

Chiastic Structure of Esther

The Demise of Haman and the Elevation of Mordecai

A: Ch 1v1-2

The author declares the glory of Ahasuerus

A1: Ch 10

Ahasuerus declares the glory of Mordecai

B: Ch 1v3-8

Two feasts of the Persians to celebrate glory, one for princes of all the provinces (180 days), one for the inhabitants of Shushan (7 days)

B1: Ch 9:17-32

Two feasts of the Jews to celebrate victory, one for the Jews in all the provinces (14th), one for the Jews in Shushan (15th)

The Demise of Vashti and the Elevation of Esther

Ch 1v9-2v20

Vashti's feast

Invited to wear the crown royal

Refuses to appear before the king

Wise men suggest a decree to remove

Vashti from being queen

The King remembers

Ahasuerus holds a feast and calls it Esther's feast

Invited to wear the royal crown

Esther appears before the king

Wise men suggest a decree to seek a new queen

C: Ch 2v21-23

Mordecai and Esther work together to save the king

C1: Ch 9:1-16

Mordecai and Esther work together to save the Jews

D: Ch 3v1-6

Haman is promoted

D1: Ch 8:15-17

Mordecai is promoted

E: Ch 3v7-15

Haman's decree to destroy all the Jews (written according to all that Haman commanded)

E1: Ch 8:7-14

Mordecai's decree to save all the Jews (written according to all that Mordecai commanded)

V12 Kings scribes called

V12 Sent to the Kings lieutenants and governors

V12 Over every province

V12 Written in the king's name

V12 Sealed with the king's ring

V13 Letters sent by post

V13 To destroy, to kill and cause to perish

V13 Little children and women

V13 In one day

V15 Posts hastened by the king's commandment

V15 Shushan was perplexed

V9 Kings scribes called

V9 Sent to the king's lieutenants and deputies

V9 Of the provinces

V10 Written in the king's name

V10 Sealed with the king's ring

V10 Letters sent by post

V11 To destroy, to slay and to cause to perish

V11 Both little children and women

V12 Upon one day

V14 Posts hastened by the kings commandments

(V15 Shushan rejoiced and was glad)

F: Ch 4v1-5v5

Mordecai and Esther work covertly to seek reversal of the decree (involves Esther appearing before the king hoping the golden sceptre is held out)

F1: Ch: 8:1-6

Mordecai and Esther work openly to seek reversal of the decree (involves Esther appearing before the king and the golden sceptre is held out)

G: Ch 5v6-9

Esther's first feast with the king and Haman. Haman leaves joyful and delighted

G1: Ch 7:1-10

Esther's second feast with the king and Haman. Haman leaves with head covered and is hanged.

H: Ch 5v10-14

Haman rushes home to celebrate with his wife and friends. They speak supportively and discuss ways for Mordecai's demise

I: Ch 6v1-4

The king reads about Mordecai going unrewarded, just as Haman enters the court to speak about Mordecai's hanging

H1: Ch 6:12-14

Haman rushes home to commiserate with his wife and friends. They are no longer supportive and discuss the beginning of Haman's demise

I1: Ch 6:10-11

The king commands that Mordecai be rewarded and Haman leaves the court to proclaim Mordecai's honouring

J: Ch 6v5-9

The centre, the climax, the pivot to the whole book.

Haman's heart is exposed revealing his enormous ego and selfishness

It's the moment Haman thinks he has won – This is his full-blown pride on display. He will be honoured, and Mordecai will be hanged. Yet everything is dramatically reversed from this point on.

Notes:

1. A key to knowing that the book is written in inverted (reverse) parallel is found in Est 9v1 with the phrase "**turned** to the contrary". The purpose of the book is to highlight how the plight of the Jews was turned around. This is further demonstrated in 9v22 "the month which was **turned** unto them from sorrow to joy and from mourning into a good day".
Turned – Hebrew = 'haphak' which Brown-Driver-Briggs says means 'to reverse'.
Hence not only is the story one of a reversal of fortune as well as of roles (cp also 9v25) but also written in the literary structure of chiasmic inverted (reverse) parallel.
2. The success of the reversal is found in the precise timing of the characters and events in the story. Everything happens on particular days/nights indicating the overriding providential control of God who had to work to an incredibly tight schedule.
Ch 1 – Esther appears on **ONE NIGHT** before the king
Ch 5 – Esther would appear before the king on the **THIRD DAY**
Ch 5 – Esther invites the king **THIS DAY** to a feast
Ch 5 – She invites the king to another feast **TOMORROW**
Ch – 6 On **THAT NIGHT** the king could not sleep ...etc, etc
The precise timing that God displays in the book is dramatically contrasted with Haman's method of timing – by the throwing of a dice to select a 'lucky day' (Est 3v7)

The most precise timing in the book is found in the centre where the development of the story brings a situation that demands at the exact moment Haman enters before the king, that the king must speak first - which he does. In fact the king never gets to hear why Haman was even there so early. Had Haman spoken first there possibly would not have been a reversal in the story.

3. The two previous points demonstrate what the whole purpose of the book of Esther is all about. Because at another precise moment, this time in the centre of human history (Rom 5v6, Acts 2v23) there was a similar occasion when men went early in the morning to ask for a man to be hanged (John 18v28). On that occasion God's timing allowed for them to ask Pilate for Jesus to be hanged and he finally relented. Jesus was then put on the cross and hanged. The Jewish leaders were ecstatic – they, like Haman, thought they had won. Their pride and envy was on full display. Yet three days later everything is dramatically reversed. In fact from this point on the whole of human history is dramatically reversed.
Hence the book of Esther is a cameo of what God has been doing on a much larger scale with the whole of human history. Yet not many people can see it because to them God's providential hand is not seen. But to those who can see God's hand in the book of Esther they also can see God's hand at work in human history.