned, **after invoking the aid of the all-seeing God and Savior**, she took two maids with her; ³ on one she leaned gently for support, ⁴ while the other followed, carrying her train. ⁵ She was radiant with perfect beauty, and she looked happy, as if beloved, but her heart was frozen with fear. ⁶ When she had gone through all the doors, she stood before the king. He was seated on his royal throne, clothed in the full array of his majesty, all covered with gold and precious stones. **He was most terrifying.**

⁷ Lifting his face, flushed with splendor, he looked at her in fierce anger. The queen faltered, and turned pale and faint, and collapsed on the head of the maid who went in front of her. ⁸ **Then God changed the spirit of the king to gentleness**, and in alarm he sprang from his throne and took her in his arms until she came to herself. He comforted her with soothing words, and said to her, ⁹ **“What is it, Esther? I am your husband.** ^[E] **Take courage;** ¹⁰ **You shall not die, for our law applies only to our subjects.** ^[E] **Come near.”**

¹¹ Then he raised the golden scepter and touched her neck with it; ¹² he embraced her, and said, “Speak to me.” ¹³ She said to him, “I saw you, my lord, like an angel of God, and my heart was shaken with fear at your glory. ¹⁴ For you are wonderful, my lord, and your countenance is full of grace.” ¹⁵ And while she was speaking, she fainted and fell. ¹⁶ Then the king was agitated, and all his servants tried to comfort her.

END OF ADDITION D

ADDITION E

The Decree of Artaxerxes

16 ^[g] The following is a copy of this letter:

“The Great King, Artaxerxes, to the governors of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, one hundred twenty-seven provinces, and to those who are loyal to our government, greetings.

² “Many people, the more they are honored with the most generous kindness of their benefactors, the more proud do they become, ³ and not only seek to injure our subjects, but in their inability to stand prosperity, they even undertake to scheme against their own benefactors. ⁴ They not only take away thankfulness from others, but, carried away by the boasts of those who know nothing of goodness, **they even assume that they will escape the evil-hating justice of God, who always sees everything.** ⁵ And often many of those who are set in places of authority have been made in part responsible for the shedding of innocent blood, and have been involved in irremediable calamities, by the persuasion of friends who have been entrusted with the administration of public affairs, ⁶ when these persons by the false trickery of their evil natures beguile the sincere goodwill of their sovereigns.

⁷ “What has been wickedly accomplished through the pestilent behavior of those who exercise authority unworthily can be seen, not so much from the more ancient records that we hand on, as from investigation of matters close at hand. ^[g] ⁸ In the future we will take care to render our kingdom quiet and peaceable for all, ⁹ by changing our methods and always judging what comes before our eyes with more equitable consideration. ¹⁰ For Haman son of Hammedatha, a **Macedonian (really an alien to the Persian blood, and quite devoid of our kindness)**, having become our guest, ¹¹ enjoyed so fully the goodwill that we have for every nation that he was called our father and was continually bowed down to by all as the person second to the royal throne. ¹² But, unable to restrain his arrogance, he undertook to deprive us of our kingdom and our life, ^[h] ¹³ and with intricate craft and deceit asked for the destruction of Mordecai, our savior and perpetual benefactor, and of Esther, the blameless partner of our kingdom, together with their whole nation. ¹⁴ **He thought that by these methods he would catch us undefended and would transfer the kingdom of the Persians to the Macedonians.**

¹⁵ “But we find that the Jews, who were consigned to annihilation by this thrice-accursed man, **are not evildoers, but are governed by most righteous laws ¹⁶ and are children of the living God, most high, most mighty, ^[i] who has directed the kingdom both for us and for our ancestors in the most excellent order.**

¹⁷ “You will therefore do well **not to put in execution the letters sent by Haman son of Hammedatha,** ¹⁸ since he, the one who did these things, has been hanged at the gate of Susa with all his

household—**for God, who rules over all things, has speedily inflicted on him the punishment that he deserved.**

¹⁹ “Therefore post a copy of this letter publicly in every place, **and permit the Jews to live under their own laws.** ²⁰ And give them reinforcements, so that on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, Adar, on that very day, they may defend themselves against those who attack them at the time of oppression. ²¹ **For God, who rules over all things, has made this day to be a joy for his chosen people instead of a day of destruction for them.**

²² “Therefore you shall observe this with all good cheer as a notable day among your commemorative festivals, ²³ so that both now and hereafter it may represent deliverance for you^[i] and the loyal Persians, but that it may be a reminder of destruction for those who plot against us.

²⁴ “Every city and country, without exception, that does not act accordingly shall be destroyed in wrath with spear and fire. It shall be made not only impassable for human beings, but also most hateful to wild animals and birds for all time.

END OF ADDITION E

ADDITION F

Mordecai’s Dream Fulfilled

⁴^[a] And Mordecai said, “**These things have come from God;** ⁵ for I remember the dream that I had concerning these matters, **and none of them has failed to be fulfilled.** ⁶ There was the little spring that became a river, and there was light and sun and abundant water—the river is Esther, whom the king married and made queen. ⁷ The two dragons are Haman and myself. ⁸ The nations are those that gathered to destroy the name of the Jews. ⁹ And my nation, **this is Israel, who cried out to God and was saved. The Lord has saved his people; the Lord has rescued us from all these evils; God has done great signs and wonders, wonders that have never happened among the nations.** ¹⁰ For this purpose he made two lots, one for the people of God and one for all the nations, ¹¹ and these two lots came to the hour and moment and day of decision before God and among all the nations. ¹² And God remembered his people and vindicated his inheritance. ¹³ So they will observe these days in the month of Adar, on the fourteenth and fifteenth^[b] of that month, with an assembly and joy and gladness **before God**, from generation to generation forever among his people **Israel.**”

Postscript

11 ¹ In the fourth year of the **reign of Ptolemy and Cleopatra, Dositheus**, who said that he was a priest and a Levite,^[c] and his son Ptolemy brought to Egypt^[d] the preceding Letter about Purim, which they said was authentic and had been translated by Lysimachus son of Ptolemy, one of the residents of Jerusalem.

END OF ADDITION F

3. **Enjoy the history!**

Esther 1:1 NOW it came to pass in the days of **Ahasuerus**, (this is Ahasuerus which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces:) **Esther 1:2** That in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace, **Esther 1:3** In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him: **Esther 1:4** When he shewed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty many days, even an hundred and fourscore days.

Daniel 6:1 It pleased **Darius** to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; **Daniel 6:2** And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage.

This, of course, is a much debated issue:

- **Vashti is unknown by that name → possibly Ametris**
- **If she is Ametris, she is back in power by the time of Artaxerxes.**
- **No knowledge of Esther**
- **No knowledge of Mordecai (although his name occurs many times in that era & location)**

How do we account for this?

Historical novel / novella

Historical accident (we don't have other records)

Historical erasure

Historical non-starter

- **Esther is not the story “we” want to tell. That story is found in**
The LXX is not a translation but a retelling with additional (made up) material.

Thoughts:

- **This story is embedded in history**

Esther 1:1 NOW it came to pass in the days of **Ahasuerus**, (this is Ahasuerus which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces:)

Esther 1:3 In the **third year** of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him:

Esther 2:16 So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, **in the seventh year** of his reign.

Esther 3:7 In the first month, that is, the month Nisan, **in the twelfth year** of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar.

Esther 1:20 And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great,) all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small. **Esther 1:21** And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan: **Esther 1:22** For he sent letters into all the king's provinces, into every province according to the writing thereof, **and to every people after their language**, that every man should bear rule in his own house, **and that it should be published according to the language of every people.**

Esther 3:12 Then were the king's scribes called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors that were over every province, and to the rulers of every people of every province **according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language**; in the name of king Ahasuerus was it written, and sealed with the king's ring. **Esther 3:13** And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey.

Esther 8:9 Then were the king's scribes called at that time in the third month, that is, the month Sivan, on the three and twentieth day thereof; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded unto the Jews, and to the lieutenants, and the deputies and rulers of the provinces which are from India unto Ethiopia, an hundred twenty and seven provinces, unto every province **according to the**

writing thereof, **and** unto every people after their language, and to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language.

- **The story reveals details of Persian life unknowable later & to outsiders (Remember: no wikipedia)**

Plots	Persian names
Court protocols	Timing
Geography	Persians claiming to be Medians???

Most of the conflict stems from differences with Herodotus.

- **The story is obviously dramatized history.**

It is not a chronicle / the congressional record

Dramatic events told in a dramatic way!

4. Enjoy the theology!

Esther 9:24 Because **Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews**, had devised against the Jews to destroy them, **and had cast Pur**, that is, the lot, to consume them, and to destroy them; **Esther 9:25** But when Esther came before the king, he commanded by letters that his wicked device, which he devised against the Jews, **should return upon his own head**, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. **Esther 9:26** **Wherefore they called these days Purim after the name of Pur.** Therefore for all the words of this letter, and of that which they had seen concerning this matter, and which had come unto them, **Esther 9:32** And the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim; and it was written in the book.

Proverbs 16:33 The lot is cast into the lap; But the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.

How can we have Theology without God?

1. The providence of God

God using all things (means) to accomplish His will indirectly yet... sovereignly!

2. The hiddenness of God

Psalm 89:46 **How long, LORD? wilt thou hide thyself for ever? Shall thy wrath burn like fire? Psalm 89:47** **Remember** how short my time is: Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain? **Psalm 89:48** **What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah. Psalm 89:49** **Lord, where are thy former lovingkindnesses, Which thou swarest unto David in thy truth? Psalm 89:50** **Remember,** Lord, the reproach of thy servants; How I do bear in my bosom the reproach of all the mighty people;

3. The “felt” absence of God!

4. The sovereignty of God and the weakness &/ hopelessness of God’s people (1776)

Esther 2:9 **And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him;** and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, which were meet to be given her, out of the king’s house: **and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women.**

Esther 2:15 Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king’s chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. **And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her.**

Esther 2:17 **And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti.**

Esther 2:21 In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus.

Esther 3:1 After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him.

Esther 4:12 And they told to Mordecai Esther's words. **Esther 4:13** Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, **Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. Esther 4:14** For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and **who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this? Esther 4:16** Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: **and if I perish, I perish.**

Esther 5:2 And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre.

Esther 6:1 On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king.

Esther 8:3 And Esther spake yet **again before the king**, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews. **Esther 8:4** **Then the king held out the golden sceptre toward Esther.** So Esther arose, and stood before the king,

Esther 3:15 The posts went out, being hastened by the king's commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace. **And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed.**

Esther 8:15 And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: **and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad. Esther 8:16** The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour.

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs
And works His sov'reign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flow'r.

Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.