

That Night the King Could Not Sleep

6: 1-14

DIG: Ironies abound! What noise might be keeping the king awake that night (5:14)? What does he do when he cannot sleep? What other ironies do you see in the hidden identity? In the robe? In the friends' counsel? Where do you see the hand of God in all of this?

REFLECT: What spiritual lessons can be learned when we contrast Haman's pride and hatred with Mordecai's meekness and loyalty? When you do not get credit for a "good deed" how do you feel about it? What recognition or rewards matter most to you? How do you guard against the self-deceptive and destructive nature of pride in your life?

Esther, the hostess, has been directing developments during her dinner-party, but now the author allows us to see what happens to each of the guests immediately afterwards.⁷⁵

This is arguably the most ironically comic scene in the entire Bible.⁷⁶ That same night of the first banquet **the king could not sleep**. The noise from Haman hoisting his death pole seemingly keeping him awake. So he ordered the book of the chronicles, the record of his reign, to be brought in and read to him (6:1). **The Hebrew verb is more than a simple past tense, and a better rendering would be, and they kept on reading them.** The official record of the Persian kings was recorded. From this official document the king would make a list of those were to be rewarded for their faithfulness.

It was found recorded there that Mordecai had exposed Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, who had conspired to assassinate King Ahasuerus (6:2). God was even in control of the reading material Ahasuerus selected. Any part of the chronicles could have been read to him, but the book falls open to the account of how Mordecai foiled the assassination plot against the king by his royal bodyguards. **Providence!** Had this not taken place, the whole story could have been a tragedy rather than a comedy, and the Jews would have been destroyed.

Sure enough the king read about Mordecai's loyalty five years earlier and decided to reward him. "What honor and recognition has Mordecai received for this?" he asked. "Nothing has been done for him," his attendants answered (6:3). Ahasuerus was mortified that nothing had been done. The fact that Mordecai didn't say a word and

continued to serve **the king** faithfully spoke volumes about **his** character. It was important for **Persian** kings to reward people publically as a means of promoting loyalty in such dangerous times. The record of **Mordecai's** loyalty "just happens" to come to **the king's** attention at the very instant that **Haman** "just happens" to be plotting **his** death.

Very early that morning **the outer court** was empty except for one lone visitor and **the king's** guards. **Haman** had been at work all night personally supervising the hoisting of **his** death pole. To make sure **he** would be the first one to see **the king** the next morning **he** arrived sooner than usual. Even such an important person as **Haman** might be frustrated by a long list of appointments, so **he** wanted to be first in line. **The king** said, "Who is in the court?" Now **Haman** had just entered the outer court of the palace to speak to the king about impaling **Mordecai** on the pole **he** had set up for him (6:4). **This is the beginning of his undoing.** Now minutes after being reminded that **Mordecai** had saved **his** life, the wicked **Haman** arrived at **the palace** in order to request permission to impale him. **Providence!**

His attendants answered, "Haman is standing in the court." **He** "just happened" to be there at that very time. "Bring him in," the king ordered (6:5). **The king's mind was so full with the thought of rewarding Mordecai that he did not ask Haman what had brought him at such an early hour.** When **Haman** entered, the king asked him, "What should be done for the man the king delights to honor" (6:6a)? There was a meeting of the persons but not of the minds.⁷⁷ The self-absorbed **Haman** thought **the king** was talking about **him!**

Haman's eyes must have lit up as **he** thought of ways that **he himself** could be paraded around the city with **royal robes** and a crown. Now **Haman** thought to himself, "Who is there that the king would rather honor than me?" So **he** answered the king, "For the man the king delights to honor, have them bring a royal robe the king has worn and a horse the king has ridden, one with a royal crest placed on the horse's head (6:6b-8). **Assyrian reliefs depict king's horses with tall, pointed ornaments like royal turbans on their heads.** There is some evidence from history that **the king's royal robes**, as well as his bed and throne, were believed to have the power to pass on the advantages of royalty in an almost magical way. But even without the magic, wearing **the king's robe** and crown would surely elevate that person's prestige in the public eye. And since **Haman** was already prime minister, **he** couldn't ask for a promotion, so **he** asked for power.

There was a similar incident involving **royal robes** symbolically pointing to King David's rise to power. Before the Babylonian Captivity, Jonathan, **the royal** prince and heir of

Isra'el's throne, symbolized his covenant with David by giving him his **royal robes (First Samuel 18:1-5)**. Immediately, David was so successful that he was promoted to a **high rank in King Saul's army**. Eventually David was the one to wear the kingly **robes** that would have been Jonathan's if he had lived.

Haman daydreamed about receiving public recognition for what **he** had only enjoyed in the isolation of the palace. Blinded by his own arrogance, he said: **Then let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the king's most noble princes. Let them robe the man the king delights to honor, and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, then repeating exactly the same words as the king, as if mulling it around in his mind, he said: This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor (6:9)!**" If there was ever a picture of **pride going before destruction (Proverbs 16:18)** this is it!

Little did **Haman** dream that **the king** had **Mordecai** in mind. **"Go at once," the king commanded Haman. "Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate. Do not neglect anything you have recommended" (6:10)**. How magnificently **Haman** tripped over his own pride. **The king** had no way of knowing of the mutual hatred between the two, but the citizens who watched the parade through the city square could no doubt understood the irony of the situation.

Haman's efforts at having himself elevated by **the king** had only brought him pain. **So Haman got the robe and the horse. He robed Mordecai, and led him on horseback through the city streets, proclaiming before him, "This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor" (6:11)!** Those words must have seemed like gravel in his mouth. **Haman's** splendid humiliation could not have been greater. One can only imagine the bitterness he felt.

*Chapter 6 contains the first of many reversals to follow (see **Bi - Now Write Another Decree in the King's Name in Behalf of the Jews** for **The Reversals in Esther**). On the very day **Haman** goes to **Ahasuerus** seeking permission to kill **Mordecai (6:4)**, **Haman** ends up not only not killing **Mordecai**, but publicly honoring him in the king's name.*

Afterward **Mordecai** returned to the king's gate. The author makes no comments on **Mordecai's** mood. Probably nothing was said between the two. Each knew only too well what the other was thinking. **But Haman**, utterly disgraced, rushed home, with his head covered in grief (6:12), and told **Zeresh** his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him (6:13a).

His advisers and his wife Zeresh said to him, "Since Mordecai, before whom your downfall has started, is of Jewish origin, you cannot stand against him - you will surely come to ruin" (6:13b)! When Haman had plotted the annihilation of a certain people (3:8), he forgot to mention that they were Jews! After his wife and all his advisors heard that Mordecai was Jewish, they were shocked. They believed that not only would his plan fail, but Haman would also come to ruin in the attempt. The full scope of Haman's disastrous miscalculation begins to take shape.

The way the Jews had survived the exile and preserved their identity did not go unnoticed by them. Edom, a nation of similar size, became extinct even though the Edomites were not deported (Malachi 1:2-5). The continuing survival of the Jewish people to this present day continues to point to the providence of ADONAI.⁷⁸ Neither Haman or Hitler can possibly stand against God's people, the apple of His eye (Deuteronomy 32:10b).

While they were still talking with him, according to custom, eunuchs were sent by the king to escort Haman to the banquet Esther had prepared, who arrived and hurried him away (6:14). Therefore, with his world crashing down around him, he was hustled off to Esther's second banquet. At one time he really wanted to go, but now he dreaded the thought of being there. The banquet would reveal Esther's true desires.

What about God's providence in our own lives? Is it not true that He has worked in your own life, often through events that were unexpected or seemed insignificant at the time? Consider your own conversion to Messiah. In my case, I came to the Lord teaching a Sunday school class. That's right . . . teaching a Sunday school class. I was not raised in church and didn't know I wasn't saved! My son was in the eighth grade at the time and they needed someone to teach his class. They knew I was a high school history teacher and so asked me. I said, "You've got to be kidding, I don't know anything about the Bible." To which they replied, "We've got these booklets that the kids go through, you just have to stay one page ahead." Well, I was an expert at staying one page ahead, so I said yes. And to teach the lesson I had to dig into the Scriptures provided, and by that June I was a new creature in Christ (Second Corinthians 5:17). I don't know what day it was, but I was changed.

Consider how ADONAI guided and directed your life. How did you meet and marry your spouse? Where do you live? Why are you living there? What circumstances led you to your current job? Christ's care and protection for His children seldom come with lightning bolts from the sky, but constantly with the unfolding circumstances of each day, one thing leads to another. Yes, you have choices, but ultimately the tiny miracles of God's providence direct your path.

Obviously not all of our experiences are pleasant. Even in the confines of the **providence** of ADONAI tragedies can happen. Life can be as cruel as the plot to destroy **the Jews of Persia** starting on the eve of the Passover. The death of a loved one, serious illness, wayward children, broken relationships, shattered hopes and dreams are all links in the uninterrupted chain of life. While none of these things are good in themselves, even in the worst of life's circumstances the Lord is always there, working behind the scenes for your benefit. **And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).**

Believers today can face threatening circumstances with hope, only because of the New Covenant in the Messiah (**Jeremiah 31:31-34**). **The Jews of Persia** were delivered because of the ancient covenant ADONAI made with Isra'el on Mount Sinai. The sudden and unexpected reversal of circumstances found in **Esther** was deliverance against all odds from certain death to abundant life. Before entering the Promised Land, Moses set the covenant before the new generation of Isra'el, and in doing so set before them **life and prosperity, death and destruction (Deuteronomy 30:15-20)**. The reversal of destiny from death to life experienced by them in **Esther**, made that covenant tangible for **the Jews of Persia**. And if it is in His will, there are times in *our* lives when faith in the B'rit Chadashah of Jesus Christ can do the same for us (**First Corinthians 15:3-4**).