

Handout: Esther Lesson 3

Significant dates associated with King Ahasuerus/Xerxes I:

1. Ahasuerus/Xerxes I was born c. 519 BC, the son of King Darius I (r. 522-486 BC) and Atossa, daughter of King Cyrus the Great.
2. Ahasuerus/Xerxes I succeeded his father as King of the Persian Empire in 486 BC when he was about 33 years old.
3. He married Esther in 479 BC.
4. In 474 BC, at the instigation of his prime minister, Haman, he issued an edict calling for the massacre of all the Jews living in the Persian Empire.
5. Ahasuerus/Xerxes I was assassinated in his bedchamber by a royal attendant in 465 BC. The Greek historian, Herodotus (484-425 BC), wrote extensively about Xerxes and described him as tall and handsome (*History*, 7.187.2).

Mordecai's prayer in LXX 4:17a-h (13:8-18) consists of four parts:

1. praise (verses 17a-c)
2. confession (verse 17d)
3. self-justification (verse 17e)
4. petition (verses 17f-h)

He addresses God as "Lord" (Kyrios) seven times in his prayer (17b twice, c, d, e, f, and h).

In LXX 4:17d-e (13:12-14), Mordecai protests that he can only give honor to God, yet there is nothing in Scripture or the laws of the Sinai covenant that stated one could not show deference to rulers, officials, or prophets:

1. *At this, Abraham rose and bowed low to the local people, the Hittites (Gen 23:7).*
2. *It was Joseph, as the man in authority over the country who allocated the rations to the entire population. So Joseph's brother went and bowed down before him, their faces touching the ground (Gen 42:6). This event happened when Joseph's brothers thought he was the Egyptian governor.*
3. *So the woman of Tekoa went to the king (David) and falling on her face to the ground, prostrated herself (2 Sam 14:4).*
4. *She knelt (Bathsheba) prostrated herself before the king (David), and the king said, "What do you want?" (1 Kng 1:16).*
5. *The king (David) was told, "The prophet Nathan is here"; and he came into the king's presence and prostrated himself on his face before the king (1 Kng 16:23).*
6. *She (the Israelite woman from Shunem) went in and, falling at his feet (the prophet Elisha), prostrated herself on the floor and then picked up her son and went out (2 Kng 4:37).*

In Esther's Prayer in 4:LXX 17k-z (14:1-19), she also addresses God as "Lord," literally Kyrios, seven times (17l, m, n, q, r, t, and y) and her prayer is twice as long as Mordecai's and divides into seven parts:

1. She acknowledged God is her true King, the only God, and her only help (verse 17l).
2. She made a declaration of her covenant heritage (verse 17m).
3. She made a confession of Israel's collective sins against God and His covenant and His just punishment (verses 17n).

4. She accused the Jew's enemies of planning to deprive God of His "heritage," the covenant people (verses 17o-p).
5. She pleaded with God to turn the evil plots of their enemies against them (verses 17q-r).
6. She petitioned God to give her courage and gave a review of her loathsome life among the pagans (verses 17s-y).
7. She petitioned God to save her people from the plans of the wicked (verse 17z).

We think of Esther's life as the queen of the most powerful nation in the ancient Near East as a life of luxury, but in 17s-y, Esther recounts how loathsome her life has been since the King chose her:

1. She hates the royal honors from the godless.
2. She loathes having to sleep with an uncircumcised pagan.
3. She has no freedom.
4. She loathes the crown that is a symbol of her royal station as though it was an unclean menstrual rag.
5. She takes no pleasure in eating pagan food.
6. She has found no happiness since the day she became the queen.
7. Her only joy is in the Lord God of Abraham.

In LXX 5:1a-2b (15:4-19), Esther dared to approach the King after fasting and praying for three days. In Scripture, the number three always represents something significant about to happen in God's divine plan. See the document "The Symbolic Significance of the Third Day in Scripture":

<https://www.agapebiblestudy.com/documents/The%20Symbolic%20Significance%20of%20the%20third%20day.htm>. At the end of the three days, she took three actions:

1. She took off her sackcloth and put on her royal apparel.
2. She prayed for God's protection.
3. She took two ladies-in-waiting with her and, passing various gates that led into the interior parts of the king's palace, she entered the king's presence.

She was not physically or emotionally up to the challenge, but at the very moment when she needed God's help, He "changed the king's heart" and quenched his anger (LXX 5:1e/15:11).

There are two more acrostics in the Hebrew text of 5:4 and 13:

1. 5:4, "*Would it please the king,*" Esther replied, "*to come with Haman today to the banquet I have prepared for him?*" In the Hebrew text, "let the king and Haman come this day" is the second acrostic in the Book of Esther with the first letter of each Hebrew word spelling YHWH, the Divine Name. It and other such acrostics are the only references to God in the Hebrew version of Esther.
2. 5:13, *But what do I care about all this when all the while I see Mordecai the Jew sitting there at the Chancellery [Gatehouse]?"* In the Hebrew text, this is the third acrostic in the Book of Esther and should read "Yet all this avails me nothing" with the last letter of each Hebrew word spelling the Divine Name backward as HWHY. See the first acrostic in 1:20 in Lesson 1.