Evidence for a Typology of Christ in the Book of Esther

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Evidence for a Typology of Christ
in the Book of Esther

L. Clayton Fausett

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT
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Initially the Esther text was disputed and discarded by the early Church fathers. More recently in the 20th and 21st centuries Christian scholarship has dramatized, distorted, culturalized, feminized, or even politicized it. Indeed, the book has scarcely been defined as divine or devotional. While it has received condemnation from scholars, theologians like Martin Luther concluded that it would be best eliminated from the canon altogether. This thesis seeks to bring the text of Esther back into consideration for valid christological interpretation by presenting evidence of a typology of Christ as exhibited in God’s plan of salvation.

In making such an assessment, this thesis presents a lexically-based evaluation from the Hebrew content of various words and phrases from the text, as well as within the larger biblical text. Determining their meaning and usage will serve to elucidate whether the text strategically incorporates christological connections evidencing of this claim.

I consider and apply a popular typologically related assessment of figurative language and symbolism, which also provides diagnostic criteria for typologies. This research thus entails a broad and varied examination of the figurative language and diverse use of symbolism including allusion, intertextual referencing, narrative sequencing, and rhetorical devices among others.

Consequently, this broadly-based analysis provides a rich array of evidence that supports a valid typology for Christ in His various roles including His messianic kingship within God’s plan of salvation for mankind, as well as other key concepts within God’s plan, or associated roles, for example that of Satan.

Keywords: Book of Esther, Christology, typology, symbolism, Biblical Hebrew
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1 INTRODUCTION

The Book of Esther is often considered unacceptable or an “opus non gratum” (Bush, 1998, p. 1). For example, Esther is one of only two books in the Hebrew Bible that does not explicitly mention God or convey the common devotional Jewish practices. Relegated at times with disdain amidst the Christian canon, it has also evoked no cordiality from non-Christian critics. The theologian Martin Luther “criticized how it Judaized too greatly as well as leaned too heavily to pagan impropriety,” leading him to contemptuously conclude it would best be eliminated altogether from the canon (Filson, 1957, p. 10). Pfeiffer wrote, “such a secular book hardly deserves a place in the canon of the scriptures” (Pfeiffer, 1957, p. 743).

My research provides evidence contrary to these opinions by validating how the book of Esther actually serves as a substantial typological witness for Christ in His pre-mortal, mortal, and post-mortal roles of salvation. This is exemplified primarily through the tandem roles of Esther and Mordecai. I conduct a lexical evaluation, often based on Hebrew content, of various words and phrases within the text to ascertain their meaning. Using this investigation of word usage in conjunction with an examination of symbolism, narrative sequencing, inter-textual references, and allusions, I will demonstrate the existence of a rich array of christological types throughout the book.

This is not meant to be an in-depth study construed on a narrow set of criteria, but rather a broader based analysis. As such it reads as part lexical analysis, part reference work, part academic interpretation, and part devotional reflection. It considers snippets of text from the book of Esther and documents how they evoke possible types foreshadowing Christ and His mission. The result is a substantial corpus of evidence that will argue for support of a Christ-centered typological reading of the text.

The benefits of such an analysis are potentially far-reaching. First, it could bring the text back into greater relevance for further religious discussion. It would also provide a more
comprehensive typology for the book of Esther. This, in turn, opens the possibility for others to perform a similar analysis of other passages involving prominent female figures of the Old Testament. Finally, it would help validate the basic tenet outlined by Christianity that central to God’s plan of salvation and agency is Jesus Christ’s atonement and preeminent role as the Messiah whose mission was foreordained and orchestrated to save, redeem and exalt mankind as co-heirs in His kingdom.

The Background section summarizes the various theological and theoretical perspectives that scholars have previously presented to provide numerous insights and contribute helpful methods that apply to my study. It also considers secular, rabbinical, and Christian attitudes toward the Book of Ether over time. Particular criteria for typological analysis will be mentioned.

The Approach section outlines the methods used in this thesis. It mentions strategies and criteria used for identifying possible types in the text, as well as particulars on formatting and presentation of the documentary evidence.

The Findings section proceeds through the text of the Book of Esther sequentially, listing each text excerpt in turn along with its corresponding typological interpretation. The Results section quantifies and summarizes the findings and sketches possible future work that could derive from this thesis.
2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Religious and Secular Attitudes

Esther is one of only two canonical biblical books that is completely void of explicit reference to deity and lacking overt mention of common religious practices, Jewish law, or Torah. This effectively solidified Esther’s initial status as an untouchable scriptural text. It is regarded as canon by the Roman Catholic Church, having been accorded such status at the councils of Hippo and Carthage in AD 392-393. Yet it has failed to generate much commentary. It appears to have been purposefully overlooked—if not dismissed—by the early Church fathers, evidenced by the scarcity of early Christian commentary. Scant allegorical mention of it by the Western Fathers surfaced during the Middle Ages. Furthermore, in “the Eastern Church there isn’t even acceptance of it as part of the canon until late in the eighth century CE” (Barton & Muddiman, 2012, p. 325) suggesting that for all intents and purposes that Esther seems to have been problematic and hence mostly neglected in early Christianity. Its complete absence from the Dead Sea Scrolls likewise attests to possible controversy or difficulty regarding its nature in achieving canonical acceptance in early Judaism as well.

It wasn’t until the twentieth century that an increased scholarly interest for the book of Esther finally emerged. Biblical interpretation during this time period started shifting towards a more secular focus of literary criticism rather than mere religious criticism and thus Esther attracted interest on other levels besides the devotional level. One area of convergence for “both the Jewish and Christian consideration of examination of the text was on the premises of its cultural context of Purim”¹ (Hoshander, 1923, p. 10). Roberts pointed out how “the book of Esther is overtly identified with the establishment of the feast of Purim and as it stands, is the obvious purpose of the book to provide a rationale for this Jewish festival” (Roberts, 1987, p. 319). While the custom of Purim offered for

¹ Purim is a Jewish festival celebrated with a public reading of the Book of Esther to commemorate how the Jews living in Persia were saved from extermination by Queen Esther and her cousin Mordecai.
Judaism an annual time for remembering Esther’s and Mordecai’s salvation efforts of their people in the midst of an existential threat, no such venerable tradition developed for the Christian side. Instead, celebration of such political deliverance served rather to increase the negative evaluation of the text with a heightened sensitivity to its nationalistic nuances. As Esther’s paramount purpose became more singularly focused on the secular nationalistic celebration of Purim, its admission into cannon became even more problematic for some Christian scholars.

For instance, shortly after WWII Anderson (1950) objected to its inclusion, from the political viewpoint that it sanctioned extreme Jewish nationalism. The thrust of his critique mainly focused on the text’s revolving scenes of violent revenge and incumbent joyous jubilation over the termination of one’s enemy. Other such politically charged commentary continued to permeate into the beginning of this century, like that of Perry & Schweitzer’s book, who turned Esther into a springboard to expound upon anti-Semitism hostility aimed towards the Jews (2008). This sort of evaluation however triggered other rebuttals like that of Miller (2014). She suggested how the relationship of the three variant Esther versions, the Masoretic Text (MT) and the two variant Greek interpretive retranslations (LXX, AT), actually contributed to the evoking of the emergence of anti-Semitic and feminist critiques.2

Regarding feminist critiques, a continual controversy has surrounded the appraisal of Esther and her deeds as a feminine role model. For some, her role was diminished while Mordecai’s was amplified. Some objected to her use of sexuality and food while others praised such useful tactics for the powerless (Barton & Muddiman, 2012, p. 32). Still others critiqued the text as emanating from the male perspective regarding women within a patriarchal social order, evoking new meaning of the subjugation of women (Wyler, 2014).2

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2 The three earliest Esther traditions include foremost the Masoretic tradition of Esther (MT). Next, what appears to be a rewritten version of the MT is the Greek Septuagint version (LXX), dating between the late 2nd and early 1st century BCE. This version at times is periphrastic and contains six narrative expansions to the text, which are often referred to as additions. Finally the Lucianic, Alpha Text or Lucia recension text (AT) dating between the 10th and 13th centuries, resembling the LXX almost word for word yet excludes other material while including material not found in the LSS.
1995, pp. 134-135). Needless to say, a plethora of direction from the evaluative feminine aspect has been generated from this text. For Miller, the story of Esther projected a “timeless message meant to address the issue of justice” (2014, p. 207). She suggested how Israel would continue facing various challenges in the form of anti-Semitism even to the present.

Numerous other secular evaluations continued to arise; some with a more literary focus proposed alternative theories for the peculiar nature and unique genre of Esther. When the exiled Russian scholar Bakhtin’s (1968) writings eventually surfaced and spread to the Western academic world in the early fifties and sixties they too had their impact on how to view this ancient text.

Bakhtin (1968) views history through the genre of carnivalesque literature. Carnivalesque refers to a literary mode that subverts traditional rules and orders to depict things turned upside-down in a disordered atmosphere of the unexpected. Its origin is traced to the concepts and behavior of the carnival, combining the sacred with the profane, and chaos with humor; where/when the routine of every day life is suspended. The carnivalesque genre originated primarily as a reaction to a dominant force or dogma of an official culture by farcically fashioning a carnivalized language, ideas, and themes in order to counter such an oppressive atmosphere.

Bakhtin’s analysis stirred Craig (1995) to suggest that unless the text of Esther is viewed through the spectacles of a carnivalesque genre, it is and has been misunderstood and thus is undervalued. Craig emphasized how this feasibly applied to the Esther text.

Clearly, Esther reflected the characteristic carnivalesque reversals and opposites. Scenarios fluctuate from woman versus man, king relegated to fool with crowing to dethronement, and exaltation to debasement. The everyday norm is certainly relativized with the stable being inverted and turned upside down. The text of Esther’s folk-type dialogue is expressed within a carnival-like context while in the midst of a situational crisis, which Bakhtin (1968) suggests is very typical of the carnivalesque genre. Thus for
Craig (1995), the story of Esther fittingly marked all the distinctiveness of carnivalesque genre identified by its inverted logic of reversals and travesties. He goes on to further suggest how the narrative may have actually originated from a pagan festival that was initially conceived within a carnivalesque structure and then later adapted to fit the Jewish framework (1995).

Such structure certainly bolsters and allows for the non-religious nature of the tale to be viewed in a more plausible context. A group of individuals within a community forced to deal with a serious threat from an oppressive foreign environment—such as a nation in exile—could provide a conceivable setting for a carnivalesque type story, especially if it coincided with a festival time. Bakhtin’s (1968) view of history through carnivalesque literature thus logically provides an applicable and convincing rationale for the transmission of the unusually secular nature of the Esther text.

However, although the Bible is indeed a work of literature comprised of a mixture of genres with variant styles such as poetry, wisdom, and history. Its purpose is distinct from that of a regular book of literature. Though there is merit in applying scripture to contemporary social or political situations—like with nationalism—its main intent is neither to provide mere social critique nor a political fiction narrative evaluating ideologies or societal structure, and thus necessitates a dimension beyond regular literature. The foremost objective and message of God’s written word entails the understanding and conveying of His will, intents, and purposes for His creations and their salvation. Therefore this also must be taken into primary consideration in determining any exegesis or interpretation of the Bible with reasonable accuracy. One of the purposes of this thesis is to make a careful observation of the biblical text as it aligns with its principal purpose in assessing more of its intended meaning, while building on previous scholarly insights on the subject.

2.2 Corrupting influences yielding a more secular text
Beyond the many various secular assessments of the book of Esther, other commentary providing insight into what fostered its more secular format is likewise pertinent to this study. Without further physical textual evidence from the ancient world concerning it, we are left to speculate on this text’s purposes, preservation, and transmission into its current form. Rational and reasonable conjecture as to possibilities for its purposes and factors affecting the text’s transmission can also shape the perception of its intended meaning.

Becker (1995) employed a linguistic philological approach in analyzing a text for its meaning. It stresses the importance and value of examining text not only from its specifically localized features, but also from its historical and cultural rooting in order to assess the ingrained complexity that has combined to imbue it with meaning. Textual meaning, in other words, is not created nor transmitted in a vacuum (Becker, 1995). Hence it is important to ascertain both the effects of the culture it was fostered in, as well as the cultural climate influencing its transmission.

Tkacz recognized the scriptural account of Esther “provides grounds for interpreting her…as a type for Christ”. She even cites parallels that could be drawn to Christ’s atoning efforts from Esther’s prayer, fasting, and the risking of her life, and early evidence that the Lextionary suggested Esther as a type of Christ (2007, p. 184). However, she also reports that such Christian “remarks are rare, and only once is she [Esther] treated as a type for Christ.” She still further cited Quodvultdeus’ work in establishing the Hebrew Scriptures as prognostication of Christian doctrines, where he “provocatively stated that Esther ‘laid down her life for her people’” yet then proceeded to interpret the persona of Esther as a type for the church (2007, p. 185). Tkacz additionally focuses on how the Septuagint’s use of the verb ‘to crucify’ serves to associate both Haman and Mordecai as prefiguring Christ crucified. This she avers becomes influentially problematic in prompting a negative view of Christ and engendering Christian anti-Jewish polemics (2007, pp. 183-187).

In a different article—regarding Psalm 22—Tkacz (2008) examines another possible reason impacting the perception of the Esther text. During the first century CE, Esther
was purposefully linked in the development of a divergent exegesis of Psalm 22, which ultimately affected its transmission and also fostered its lack of clear early christological connection (2008). According to Tkacz the Psalm as initially analyzed by Augustine was given a prophetic reading of Christ and His passion. However, this conclusion engendered a later counter-reactionary Jewish interpretation, resulting in Jewish rabbinic efforts to instead connect the Psalm to various pre-eminent Israelites, including David, Hezekiah, and Mordecai. To make such pairing plausible, especially with Mordecai, it took extensive rabbinic elaboration with alteration of the text as well as additional emphasis on Purim, as Tkacz detected in her study of the Midrash Tehillim. This then fostered the emergence of the later Jewish messianic interpretation of the Psalms’ verses during the Christian era that developed in the Pesiqta Rabbati (2008).

Augustine’s initial Christ-centered application of the Psalm thus became encumbered by the emerging rabbinic traditions and by an additional hindrance of a connection of crucifixion to Haman also included by the rabbis. Hence Christian scholarship seemed reluctant to further associate Esther with Christ (2008). Tkacz’s observations provided insight into why the Esther text was not typologically paired with Christ early on, even though connections could have been drawn. It also bolsters the plausible idea of actual Christ connectivity initially existing in the text. Here, for this research, I suggest that Tkacz’s documented evidence provides some possible postulation of a purposeful corrupting which may have hindered the development of the text’s initial transmission by masking or diverting viable connection to Christ.

Bush (1998) added to the argument and effects of possible text corruption. He provides an alternate theistic reading, suggesting that it was the general misreading of the Esther text, relegating it to an unfortunate state of common non-acceptance among Christians. He comes to this conclusion and further builds off Clines’s (1984) and Fox’s (1991a) analyses of the text’s present form as being the product of a two-step redaction effort. Bush points out that there is similar incongruity evident between the book’s literary style of exposition and resolution. In his evaluation of the text’s discourse structure he suggests a twofold purpose of the book. First is corroborating the idea that the original story was
adapted to the purposes of instituting the festival of Purim. Second is that the narrative portion was intended to reveal the quality of the text’s situation (the uncertainty of life for Jews living in the diaspora), not characters. He concludes that the overall purpose of the book is to attest to the providence of God through this dilemma, which is likewise the typical purpose of the other Old Testament books (Bush, 1998).

The realization of such providence at work is attested through a series of dramatic reversals where the actions of events with their expected results actually culminate in opposite outcomes. These events are highlighted as they are correlative couched with similar phraseology within the text. He ultimately concludes it is the condition of faith, (alluded to in the story’s elements such as fasting), that attests to this divine providence of the Jews’ deliverance from their threat of annihilation (Bush, 1998).

This thesis, informed by Bush’s perspective while acknowledging Bakhtin’s and Tkacz’s insightful perceptions, provides corroborative evidence for the text’s more original devotional intents.

2.3 Focus on theistic evaluation of the text

Though the twentieth century has not been productive in generating religious commentaries that render the book of Esther with a distinctive theistic reading. Yet a few in the later part of this century have surfaced. Bush (1998) seems to favor this direction. But Beckett (2002) in the late eighties is probably one who most notably challenges the prevailing irreligious appraisals by presenting an overt devotional reading of Esther.

Beckett (2002) approaches the Bible from the classical typological viewpoint that revelation is deliberately recorded in story format for God’s own self-revelatory purposes. For him the book of Esther is a part of a metanarrative within the overarching theme of deliverance, which is expressed in the reversal of circumstances. He suggests that the Old Testament types of the prophet, priest, king, servant, and judge, as well as
concepts like sacrifice, are tools implemented to provide evidence and convey the nature of Jesus Christ as God. Becket goes on to state how each of these then serve specifically as a sign or symbol that is personified and fulfilled by Christ in his incarnation, death, and resurrection. The nature of this revelatory process for perceiving Christ is developed cumulatively throughout the Bible story format. Then he suggests that, as the story unfolds, it reveals a more complete picture of Christ. His reason for this is to understand God not as one who intervenes for the sake of miracles, but rather one with higher purposes beyond mere intervention. He sees it as a story that openly seems to lack divine providence while paradoxically illustrating the evidence of such miraculous and purposeful providence (Beckett, 2002). Beckett writes with the purpose of directing a devotional approach to the Biblical stories, which broadly suggests an overall message of deliverance but with specific inference to Christ.

Beckett’s two premises claim that: (1) there is an overarching metanarrative theme of deliverance, and (2) Christ is typologically manifest fulfilling such roles of deliverance. These premises contribute to this thesis in helping to substantiate a Christ typology. My research thus provides more empirical evidence from the terminology used, to add further proof to such perceptions such as what both Beckett’s (2002) and Bush’s (1998) more recent devotional evaluations suggest in the book of Esther.

2.4 Sample findings due to prior research

Both Frye (1982) and Alter (2011) suggest a strong inter-textual approach of examination in ascertaining meaning from biblical narratives, especially with regard to typology. Alter approaches the Bible as a sacred history rather than merely a historical narrative, which gives credence to the idea that it could then deliberately make use of symbolism and syntactic patterns as strategies to convey meaning, and therefore should be approached for analysis from that standpoint (2011). Frye likewise echoes this viewpoint. Typology for him is less concerned with critical textual analysis and more with the internal literary unity and logic within and between the texts. Frye sees the structure of the Bible in terms
of an overarching metanarrative of shared mythology which permits the use of allusions driven by metaphor to transmit and create the Bible’s cultural history from a more complete perspective (Frye, 1982).

Alter’s premise in studying the Old Testament narratives is to approach them with analysis mainly focused on word choice, syntax, dialogues, and narration. This helps to reveal possible similar linguistic interconnections by highlighting themes and nuanced meaning, which, when interwoven within various passages, adds yet another dimension of interpretation (Alter, 2011). My study will likewise pattern after these philosophies by focusing on identifiable patterns and word meaning interwoven intertextually in such a way as to convey understanding that the ancient Israelite audience could be culturally cognizant of and would thus readily appreciate.

Grossman (2011) reveals some of this type of interplay between various textual readings of Esther when juxtaposed with other Biblical texts. These interconnected illusions create what he terms a “hidden reading”. Such connections cause a careful Bible reader to reflect back through the ancient Israelite history to similar scenes to widen the interpretive narrative for overarching themes. Even similar words or phraseologies could prod the reader to recall a past scenario that would provide background and meaning for the new scene unfolding (2011).

For instance, Grossman points out how the exact yet very untypical usage of words in the phrase “great and small” is found in various places throughout the Bible, but in its reverse order, “small and great” (2011, p. 44). The other time this less frequent inverted phraseology is found, besides in the book of Esther, is in Jonah’s description of Babylon’s Nineveh. Grossman points out how both passages share commonality in the direct involvement of both kings as well as similarity in their general behavior, yet there are some distinctively opposing concepts such as the description of their clothing. For Grossman this is a prompt to the intuitive reader to discern the purposeful message the author is intent on evoking between the images of Nineveh’s repentance in relation to the scene of King Ahasuerus’ joy and feasting (2011).
Another purposefully repeated reference is in Memuchan’s suggestion of a solution to Vashti’s disobedience to the king when he says, “let your majesty bestow her royal state upon another more worthy than she” (Esth. 1:19). This distinctly echoes Samuel’s words directed also to Saul who failed to triumph in facing Agag the Amalekite in engaging war against him and thus evoked Samuel’s rebuke, “the Lord has this day torn the kingship over Israel away from you and has given it to another who is more worthy than you” (1 Sam.15:28).

This invites the reader to parallel the removal of Vashti’s royal position to the similar stripping of Saul from his kingdom. However, this connection becomes even more compelling from another aspect. Saul, the Benjaminitite King, lost his royal kingdom by not waging war against Agag, whereas Esther, the queen and also a Benjaminitite, avoided losing royal regency by victoriously bringing about the demise of Haman the Agagite, Amalek’s descendent. This brings to the narrative a somewhat cosmic conflict between the Benjaminites and Amalekites.²

Benjamin in Hebrew means ‘son of the right hand’, which could imply son of the covenant hand, and Amalekites of course were the archenemies of God’s people. More can be explored from the deuteronomistic records regarding the background of this ancient Israelite feud and God’s command to wage a war of extinction against the seed of Amalek to provide additional evidence supportive of a christological interpretation.

Grossman, besides pointing out several explicit echoes in Esther that reverberate throughout various revelatory narratives, also draws similarities between types like Joseph and Sara with Esther (2011, p. 68). Yet many of these aspects find significant tie to Christ, and where there is such close correlation between Esther and Joseph (who is already typologically perceived to be illustrative of Christ by scholars) it warrants further exploration as a premise for this thesis.

² From Esther 2:4-6 and 1 Samuel 9:1, both Esther and her relative Mordecai were identified Benjaminites descended from Kish and father of Saul, who against the Lord’s counsel spared King Agag. Conversely in the story of Esther, Haman the Agagite is actually eliminated.
Consider how to extend these inferred parallels between Joseph and Esther to further establish these connections to Christ. Just as Joseph’s father sent him to seek his brother’s well-being, which he willingly accepts, Esther also willingly complies with Mordecai’s dispatching her to seek the aid of her people. The analogy drawn between these two biblical characters can easily be extended to Christ beyond the fact that they all three face the peril of death for their people. They also similarly become servants, are sold to Gentiles, are falsely accused, and though initially unknown to their people, eventually provide for their people’s deliverance. Each are prospered to rise from an alien station to eventually be promoted by a king, receive a new name and honor, and are ultimately acclaimed by their people to whom they bring salvation. Grossman only draws the connection between Esther and Joseph without associating it further to Christ.

Grossman also postulates intertextual connectedness in Esther’s overall structure by identifying a broad juxtaposition of the story’s literary units, which discloses a unified chiastic structure from the beginning to the end. The centerpiece of this chiasm is focused on the sleepless scene of the king after which Mordecai is majestically arrayed, placed upon the royal horse, and is acclaimed by the people as “Haman leads Mordecai on horseback through the city square” (Grossman, 2011, p. 237). He suggests it is the text’s reversals, using the Bakhtian perspective of carnivalesque, which serves to focus this chiastic structure.

Grossman clearly identifies several such intertextual correlations including “allusions, rare expressions, timings, events, or peculiar word usage” which hint to what he calls “hidden” messages underlying the surface reading (Grossman, 2011, p. 2). Perhaps due to some personal Jewish leanings, he makes no inference to any christological connection, which could clearly and logically be drawn, hence what this thesis aims to accomplish.

Beyond such intertextual allusions however there are also numerous intratextual allusions, such as the meaning of the Hebrew names within the narrative that hint to a sub-plot implying Christ. Through a close examination of names, both of the characters
and the places within the narrative from the Hebrew context, this thesis will provide further fruitful insights along this vein further supporting the claim of a possible christological reading.

Consider another source of intertextual allusion. Spoelstra provides insight into the survival of the Jews’ corporeal ethnic identity in the face of annihilation within their co-colonized sphere of Persian imperialism by evoking aspects from their deuteronomistic cultural memory of engaging in “Holy-War” (Spoelstra, 2015). This protocol would tie equally as an accordant resistive response in achieving ultimate imperium over Satan, thus further attesting to the alignment between the two figures.

The place names in the narrative also strengthen the connections of a possible underlying story, such as the name “Shushan”, the place and origin of the tale. Shushan was the place where the Persian kings had their winter palace. However, this name to a Hebrew speaker also carries the meaning of ‘lily’, which is equated with the ideas of purity and whiteness. Such abstract ideas can find easy connection symbolically with Christ and his redemptive resurrection (Songs 2:1).

Other words and symbols in the text similarly demonstrate insightful and applicable connections, such as the Hebrew word birah used to denote the palace in Shushan. The only other place the Bible uses this word is in reference to Jerusalem and the temple within its confines (1 Chr. 29:19). Thus this word seems to be hearkening to the Royal City itself, an allusion which is further supported by imagery evoked in the description of the King’s palace from a linguistic level when read in Hebrew (Koller, 2014). However this connection is further ratified with Paton’s acknowledgment that there are also literary connections architecturally between the palace and temple sanctuary, especially in relationship of the vision of Ezekiel (Paton, 1908).

Elwell (1984) elaborates on the purpose and timing of the narrative feasts throughout the story, which also seem to serve symbolically as a vehicle for the elements of salvation to enter the center stage. Feasts and festivals shed significant meaning to texts like Esther
when the nature of these particular events is understood within their salvation context for
the ancient Jews. The main events of the Esther narrative take place during Nisan, which
is when the Passover Feast is celebrated during the beginning of that month on the
Hebrew calendar. Passover for the Jews is typically connected to the redemption of
mankind, when God redeemed His people from the slavery and idolatry of Egypt. The
preceding month of Adar points towards the anticipation of the Passover with its
celebration of Purim, which was added after the Jew’s exile. While the central event of
the month of Sivan is Israel’s encampment at Mt. Sinai when God gave the Torah to
them. Sivan is the third month of the Hebrew calendar beginning from Nisan, the month
of the Jews liberation, and is also significant symbolically as well as historically
connected to the month of Nisan.

Elwell explains that these commemorative events, so communally celebrated by the
entire Israelite nation, were a typological framework within which “theological principles
of sin, judgment, justice, and mercy are conveyed”. They drew them together for the
purpose of recalling their past in remembering with gratitude God’s acts of grace that
protected and prospered them, His people. Typologically, these events also anticipated a

2.5 Typological analysis

In seeking to understand meaning in the scriptures, typology serves as a valid tool for
biblical interpretation. Christ, Himself, likewise interpreted the canonical narratives. His
own such use of the scriptures was how He taught (John 6:32-35; Matt. 12:30; 20:28)
while inviting all men to likewise earnestly search how they testified of Him (John. 5:39.
Eventually, after His resurrection He “expounded…all the scriptures the things
concerning Himself” as to His fulfilling the entire typological system (Luke 24:25-44).
Probably influenced by Him, the New Testament writers utilized typology. Much of the
Pauline pedagogy is derived from the use of typology and allegory. For example, Paul
taught of Christ’s redemption throughout the book of Hebrews by explicitly noting Adam
as a “type of the one to come” (Rom. 5:24; 1 Cor. 15) while also highlighting the Exodus (1 Cor. 10), tabernacle, and sacrificial system.

Still, God’s word revealed progressively, and based on His unchanging nature and purposes, the New Testament would have been written in light of the foundational teachings of the former as a continuation of His redemptive plan for humanity. Thus, Old Testament typology was an apt vehicle to illustrate how Christ and His ministry fulfilled certain historical and prophesied events.

But despite to what extent God typologically exploits past events to project future realities as a way to narrate the history of His works, the scriptures typically demonstrate overall internal consistency. Over a record of a few millennia, themes such as God’s law, man’s rebellion, as well as His merciful plan inclusive of a redeemer remain constant. The initial promise of a Messiah is perpetually foretold by a plethora of prophets including Joel, Obadiah, Micah, Isaiah, Zechariah, or the Psalmist who prognosticate of details regarding His birth, ministry (including His triumphal entry), death, burial, etc., accurately foreshadowing the events of Christ’s life.

The reliability and recurrence of certain constant themes, patterns, and events not only speak of an overarching narrative in the Bible, but also of the viable possibility of shared meaning between texts, with the apparent connections of the earlier biblical narratives seeming to shape an interpretive framework for the later texts.

Mohr, argues the validity of typology as an interpretive tool from his investigative work regarding the use of figurative language in typology. He explains “typology is definitely involved in language because the figurative expressions found in language is the root and foundation of typology itself” (1974, p. 54). He thus advocates the value of a focused study of typology from a linguistic basis.

In the examination of word usage within the “type” area, he states “when there is a satisfactory understanding of how ‘type’ words are used in the scriptures, then an
interpretation and definition can be given” (1974, p. 139). He generated comprehensive lists of figurative language, categorizing and classifying typological terms to help demonstrate their integral relationship with typology.

Drawing upon the expertise of several scholars, Mohr also compiled a list of seven guidelines for evaluation of a proposed type’s merits for a primary type which reflects Christ and His redemptive work (1974, pp. 172-175). These include that a true or primary type should be:

1. Progressive—It begins in heaven with God, is displayed in the Old Testament and is related to Christ and His atoning work with finality at a future point in Christendom. Thus it spans phases of time.

2. Prefigurative—A type by nature is prefigurative, projecting some aspect of future redemption.

3. Predictive—Anything that prefigures something is predictive and involves an element of prophecy. Bible types originate in the Old Testament historic setting but proceed prophetically to include its later application.

4. Purposeful—It must demonstrate meaningful application at the time of its inauguration as well as in its antitype or archetype, with greater purpose in in its continuity in later fulfillment.

5. Proven—It must be supported in harmony with scripture (Such internal comparison provides a check for contradiction to help with validation of interpretation of implicit passages for accuracy to not contradict the explicit or didactic biblical portions).

6. Picturesque—It should demonstrate a quality of being graphic to support a mental image.
7. Pure—All types must lead to the atonement aspect of Christ and His church.

2.6 Thesis statement

This thesis provides evidence contrary to the prevailing opinions that the Book of Esther is a godless text. Through detailed consideration of figurative word meaning and usage, it demonstrates how the book of Esther actually serves as a substantial typological witness for Christ in His divine and mortal roles within God’s plan of salvation. Lexical analysis provides evidence of how the divine redemptive subplot unfolds in parallel with Esther’s salvation, giving insight into such topics as God’s nature, purposes, laws, and covenants; man’s agency; an adversary; atonement; redemption of the first born; and the coming of the Bridegroom or Messiah. Various words and phrases within the Book of Esther, viewed within the broader biblical context, illustrate these redeeming components within God’s plan, as expressed through the tandem roles of Mordecai and Esther.
3 APPROACH

As indicated in the previous chapter, the purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate that the Esther text exhibits a myriad of symbolic connections and purposeful patterns pointing to Christ and His redemptive functions and roles within God’s plan of salvation for mankind. In this chapter I outline the approaches used and illustrate them with salient examples.

Mohr’s (1974) criteria for typological study have been previously discussed. All of these characteristics are followed in varying degrees within this analysis: a typology assessed from the use of symbolic figurative language should be progressive, prefigurative, predicative, purposeful, proven, picturesque, and pure.

In order to make a typological assessment from the Esther text based on these diagnostics, consider first the meaning of typology itself. Paul explains types in 1 Cor. 10:11 as examples of things that will be fulfilled that are given for instruction purposes. Edersheim (1874) states “a rite which has a present spiritual meaning is a symbol; and if, besides, it also points to a future reality, conveying at the same time by anticipation, the blessing that is yet to appear, it is a type” (p. 106).

McQuilkin (2009) further elaborates: “a type can be defined as a ‘prophetic symbol’… A symbol is something used to represent something else.” He asserts how typology is common in Scripture as “a major category of prophecy,” which can include “people, rites and ceremonies, acts and events, objects, offices (e.g., prophet, priest, and king)” and such. Thus, theologically speaking typology involves two components; the first is a spiritual correspondence between an Old Testament person, event, thing, institution, or ceremonial act within its actual historical framework. The second is what an interpreter finds that foreshadows a future heightened fulfillment in Jesus Christ and of His redemption. For example, King David was a prominent type for Christ, the Son of David,
as attested by Scripture (Matt. 21:9; Mk. 12:35). Paul likewise identified this in Adam (Rom. 5:14). As such, typology in general serves to demonstrate the overall continuity in God’s overarching redemptive history for man.

Identifying and documenting types from symbolic representation and use of figurative language in Scripture requires evaluation in determining the intent of meaning. Due to the paucity of scriptural detail and the fact that some prophecy remains yet to be ultimately fulfilled, parallels drawn require some decisive filling-in. This demands careful and conscientious attention to ascertain which nuances in the text should be emphasized. My purpose was to pursue this analysis with due earnestness and perception in order to assess whether a given verse evokes some christological reading contributive to an overall typology.

Due to the vast array of elements indicative of typology as noted by Mohr (1974) and McQuilkin (2009), this kind of research necessitates consideration of a broader symbolic and inter-textual analysis. Such phenomena as inter-textual parallels, narrative sequencing, and possible symbolic and doctrinal connections within the larger text must be considered. Lexical usage, word imagery, rhetorical devices, and syntactic patterns should be identified if their strategic usage entails a related christological reading for the text. Such an examination reflects Frye’s (1982) and Alter’s (2011) inter-textual study of biblical narrative in ascertaining meaning with regards to typology.

For Alter (2011), the acknowledgement of the Bible as sacred gives credence to the idea of deliberate strategies. Thus he suggests that syntactic patterns, specific word choice, dialogue, and such should be examined for latent purposeful intent. Frye (1982), while sharing a similar viewpoint, sees the structure of the Bible in terms of an overarching meta-narrative which permits the use of allusion driven by metaphor to create a more comprehensive perspective. My study draws on these philosophies in that it points out identifiable patterns of symbolic meaning interwoven throughout the fuller biblical narrative, which trigger a deeper cohesive understanding for an ancient audience.
The search for types also involves a close examination of lexical content, key terminology and its symbolic use (i.e. objects, colors, numbers, events, etc.), and distinctive phraseology. Often a word or phrase is too prolific for copious review in the entirety of its attestations, so some subset of usages as they relate directly to the text under consideration is chosen. Such is often the case with the data presented in this thesis. Occasionally, I will also base analysis on the “Biblical Law of First Mention” which implies that the initial mention of a Biblical word, phrase, or doctrine generally provides a clearer foundational comprehension of a theological concept’s intended meaning.

Proper names within the ancient Jewish culture were a rich source of connection to the actual essence for which the entity was named (1 Sam. 25:25). The mere meaning of names and how they are aligned in the narrative provide knowledge from which to convey and reinforce further meaning and theological significance. A sampling of the names within the book of Esther seems to point to meanings which could be readily tied to a Messianic under story.

For example, Hadassah, the Hebrew name for Esther meant ‘myrtle’—an aromatic plant ritually used in ceremonial rites of passage—was also mandated for specified application in the ceremonial commemoration of Israel’s last appointed times—the Feast of Sukkot, prefiguring when God ultimately tabernacles among men (Berenbaum & Skolnik, 2007). To the Hebrew audience, the name tabernacles was given the meaning ‘I am Hidden’, while in Persian it meant ‘star’ (Abarim Publications). Stars in the Bible were considered signs (Gen. 1:14). The patriarch Abraham was promised offspring that would be like the stars, which Paul defined as offspring in Christ (Gal. 3:29). Understanding how the ancient Hebrew could perceive the context of these names, it becomes evident how Hadassah, or Esther, could find ready interpretive connection with Christ. These examples are explored in further detail in the next section.

Haman’s name provides the attributes associated with an Antichrist figure. Other names particular to the narrative’s natural historical framework likewise serve to strikingly
foreshadow, like the name of the king’s palace. Shushan is a homograph for the word ‘lily’ and evokes ideas of ‘purity’, ‘glory’ and ‘regeneration’ (Abarim). Whereas the lily is metaphorically associated in Scripture as signifying of the Lord and His kingdom it becomes a fitting symbol for God’s heavenly abode—where the plan of redemption was laid out (Keach, 1858). Such onomastic word play throughout the Book of Esther evidences a coherent and cogent sub-plot in the text, with the denotation and connotation of the Hebrew names suggesting a christological reading.

Numbers, objects, colors, events, and similar lexical content also serve to point out correspondence with another reality. Ten is often expressive of perfection of divine order, law, or the concept of completion. It marks the month Esther secured position in the king’s palace, and also the enormous amount Haman unscrupulously offers the king to strategically annihilate the Jews. However, it also decisively links an end time prophecy with Esther’s ten feasts marking the span of God’s redemptive plan as well as the final defeat of Satan and his dominion mirrored in the demise of Haman and his adversarial ‘sons’. Thirteen and fifteen likewise earmark end time. Thirteen signals the Jews’ death sentence, decreed by the king under Haman’s instigation, as well as the beginning of Esther’s fast According to Bullinger, the number 15, which designates Shushan’s final commemorative celebration, specifically “refers to acts wrought by the energy of divine grace” (2005).

Frequently objects are used to connect and convey meaning. The king’s signet ring denotes the manifestation of authority. The queen’s crown (keter) meaning ‘diadem’, correlates with the high priest’s headdress as well as the ancient bridal wreath custom. Haman’s gallows denotes the ‘tree’ intended for Mordecai’s death. Certain colors and materials specifically associate directly to the temple and its liturgy. Such symbolic use of objects further bolsters provides evidence for an underlying typology.

Figurative use of words beyond their literal meaning includes such examples as ‘seed’ to denote Christ, ‘know’ correlative with covenantal law, or utterances like ‘great to small’ and ‘that day’ to indicate the Day of the Lord and inclusivity of its judgment. Other key
terminology like the word “feast” is likewise purposefully laden with fuller connotation than denoting the ten events throughout the narrative, as will be discussed in this thesis.

Symbolic reference to figures such as Joseph, Sarah, Isaac, or King David, illustrate or typologically associate with Christ as well. Key use of words highlighting topics such as anointing, treaty language, or using an ethnonym like ‘Agagite’ lend further support to a typology present within the historical reality, by drawing pertinent correlative intertextual allusion and analogy to help shape the meaning of the immediate context.

These are just a few examples of the inferences that can be elicited from a close lexical examination of the Esther text that can contribute to a christological reading in the book of Esther. These and many more examples will be discussed in the next section. My research will present several other attestations that are germane to substantially evaluate the validity of this claim.

3.1 Formatting conventions

Because of the highly textual nature of this thesis, and its broad basis, a wide range of lexical tools were used in the background research. For example, the Word Cruncher electronic viewer program for the Hebrew Scriptures was employed to aid the process of narrative comparison and in searching for word frequencies and collocations.

I also consulted lexical resources and tools such as lexicons, Bible dictionaries, concordances, biblical commentaries, and scholarly literature to help explore the theology such terminology represents. I mainly made use of the (Hebrew) Masoretic Text of Esther to execute this analysis of word usage in determining whether it demonstrates a viable Christology. I did not make general use of other versions, e.g., Septuagint (LXX), Latin Vulgate, Samaritan Pentateuch or Syriac Peshitta except to occasionally include insightful comparative notations or commentary from texts such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, Mishnah, the Targum or LXX. A Qumran copy is not attested.
The proposed examples of symbolic content for christological typology reported in this thesis are presented in sequential order following that of the Esther text. Each instance is documented in an entry, which includes enough context to situate its usage. The content of the entire verse is not reiterated; it is assumed that the reader is already familiar with it or can find it readily. Each entry has an English header line which includes the verse reference followed by the word(s) or phrase in question. All header verse text reflects the Jewish Bible Tanakh text (JPS Tanakh), with the salient words underlined. If the corresponding Hebrew word is discussed in the entry, it also appears, along with a Romanized transliteration. Translations, glosses, and meanings for the word in question are often listed and documented, as found in published lexical resources. A subsequent discussion of implications for Christology follows, based on the context, usage, imagery, symbolism or intertextual references to other Scripture, Jewish and Christian.

As this thesis involves a considerable amount of linguistic content, punctuation conventions in this thesis follow the style sheet of the Linguistic Society of America and similar specifications. In particular:

- Conceptual glosses and semantic meanings are enclosed in single quotes.
- Direct quotations from research literature are surrounded by double quotes.
- Direct reference to words, idioms, and terms are enclosed in double quotes.
- Punctuation such as periods and serial commas remain outside the quotes where possible.

For example, the following is an example text that adheres to these practices:

Strong’s suggests for this word the general meanings of ‘beautiful’, ‘good things’, ‘welfare’, ‘prosperity’ and ‘happiness’, with translations of “pleasant”, “agreeable”. HALOT suggests “‘good’ in all kinds of meanings”.

Reference tools such as lexicons, dictionaries, concordances are helpful in providing nuanced meaning, semantic range and specific application in the search for understanding
in the spectrum of word usage, and therefore vitally integral to this type of study. A core set of linguistic reference tools is cited on a very frequent basis. In order to improve readability, these are not signaled by full citations on each occasion, but rather by a shorthand reference, as is often done in biblical scholarship. Following is a list of the relevant citation shorthand citations:


Scriptural citations are plentiful; all abbreviations for the Books of the Bible and Apocryphal writings follow the SBL Handbook of Style, 2nd edition, 2014. Lists of multiple biblical citations are delineated by semi-colons and commas as follows:

(Exod. 28:41; 29:9, 13, 28-31; 32:29, Lev. 8:33; Num. 3:3).

Capitalization will follow the conventions of the Liturgical Press Style guide.

Besides the consistent use of the King James Version (KJV) for scriptural commentary within the thesis, the JPS Tanakh 1917 version is utilized for all headword phrases translations, with the following other sources occasionally cited:

- BSB—Berean Study Bible
- CSB—Christian Standard Bible
• ERV—English Revised Version
• ESV—English Standard Version
• ISV—International Standard Version
• OJB—Orthodox Jewish Bible
• NASB—New American Standard Bible
• NIV—New International Version
• NKJV—New King James Version
• WNT—Weymouth New Testament

3.2 Limitations

Certain complexities involving the evaluation of the book of Esther cause this analysis to be confined solely to the examination of the Hebrew MT version of Esther while excluding the two Greek versions (the LXX, and the AT). This is not to ignore the importance of possible additional insights provided by these other redactions but rather due to time constraints and my lack of familiarity with Greek. The Greek versions contain additions unattested in the MT, as well as lack of scholarly consensus regarding which text best reflects the original text. In any case, the intended interpretation of the original text can only be presumed from examination of the extent of its existence. With this said, however, a study comparing the semantic agreement between the three texts, excluding the variant additional Greek portions, was recently conducted by Jobes (1996). Her conclusions were that between the AT and the MT, there was an 84% overall shared semantic agreement, and between the MT and the LXX there was a likewise favorable comparison with an 88% semantic agreement. This allows some credence to the postulation that the basic outline of the original text seems to be similarly shared between the extant three versions (Jobes, 1996).

My research is obviously limited in its ability to positively ascertain the accuracy of the transmission of the text from its original state. It cannot account for any errancy emanating inadvertently or with intentional mistranslation or omissions; however, this is
not the intent or the scope of this research. My goal in relation to this aspect is merely to entertain possible reasoning behind the variance of the book’s current more secular form as opposed to the other canonical records.
ESTHER 1

This opening chapter focuses on the Persian king Ahasuerus who is described with particularity and details that could also fittingly describe God, the King of Heaven and His plan for His kingdom. The chapter also describes Ahasuerus’ domain as delineated by its territory (Hodu to Cush), its physical realm (127 provinces), and his throne’s locale (Shushan, meaning ‘lily’). His agendas are likewise uniquely disclosed: an unusual offer of two feasts where none are “compelled” and the drinking is “according to law”. The first feast of 180 days is extended to his officials and servants for the purpose of displaying his honor, only to be followed by a second one—in the ‘garden court’—that is extended to all. Finally, the chapter closes with one queen being deposed while another is sought for the royal estate.

1:1—‘it happened in the days of’—Berlin recognized how Esther as a diaspora story provided “an optimistic picture of Jewish survival and success” amidst threatening destruction of an enemy in a foreign land (2001, p. xv). The drama of man’s salvation could not be more succinctly stated than Berlin’s description of the book of Esther.

Rare in the Bible, this phrase serves to “set the story in a precise time” within the Persian Empire (2001, p. 5). In analysis of the book’s structure, Howard Jr. & Grisanti (2003) likewise noted a specific timing element where each episode is successively more crucial to its plot, and suggest the first two chapters serve as a prologue, which likewise would be applicable for the logical progression of God’s plan of salvation. The context of these two initial chapters foreshadows Esther’s veiled redemptive narrative.

The circumstances for all occurrences of this phrase speak of times of great calamity befalling God’s chosen people. Yet resolution is found through acts of salvation wrought by those symbolic of Christ including: Abraham, (Gen. 14:1), Boaz (Ruth 1:1), and Christ Himself as the Messiah (Isa. 7:1).
The various elements conveyed include: numbers, names, places, and gestural practices such as a raised-hand oath or removal-of-shoe redemptive ritual. These are symbolically interwoven to create a clear thematic picture of redemption. With such shared characteristics, the passages demonstrate a repetitive sequencing, and possible progressive succession of an overarching redemptive theme. First is the threat against the covenant people, culminating with Abraham’s deliverance of Lot. Next at the dark time of starvation, anarchy, and “no God”, hope of redemption for the exiled and estranged comes through the kinsman redeemer who secures the messianic line. Then as the Assyrian empire consolidates their control in prelude to Israel’s complete collapse, there is prophetic promise that a remnant will survive and God (Immanuel) will come with future restoration. At length then comes Esther’s culminating story of salvation and the deliverance of God’s people.

1:1—‘that Ahasuerus who reigned’—The use of this parenthetical comment, as well as the repeated use of the term “reign” is for the specific purpose of clarifying who is being inferred here. Anciently, rabbis and those like Philo—a Jew of the diaspora—believed God uniquely spoke through scripture wherein each detailed aspect indicated some purposeful meaning for His people. Hence this parenthetical may have alluded to heaven’s ruler, which could suggest a parallel underlying redemptive plot.

1:1—‘reigned...from India to Cush’—This merism, the use of two contrasting words to refer to an entirety, is used here as a rhetorical device to delineate the extent of the king’s dominion, defining it by the provinces at its extremities (Wechsler, 2015). The extent of God’s dominion is likewise frequently noted by its extremities (i.e. the ‘four corners of the earth’) (Ezek. 7:2; Isa. 11:12; Rev. 7:1).

1:1—‘from India’—הֹדוּ (hoddu)—This proper locative noun for India is used only in the book of Esther. However, un-voweled, it could reasonably resemble the third masculine singular noun הוד (hod) from the unused root for ‘grandeur’ meaning ‘splendor’, ‘majesty’, ‘glory’, or ‘vigor’. As such, this word would then translate as, “his splendor”
or “his glory” such as in Psalms 148:13—“His glory is above the earth and heaven.”

1:1—‘to Cush’—כוש (cush)—This proper name refers to the people of a land, or Ham’s descendant. Cush, as grandson to Noah, begat Nimrod, known as the founder of the occult and Babylon (Gen. 9:19). The Cushites or Ethiopians are mentioned as a distant people far removed from the grace of God consequential to their idolatry and procuring of slaves (Jer. 13:23).

Usage of this word also bears figurative significance. The concept of ‘Babylon’ from its origin and rise as introduced in Genesis through to its destruction in Revelation (Rev. 16:19; 17:1; 18:1) represents both the literal city of corruption and figurative portrayal of wickedness with unscrupulous pride and rebellion. Nimrod—Cush’s son—whose name meant ‘rebellion’ founded it. Satan, meaning ‘opposer’, fostered rebellion towards God, establishing a worldly corrupt empire, which ultimately will incur God’s divine judgments. Derived from the Akkadian word babilu meaning ‘gate of god’. Babylon is clearly the counterfeit antithetical door to entering God’s domain (Rev. 3:8), metaphorically conveying opposition to God with resultant exile from His Promised Land.

1:1—‘who reigned… over 127 provinces’—שבעים ואהリスト מمائיא (127) (medinah: province)—Strong’s and BDB both list for this word ‘province’. In 5 BCE during Persian rule it was the regular Aramaic word for “city” and originally denoted a “place of jurisdiction” (Shamsy, 2013, p. 21). Weinstein also concludes that medina is used in the biblical sources only when the central administration and its management are clearly at issue. (2016). In a correlative way, God had central concern over the design and destiny of His infinite domain and creation.

Regarding numbers, the science of mathematics was reputable in Greek civilization, as well as in Egypt and Babylon due to Pythagoras’ mathematical achievement. Pythagoras eventually established an order that tied together philosophical wisdom and mathematics
as a moral basis for the conduct of life. Under his influence Euclid made several mathematical discoveries, one of which was his observation of four Mersenne primes\(^4\) and their connection to perfect numbers, the largest being 127.

Beyond their importance in a quantitative sense, numbers are symbolically significant in conveying patterns of meaning as Bullinger and others have suggested (Bullinger, 2005). The mere fact that 127 appears only twice in scripture—both times with peculiar specificity—seems significant, especially since its specific notation here represents a symbolic, and not a factual, numeric quantifier for the actual subdivisions of the Persian provinces current to the time (Asheri, Lloyd, & Corcella, 2007; Kitchen, 2003). It possibly was a reflector of various cultures, peoples, and regions under a main place of jurisdiction.

The single other occurrence of 127 outside of Esther is its indication of Sarah’s life span marking her lifespan, unusually noted according to Rashi and Rabbi Shapira (Abramson, 2017; Shapira, Worch, & Miller, 2004). Uniquely, Sarah, as the founding matriarch of Judaism, is the only woman whose age is disclosed in the entire scriptural record, marking both her death as well as also noting her birth age with Isaac, her promised “firstborn” (which concept for Israelites was crucially related to inheritance and redemption).

God’s covenant with Abraham ultimately involved Sarah through whom it would be physically fulfilled, with the change of her name to be the ‘princess’ of all nations (Gen. 17: 15-16) in effect being a seal of that promise. Sarah was first a mother to “Israel” with the physical birth of her son and promised heir, Isaac, to whom God would establish His everlasting covenant (vs. 19) and make “a great nation” (Gen. 12:2). Then through Isaac she would become the “mother of nations with kings of peoples” (Gen. 17.4-6). This multitude of nations with “kings” was begotten through God’s covenant with Isaac’s descendants through whom He would bless the entire earth (Gen. 26:3-4). Therefore,  

\(^{4}\) 127 is the largest double, and smallest triple, Mersenne prime, represented in binary by seven consecutive 1’s (e.g. 1111111).
Sarah was the “mother”, physically of the great nation of Israel proper, as well as spiritually to all nations through Isaac and his descendants, who were begotten to be a dynasty of kings and priests unto God’s kingdom (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 1 Pet. 2:9). These two figures therefore epitomize the physical and spiritual birth of Israel—God’s house.

The number 180, mentioned a few verses later in this chapter, also occurs only once more marking Isaac’s lifespan (Gen. 35:30). As Shapira pointed out the contiguous placement of these two numbers perhaps is meaningful because it ties together the life of Sarah, the valid mother of God’s nation, Israel, with the unprecedented sacrifice of her son and sole heir Isaac (Shapira, Worch, & Miller, 2004). By extension, then, it is indicative of the salvation of Israel with Isaac being God’s representative Firstborn. Thus the juxtaposition between the story of Esther and the sequential placement of these two numbers seemingly expresses the purposed extent of that salvation in verses 1-4, and the physical and spiritual realization of that salvation.

1:2—‘when he sat on the throne of his kingdom’—כִּסֵּא (kisseh) מַלְכוּת (malkuth)—
BDB, HALOT and Strong’s lists the Hebrew word kisseh as meaning ‘throne’ or ‘seat of honor’, while BDB and Strong’s suggests for malkuth ‘royalty’, ‘royal power’, ‘reign’, or ‘kingdom’. HALOT adds, ‘royal dominion’, ‘kingship’, ‘royal honor’, and ‘royal accomplishments’, indicating it refers first to dominion, and secondarily to the realm over which a reign is exercised.

Both of their initial attestations imply God directly or indirectly. The first occurrence of kisseh in Genesis 41:40 references Joseph being second on the throne only to Pharaoh, while malkuth in Numbers 24:7 references Israel’s king, the Messiah. Connection of these two words to the Messiah is frequent—particularly in the Psalms—which often proclaims, “the Lord is King” (Ps. 45, 93, 96, 97-99).

While these words occur several times in scripture separately, they appear in tandem only six other times. One is found in Esther 5:1: when on the third day Esther put on her royal
robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king’s hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall, facing the entrance.

Israel was promised an eternal kingdom assured through David’s sovereignty. As God declared it would be a descendent who would secure this (2 Sam. 7: 12-16). Despite the successive line of disobedient kings after David, God continued to reassure Israel through Jeremiah that this righteous “branch” would reign (Jer. 23:5). John declared the “branch” to be the Lord Himself (Rev. 22:16). Thus, the surety of David’s covenant lay in the fact that God Himself would descend to reign in ultimate fulfillment of His promise, which prophets like Isaiah and Luke clearly predicted and verified (Isa. 9:6; Luke 1:31-34).

Beyond the two instances in Esther, all the other verses using these terms implicitly refer to the establishment of the Davidic promises with the immutable decree regarding the inauguration of his dynasty as a promised perpetuity. This would be primarily realized through the reign of his son Solomon, as illustrative of the greater Messiah, Christ Himself.

1:2—‘which was in Shushan the castle’—בִּירָה (birah)—Strong’s and BDB suggests birah to be a Chadean derivative implying ‘citadel’, ‘acropolis’, and ‘temple’, while here it equates to the royal castle. Its most prolific use is actually in the Esther text, denoting the royal abode in conjunction with part of the city adjoining the palace. In Nehemiah it refers to the walled temple of Jerusalem (Neh. 2:8), referenced likewise by David to his son Solomon (1 Chr. 29:1). Just as a king strategically controls the events of his kingdom from his “castle”, God likewise orchestrates man’s salvation from beginning to end from His throne room in heaven’s temple. Apocalyptic prophecy such as in Daniel or Revelation, which clearly present a progression of such divine commands originating from God’s heavenly temple with angels being dispatched to synchronize various events (Exod. 24:9-11; Isa. 6:1; 63:15; 66:1; 1 Kgs. 22:9; Dan. 7:9; Ps. 11:4; 103:19; Rev. 4:1-6; 20:11). The earthly temple was merely a type or shadow of its heavenly manifestation (Heb. 8:5; 9:23-24; 10:1).
1:2—‘Shushan’—שׁוּשַׁן (shushan)—HALOT presents this word as an Elamite place name, which as recognized by Josephus was the capital city of Elam and the royal winter residence. It is a homograph of the word for “lily”, specifically the water lily belonging to the lotus family, which connects with the ideas of whiteness, purity, glory and regeneration. Abarim further notes that its etymology also finds association with a word meaning ‘alabaster’ in the description of the temple materials (1 Chr. 29:2), in the bridegroom passage (Song. 5:13-15), and in Christ’s anointing (Luke 7:37).

Before the Masoretic voweling, the root possibly may have been sus or sis, meaning ‘rejoice’ or ‘delight’. God’s “delight” as indicated in Deuteronomy was in Israel’s obedience to His law (Deut. 28:63; 30:9), while “rejoicing” ensued from His salvation (Isa. 61:10).

The lily is often used in scripture as a metaphor signifying the Lord and His kingdom (Keach, 1858). Llewellyn-Jones discusses how in reliefs the king was depicted in audience wearing his court robe, crown (keter with diadem) and holding a lotus blossom and scepter, while accompanied by the crown prince similarly depicted also holding a lotus (2013, p. 69). He indicates how the ancients of the Near East perceived the universe as being divinely ordered with their kings and courtiers as “mundane earthly reflections of a heavenly hierarchical idea…adopting the same crown, same type of garment…and [who]’emit’ the same glory” (2013, p. 20). Similarly, the fleur-de-lis of the French kings symbolized the anointed king’s divinely authorized right to rule.

Shushan with its metaphoric meanings is thus tied to monarchy, purity, regeneration, and glory of the lily, plus to the precious white stone alabaster, which safely keeps what anoints and purifies until its time of use, a symbolically fitting type for God’s abode.

1:3—‘in the third year he made a feast’—שָׁלֹשׁ (shalosh)—Strong’s and BDB associates this word with either ‘three’ or ‘triad’. Its first attestation occurs with Enoch (Gen. 5:22-23), who attains fellowship with the host of heaven.
The number three is typically associated with the divine, perfection, or completion and is represented in Judaism in many ways: the three patriarchs, the three pilgrimage festivals, events such as God descending with the Law for His people or Jonah being delivered from the mouth of the whale, and—for Christians—the completion of Christ’s redemptive work with His resurrection on the third day. As such it associates the king’s feast here with divine monarchial orchestration.

1:3—‘he made a feast’—מִשְׁתֶּה (mishteh)—Strong’s and BDB both list for this word ‘feast’ and ‘drink’. In general, the ancient Jewish understanding of “feasts” is much more replete with connotation beyond its literal meaning. Feasts/festivals serve the purpose of revealing God’s ultimate plans for the salvation of His people, particularly forecasting the entire course of the Messiah’s redemptive work as delineated by the seven annual Feasts of the Lord, which extend within 180 days (c.f. 180 years of Isaac’s lifetime). In the book of Esther there are ten feasts—ten being expressive of the perfection of divine order, or the completion of the cycle of man’s salvation. The two initial feasts—the long one for his principals followed by a shorter one for all his subjects—are intended for the magnification of the king’s majesty. The third feast—held independently by Vashti for the women—precedes the one honoring Esther in supplanting the rebellious queen. The next banquet to occur transpires between the king and Haman for the purpose of signing the decree of the Jews’ annihilation, with the next two occurring privately between the king, Esther, and Haman—at which point, during the second she denounces Haman. Directly afterwards comes the culminating public festival with the promotion of Mordecai in elevation to the king, which is then subsequently followed by two more public banquets celebrating the Jews’ victory in Shushan and its provinces. Combined, these feasts provide the necessary framework specific to the events of God’s redemptive plan, basically extending over the allocated timing for His set appointments for Israel.

Long (2013) directly traces the use of the word mishteh to the idea of a messianic banquet—in particular an eschatological wedding banquet of the bridegroom and its correlative concepts. He mainly focuses on Isaiah’s inaugural messianic banquet (Isa. 25:6-8), the return from the wilderness message (Isa. 40-55), and Hosea’s marriage
metaphor. He also demonstrates how Christ intentionally uses and combines these three well-known biblical traditions in application to Himself and His mission.

Long produces numerous intertextual evidences of how the prophets of the Hebrew Bible shared an understanding of a covenant meal as an ongoing eschatological feast, whether manifest as an initial inaugural meal at Sinai (Isa. 25:6-8), or a culminating time of victory when all celebrate with food and wine at exile’s end (Isa. 40-55) (2013, p. 43).

He further explains how the idea became multifaceted with variant manifestations as the biblical writers reapplied it to different situations intertwining it with peace offerings, treaties, anointing, coronation rites, distribution of wine, diverse foods, or in the wedding context. He notes other key elements such as: the component of warring parties, riding a mule, use of covenant vocabulary, re-naming of an individual etc., which all have covenant overtones. His various notions find an identifiable depiction in the book of Esther (2013, pp. 50-59).

Long’s overarching feast of salvation from Mount Sinai to Mount Zion finds ready application in Esther and its ten continuous feasts.

1:3—‘the army of Persia and Media’—חֵיל (chel)—Strong’s and BDB suggest for this ‘rampart’ or ‘fortress’ while HALOT offers ‘outer rampart’ or ‘outwork’ but in particular for this verse—‘army’. Strong’s denotes it as a collateral for the word, חַיִל (chayil)—meaning ‘strength, ‘efficiency’, ‘wealth’ and ‘army’ which root origin is חוּל (chuwl) which means ‘bringing forth’, ‘dance’, and ‘whirl’.

More consistently chel conveys the idea of contesting territorial dominion; its usage in Psalms and Lamentations likewise reflects either alignment with or antagonism towards God’s objectives.

Its various attestations all connect to activity centered around securing dominion, either indicating how supportive efforts affixed to God’s intents ultimately succeed, or opposing
efforts fail such as in God’s deliverance of Israel with the overthrow of Pharaoh or Zobah’s king Hadadezer (Ps. 136:15; 1 Chr. 18:9).

Typically a rampart denotes an embankment serving as a bulwark for a defensive boundary or enclosed region. Though it is synonymous with ‘rampart’, ‘wall’, ‘fortress’ etc., it also finds expression as ‘army’ or ‘host’, even being rendered once as ‘poor’. Each of these suggests some sort of mass or collective body as an abutment or support, literally or figuratively, even the poor being integrally associated as those comprising God’s kingdom.

Metaphorically, the word conveys the idea of reinforcements, or hosts, either of God or Satan’s kingdoms, such as those polarized factions of the conflict that originated in heaven. Its twenty-seven occurrences consistently fall in passages focused on conquest concerning Israel’s boundary. Some examples include: Pharaoh’s hosts coming against Israel, Rabshekah’s army confronting Hezekiah, the mighty army which invades Judah in the Day of the Lord, and God’s judgment against Egypt’s King Crocodile and his hosts. Many of the passages also reflect David’s rise to power and his conquest to expand the dominion of Yahweh, which can imply messianic emergence and triumph over opposing forces.

1:3—‘the army of the Medes and Persians’—מָדַי (maday)—פָרַס (paras)—The first attestation for maday as a proper name for a people is in the Table of Nations identifying descendants of Japheth (Gen. 10:2). Next it is mentioned twice referencing the fall of Israel into captivity to the Assyrians in the city of the Medes. The remaining instances fall in passages reflective of judgment involving Babylon’s imminent early destruction (Isa. 13:17), or included with later judgment against all nations projected to drink God’s cup of fury in His punishment of Babylon (Jer. 25:25).

The majority of the occurrences in Esther reflect paras (Persians) referencing those integrally included in King Ahasuerus’s kingdom. They find connection with Cyrus and his restorative efforts after Judah’s 70-year captivity noted in their first three attestations
(2 Chr. 36). Beyond these, two further instances in Ezekiel relate to God’s judgment of Gog, while two others in Daniel reference final judgment involve the Antichrist and his confrontation with the Prince of Persia.

Hence both maday and paras seem to indicate those integrally entwined either with the fall of Babylon or Israel, or restoration, either with early or future fulfillment with divine judgment.

In relation to ancient Israel, God historically utilized both the Persian and Median empires and their prominent figure Cyrus, to fulfill His plans of redemption and overturn Babylon. Therefore with both the Medes and Persians finding such ready symbolic connections with the divine fulfillment of prophecy of judgment and redemption, it would only be consistent that they were integrally included in God’s plans from the beginning as a mode to convey such plans.

1:4—‘when he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom’—רָאָה (raah)—Strong’s associates this verb with ‘to show’ whereas both BDB and HALOT render it as ‘to cause someone to see’. Here it expresses the idea of showing someone the king’s riches but without mentioning to whom they are being exhibited, or for what express purpose.

Scripture is replete with references to the centrality of glory being God’s ultimate goal, for display, and for the upholding of His glory (John 14:24; Col. 1:27; Eph. 1:18, 3:16; Rom. 8:22-23). As scripture reveals, His plan is to fill the earth with the knowledge of His glory (Hab. 2:14). It was for the very purpose of God’s glory that mankind was created (Isa. 43:6-7). All is done for the sake of God’s glory (1 Cor. 10:31; 1 Pet. 4:11): His defeat of Pharaoh (Exod. 14: 4;18), the sparing Israel in the wilderness (Ezek. 20:14), His wrath to display His greatness (Rom. 9:22-23) and Christ’s redemption of man is all for God’s glory (John 12:27-28).

Though it was the constant plea of the psalmist that mankind seek God’s face and presence, occasionally man was privileged to behold His fullness, which experience was
expressed in terms of “glory” (Ps. 24:7-10; Ps. 63:2). A majestic God purposefully reveals His glory to His creations along with His plans for their redemption. This is confirmed to Ezekiel in the last chapter and conclusion of his temple vision when Jerusalem receives the new name that “The LORD is there” (Ezek. 48:35).

1:4—‘the riches of his *glorious kingdom*’—כָּבוֹד (kavod)—Strong’s lists this word as ‘glorious’—inferring God’s glory—followed by ‘honor’ and a few instances of ‘abundance’. Its 189 verses reference God’s radiant realm of greatness and perfection.

Its origin is related to the word *kavad*, which expresses a more concrete idea of ‘to be heavy’ or ‘weighty’. Therefore, this concept often ties to heavy things like armaments, weapons or defensive protections.

Such ‘heaviness’ often equates with something glorifying. In his letter to the Corinthians Paul comments that momentary affliction leads to “a far more exceeding eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17).

Many instances tie artifacts to God’s glory and to redemption. Abraham, the patriarch of the covenant, was rich in cattle, silver, and gold (Gen. 13:2). Other attestations for this word similarly connect either to redemptive roles or symbols: King David (1 Sam. 22:14), the king’s captain of the guard (2 Sam. 23:23), Moses’ heavy hands or God’s hand (Exod. 17:12, Ps. 32:4), or other actualities and objects like the oil of the olive tree (Judg. 9:9), hair (2 Sam. 24:26), sacrifices ( Isa. 43:23), or Jerusalem (Lam. 1:8).

Conversely, other instances relate the symbolic ‘heaviness’ of sin. Beyond the aspects of sin and iniquity (Ps. 38:4) other connotations of *kavod* pair with oppositional stances to God, such as the hardening of the heart (Exod. 9:34), dull ears (Isa.6:10), a heavy yoke (2 Chr. 10:10), bondage or heavy chains (Neh. 5:18).

On the one hand, these contrastive positions reflect the honored state of those who accept God’s offer to all of redemption and salvation without being “compelled” (Luke. 3:6; 1 Tim. 2:4). On the other hand, they represent the incumbent weighty constraints of the
devil’s captivity and destruction from rejecting God’s proffered salvation (e.g. Ps. 50:1; Isa. 24:20)—recognizable here with the king’s invitation to his lavish feast.

1:4—‘the honor of his majesty’—יְקָר (yekar)—HALOT suggests for this word the meanings of ‘preciousness’ and ‘honor’ to which Strong’s and BDB add ‘price’. Its first appearance is here in Esther, which text also accounts for more than half of its seventeen attestations.

Wisdom implies incorporation of truth, which God embodies in entirety. Such wisdom enables Him to achieve mankind’s redemption and salvation, according to the “riches of His wisdom and grace” with the intent to bring unification (Eph. 1:7-10).

It was the king’s ‘honor’, or ‘preciousness’ associated with his “excellent majesty” (Esth. 1:4) which Haman so insidiously coveted. Yet ironically—it is Mordecai who receives such, being the one who the king ultimately “delighted to honor” (vs. 9-11). Likewise, only Christ is due such honor from God (heaven’s king) in being crowned with dominion, “glory”, and “honor” (Heb. 2:9; 2 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 5:11-13).

1:4—‘his excellent majesty’—גִּדוּלָה (gedullah)—All three lexicons list this feminine noun as ‘great’ or ‘greatness’. Beyond the three occurrences in Esther, the remaining twelve attestations specifically refer to David recognizing God’s attribute of greatness, either in his glorifying and praising of God, or exalting God for His great deeds. Besides God and the king this likewise finds ready application with Mordecai’s “greatness” and ultimate magnification in the final chapters of Esther.

1:4—‘even a hundred and fourscore days’—This equates to 180 days, which number appears once more—as the measurement of Isaac’s life (Gen. 35:28). “Isaac” means ‘laughter’, signifying ‘joy’. Isaac, as Abraham’s pledged offspring, or “Seed of Promise” (Gen. 21:12; Acts 7:8; 32; Heb. 11:18), is dedicated for sacrifice but instead is fully restored, thereby becoming the ultimate type foreshadowing Christ’s atonement.
Furthermore, the number 18 and its multiples and augmentations (e.g. 180) have been perpetuated in Jewish culture as the symbol of life. The graphemic representation of the number with Hebrew letters also has a lexical meaning “life” or “to live”. In turn, this word comes from the root חיה, which finds connection with the word meaning ‘living’ related to Eve’s biblical name, for she was the “mother of all living” (Gen. 3:20). It also bears connection in the Bible with deliverance from bondage—both physical and spiritual (Judg. 3:12-15; 10:7 – 8; 11:29; Luke 13:10-17).

This unique tie with such explicit identification to Isaac’s lifespan—in conjunction with that of Sarah’s earlier—may serve as a foreshadowing of God’s atoning plan of redemption for both body and soul with salvation from sin.

1:5—‘the king made a feast unto all the people...great and small’—This phrase, formulated in its reverse as “small and great” typically appears in the Bible to denote inclusivity, like saying “everyone” or “everything”. However as Grossman noted, being stated in this order it is only found a few times, with added significance (2011). Since it also appears in verse 20 of this chapter, it will be more fully addressed there. For now, it appears to point the reader to the notion of pending times of judgment intended for God’s people, and serves in both verses to signal covenantal expressions (Grossman, 2011) which could again imply God’s overarching redemptive plan.

1:5—‘made a feast...seven days’—Seven is a foundational symbolic number in the Bible, commonly associated as a perfect and sacred number comprising the idea of completeness, perfection, and holiness. It is repetitively found with variant application in this introductory chapter in five different verses; 1, 5, 14 and twice in verse 10.

Seven often reflected God’s denoting of prophetic time for His people. He instituted a yearly calendar wherein there were seven specified feasts or Holy Days outlined in the Torah, beginning with Passover in Nisan the first month and ending with the Last Great Day (the day after Sukkot) in the seventh month. The observance of these appointed commemorative mandates replete with their prophetic meaning and fulfillment, brought
understanding to both Israel’s history and faith. There is also evidence of a seven-year cycle as well known as Shmita, the sabbatical year (Exod. 23:10-11; Lev. 25:1-7, 18-22).

Seven is God’s patterned mark of completion or perfection, and thus finds fitting repetition in the first two introductory chapters of Esther, as well as its concluding chapters 8 and 9 marking these with a sense of ordained completeness.

1:5—‘the court of the garden of the king's palace’—גַּנָּה (gannah)—This feminine noun, meaning ‘garden’ is first found in Balaam’s description of the encampment of Jacob’s house (Num. 24:6). The language in the later part of this verse echoes reference to Eden (Gen. 2:8), where this word first occurs in its masculine form.

Anciently, a garden was a piece of ground for cultivating. It was also used as a place of shelter, worship or for burial (Eccl. 2:4-6, Song. 4:12; 6:2). Often a wall of earth or stone would enclose a garden for protection against wild beasts and thieves. Biblical gardens in general depict a suitable place for God to sow His “seed” in order to grow and cultivate righteousness (Isa. 61:11), hence why Eden was the first prototypical paradisiacal place.

God’s greatest and most important work of redemption and salvation was wrought within garden enclosures, including; the fall in the Garden of Eden, the atonement in the Garden of Gethsemane, and ultimately the resurrection from the Garden tomb near Golgotha.

1:5—‘the king made a feast…in the court of the garden of the king’s palace’—חָצֵר (chatser)—This word contains multiple meanings, with Strong’s suggesting ‘to encompass’ and ‘surround (enclose by wall)’. BDB includes ‘enclosure’, as for cattle yard, or ‘court’, as in surrounding a palace, temple or confinement, ‘settled abode’, ‘settlement’, or ‘village’. HALOT suggests ‘yard without walls’. Of its 189 occurrences, beyond the seven references in Esther, all but three clearly refer to the tabernacle or temple courts of Solomon and Ezekiel, the psalmist’s heavenly courts, Jeremiah’s court of imprisonment adjacent to the temple (Jer. 20:1-3, LXX) or one of Israel’s camps.
The few places where this word occurs suggest a strong symbolic tie to the idea of redemption (Exod. 8:13; Lev. 25:29-31; 2 Kgs. 20:1-4; 2 Sam. 18:18).

Whether it is the tribal land inheritances, the tabernacle, or the physical domain of the temple, marking where Isaac was to be sacrificed, each signify redemption as a manifestation of sacred space belonging to God and His realm, which He had promised to share with His people as an eternal inheritance.

Concentric spheres of holiness as reflected by the various courts represented sanctity for right of access emanating outward from the temple starting from its center of holiness: the Holy of Holies, sanctuary, and vestibule. Then after the courts it would continue to extend beyond the enclosed city of Jerusalem, and surrounding walls of Israel to eventually encompass its borders and beyond to profane space (Hitchcock, Talbot, West, Eadie, & Cruden, 1900).

The near proximity of the courtyard to the center of holiness is also reflected within Eden’s Garden. Noted as earth’s temple, it was a designated sphere of holiness being in close proximity to God’s presence.

Courts typically reflect connotations of royalty, law, and judgment, being indicative of places or institutions where authority is exercised to adjudicate disputes or administer justice within a society’s legal system. This is where the divine council—the myriad of servants that functioned to fulfill God’s purposes for His creations. Prophets, such as Isaiah, Jeremiah or Micah, periodically witnessed such court sessions in God’s throne room via vision—to ascertain His will in order to relay His word. The phrase “Thus saith the LORD” signified they had heard the message and policy to be enacted (Sumner, 1991).

The “courtyard” here thus signifies a place of proximity to God’s holy sanctuary specifically connected within His sphere for His salvational intents and purposes, just as within a king’s domain it was likewise a place for administrative and jurisdictional
purposes. As such, they are relevant and proper places for judgment concerning the legal affairs of a centralized administration, as with God’s realm, since there is no salvation without execution of justice (Isa. 1:27; 56:1). Just as a king systematically upholds the law of his kingdom, heaven’s King reigns with principles of righteousness and justice with His heavenly court typifying the legality of such things (Isa. 9:7; 32:1).

1:6—‘there were hangings of white, fine cotton, and blue, bordered with cords of fine linen and purple, upon silver rods and pillars of marble; the couches were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of green, and white, and shell, and onyx marble’—This entire verse is replete with words that are specifically paralleled to those used in the description and identification of the temple as indicated below:

‘white stuff’—חור (chur)—קרפס (karpaç)—בוץ (buwtz)—These words share a similar sense of meaning. For chur, both BDB and Strong’s suggest ‘white stuff’ with reference to ‘cotton’ or ‘linen’, while HALOT gives it the definition of ‘white fabric’ or ‘linen’. Next, קרפס (karpaç), HALOT suggests it conveys ‘linen curtains used as awning’. Here it describes the luxurious furnishings of the palace interior, used again in Esther 8:15 in conjunction with תְּכֵלֶת (tekeleth), the fine twisted violet threads in describing the woven fabric of Mordecai’s exquisite robes. The word קרפס (karpaç) is a loanword from Sanskrit or Persian for which BDB and Strong’s suggest the meaning ‘byssus or fine vegetable wool:—green; cotton or linen’. HALOT further indicates ‘cotton plant; fine fabric, or linen’. Finally, Strong’s gives בוץ (buwtz) the meaning of ‘fine linen’.

These definitions parallel in meaning with ‘bleached stuff’, i.e. white linen, (or also by analogy, marble) for the Egyptian loanword שֵׁשׁ (shesh), and denote: clothing in relationship to temple materials, priestly garb, the figurative description of the virtuous wife, or the bridegroom in Song of Solomon. This material takes on further significance in Barker’s observation of the “vital connection between the veil and incarnation symbolized by the vestments of the high priest” who typified Christ in wearing garments of the same fabric as the veil (Exod. 39:29) (2003).
HALOT elucidates how *shesh* is homonymous for שַׁיִּשׁ (*shayish*)—alabaster or marble also noted for temple use (1 Chr. 29:2), sharing the similar properties of exquisite whiteness and high value. HALOT additionally explains that בּוּץ (*buwtz*), though not as old in use as *shesh* also conveys ‘to bleach white’ in reference to cotton or linen, therefore having equivalent meaning. All fourteen of its attestations likewise exclusively reference priestly clothing, temple materials, or indirectly of those who craft such materials. All of these words share a synonymous sense of meaning correlated either directly or indirectly with the temple.

‘purple’—אַרְגָּמָן (*argaman*)—For this word HALOT lists ‘wool dyed with red purple’. Beyond its two uses in Esther, it only appears in verses directly connected to the temple, relating with the veil, priestly vestments, the craftsmen for temple materials (Jer. 10:9), or temple allusions involving covenant connection such as Solomon’s wedding procession, the Bridegroom’s betrothed (Song. 3:10; 7:65), Proverbs’ virtuous woman (Prov. 31:22), or the symbolic lament of Tyre reflective of Satan’s fall from heaven’s temple (Ezek. 7:27,16).

‘rods’—גָּלִיל (*galil*)—According to Strong’s, this word conveys ‘cylinder’, ‘rod’, ‘circuit’, and ‘district’. HALOT adds ‘revolving’ (door), ‘cylinders’, and ‘round rod or ring’.

Each of these definitions allude to a circular nature or circumference. The circle is a universal symbol with extensive significant meaning including the ideas of eternity, totality, wholeness and such. It also evokes cyclical notions of a perpetual revolution of time rolling forward with repetition, duality, and ascendancy.

Besides being used here it also references the chief Israelite wilderness encampment Kedesh of Galilee (meaning ‘holy’), and in description of Solomon’s Temple and the bridegroom.

‘pillars of marble’—ﬠַמּוּד (*ammuwd*)—This noun as noted by Strong’s and BDB means ‘pillar’ or ‘column’.
The images paired with this word vary greatly such as: the pillar of fire or column of smoke preceding the tabernacle; the temple columns overlaid with gold or bronze; the seven pillars of Wisdom as heaven’s cosmic ‘supports’; and the metaphoric description of the bridegroom’s legs as “pillars of marble” (Song. 5:15), an allusion to the viability of strength or power necessary to uphold all that is laid upon His shoulder.

These all tie relationally to temple cosmologically figuratively or literally, and by extension God’s realm. Beyond their conceivable structural function as actual pillars, their symbolic significance has been greatly conjectured. The prominent pillars of Solomon’s temple were referenced by name. The one to the south of the temple entrance was called Jachin meaning ‘Yah will establish’, while the north side was named Boaz meaning ‘in him is strength’. One speculation for their symbolic purpose is that, if considered together, they could represent covenants; suggestive that God would establish the righteous through His strength. In addition, passing their entrance symbolizes an indication of His promises and presence that endures forever (Heb. 1:8).

‘pavement’—רִצְפָּה (ritspah)—HALOT suggests various substantives for this word including ‘stone’, ‘pavement’, ‘flagstone floor’, ‘mosaic floor’, while BDB and Strong’s add ‘glowing stone’ (or coal). Besides its occurrence in Esther, its seven other attestations exclusively are used in the description of the temples of Solomon, Ezekiel, or heaven’s temple.

‘of green, and white, and shell, and onyx marble’—This phrase includes the following three terms with their respective meanings as listed by HALOT: בַּחַט (bahat), ‘mineral for amulets’; ‘mineral mixed with other stones in costly mosaic floor’; דָּר (dar), ‘mother of pearl’; ‘precious pavement’, and כֹּכֶרֶת (cochereth), ‘a paving stone, possibly black marble’. Though none of these occur elsewhere in the Bible, the glory of God’s dwelling place and heavenly temple is often projected through the portrayal of precious stones and gem-like pavement (Rev. 4:3; 21:19; Ezek. 28:13; 39:8-14).
‘gold’— זָהָב (zahab)—‘silver’—כְּסַף (keseph)—These particular precious metals have long been readily equated with the sphere of divinity. Whether Christian or pre-Christian, gold easily found association in religious realms with the divine due to its rarity, luster, malleability, as well as its indestructible properties, all which typify divinity. Silver, a specified metal for the temple was often noted as the primary substance for the temple vessels. It also served as the primary stable medium of currency for exchange and transactions (Jer. 32), and was equated symbolically for redemption, in particular as the silver shekel temple tax (Matt. 27:3-10; Gen. 20:16).

1:7—‘vessels’—כְּלִי—(keli)—This word finds consensus in both lexicons’ definitions as ‘vessel’, ‘utensil’, ‘receptacle’ or ‘piece of equipment’. Just as the heart is metaphorically a container for the covenant, vessels typically can be a ready metaphor for men, used by Isaiah in his rich portrayal of God as the potter (Keach, 1858, p. 296).

1:8—‘drinking…according to the law’—Early forms of Semitic covenants “between two contracting parties, was originally sealed with blood; a bond, or a law; a permanent religious dispensation. The original way was ‘to cut a covenant’ (ברית כָּרַת), where the covenanters cut into each other’s arm and then sucked the blood, the mixing of which rendered them ‘brothers of the covenant’. This originally conveyed the idea that the covenant was a life-fellowship” (Trumbul, 1887).

Gordon explains how blood, being the substance that imbued life, was the recognized element for uniting identity or, in essence, for the forming of a common life between the covenanters (1936). With the passage of time the blood rite was superseded with its substitute, the ‘blood of the grape’ or wine.

The ancient marriage compact, as Gordon reports, was such a covenant ceremony accompanied by eating and especially drinking together, which is the illusion here. This created a unity of life between the covenant parties, and with the tribe of the one being admitted into the community (1936). This too, signifies God’s relationship with covenant Israel, His bride.
1:8—‘the drinking was according to the law’—דָּת (dath)—Both BDB and Strong’s list this word as meaning ‘decree’, ‘edict’, and ‘law’, while HALOT adds ‘order’. Derived from Persian, twenty of its twenty-two occurrences fall in the Esther text. The word appears two times beyond Esther—one in Deuteronomy and again in Ezra.

Ezra 8:36 documents the exiled as they re-enter the Promised Land to rebuild the temple and live God’s law. This begins with an initial accounting of the treasury, followed by the sin and burnt offerings. This verse further recounts: “they also delivered the king's edicts to the royal satraps and governors of the region west of the Euphrates, so that they would support the people and the house of God” (CSB). The “edicts” are presumed to reflect the royally mandated written permission certifying Ezra as the authorized administrator of the Jewish law concerning those regions.

Both attestations similarly reflect the law with specificity to God, regarding His stipulations for those who inhabit His land. But they also mark two time frames. First, it reflects Israel’s spiritual ascendancy with initial efforts to reestablish the Promised Land and rebuild the temple under the “Prince of Judah”, David’s descendant Zerubbabel (Ezra 1:8). Then, in later efforts under Ezra’s priestly leadership and involving a much larger group, it centers on the workers needed to assist with the instruction, purification and establishment of Zion. This possibly finds parallel with the two-fold messianic efforts and roles. God initially laid out the laws, stipulations, and temple ordinances for His people to secure the Promised Land, which would extend to all nations under the same scepter when Shiloh comes (Gen. 49:10).

1:8—‘drinking according to the law…none did compel…that they should do according to every man’s pleasure’—אנָס (anas)—HALOT suggests for this word ‘to press’, ‘to force’, ‘to violate’, or in a derived form, ‘to be compelled’.

One of the most significant conflicts was the war in heaven when Satan rebelled against God (Isa. 14; Ezek. 28; Rev. 12). The ancient text of Moses discloses how Satan not only
sought to ‘exalt’ himself above God (Isa. 14:13; Thess. 2:4; Mos. 4:1), but his proposal to redeem all men would ultimately destroy man’s agency (Moses 4:1-4, 7). This initially led to his banishment from God’s presence as well as a loss of one third of God’s host of heaven (Rev. 12:4), in what would become an ongoing battle.

Just as the king compelled none to drink, so God’s laws authorizing His offer of Salvation are extended to all mankind for their own choosing (1 Tim 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9). He who bears the fruit of salvation freely offers it saying, “if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me” (Rev. 3:20, ESV). Although it inevitably remains singularly man’s choice to receive or reject the offering, those that believe will be saved, but those who do not believe Him will be condemned (Mark. 16:16).

1:8—‘according to everyman’s pleasure’—רָצוֹן (ratzon)—Both HALOT and BDB list ‘goodwill’, ‘favor’, ‘acceptance’, and ‘will’ for this word.

Throughout scripture this word is used in a myriad of contexts to convey what connects with ‘pleasure’. These include: the righteous and good who obtain God’s favor; the upright or those seeking good and to do His will; God’s altar; or the king (as a type for God), etc. The commonality associated with each of these is the suggestion of a ‘acceptableness’ of God in relation to aspects of sacrifice, repentance, oaths, and right conduct. What is being proffered for the “pleasure” of all men in each of these is the desirable fruit of redemption.

1:9—‘Also Vashti the queen made a feast’—וַשְׁתִּי (Vashti)—This name signifies ‘beautiful woman’ (Jones, 1997). It is reflecting the resplendent appearance of this regal Persian princess, who was renowned in the kingdom as being “fair to look on” due to her exquisite beauty.

Since God made man in His image (Gen. 1:26-27), he likewise is glorious. The psalmists reflect with awe over God’s handiwork, exclaiming how in the scale of creation, man
ranked just lower than the angels, crowned with glory, honor and dominion (Ps. 8:3-6).

Others who have been characterized as ‘beautiful’ in the Bible include: Sarah (Gen. 12:11), Rachel (Gen. 29:17), Tamar (2 Sam. 13:1, 14:27), Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11:2), Abigail (1 Sam. 25:3), Abishag (1 Kgs. 1:3), the Beloved (Song 1:5), Joseph (Gen. 39:6), Moses (Exod. 2:1-2), Saul (1 Sam. 9:2), David (1 Sam. 16:18), the Messiah (Isa. 33:17), along with Esther (Esth. 2:7), and even the King of Tyre (Ezek. 28:12). While each of these bear tie to royalty, all but two, find a tie to Christ and covenantal connection.

The king of Tyre, mentioned as “falling” from heaven (Isa. 14) has been tied to the pre-mortal Lucifer. “Lucifer”, conveying ‘light-bringer’ or ‘shining one’ finds connection to Venus, the morning star, and ancient origins of a heavenly body being cast to earth for insurrection. Lucifer, one of the highest of created beings who stood in God’s presence, rivaled God for power and glory. Similarly the premier Princess—Vashti—seen as one of the most beautiful in Persia, seemingly rivaled the king in her defiant refusal of his command and the holding of her own banquet.

Additionally, as transliterated from Persian to Hebrew, the name Vashti to the ancient Hebrew might have conveyed the word *sheti*, a noun implying ‘drinking’ from the verb *shata*, meaning ‘to drink’. Though wine is often symbolic of the covenant, drunkenness in the Bible is often paired with rebellion, Satan’s doctrines and God’s judgment, and thus once again pairs with Lucifer, against whom God’s judgment was kindled (Prov. 20:10; 23:29-32; Hos. 4:11-12; Rom. 13:13-14; Gal. 5:19-21; Rev. 17:2).

Vashti is briefly recorded as the exquisite queen in the king’s court who defiantly refused to comply with the king’s command. After holding her own banquet, she is dismissed, being stripped of her royalty, and banished as fit punishment. As shown, this could find parallel with the circumstances of Satan’s own expulsion from God’s heavenly courts.

1:9—‘women’s banquet’—נָשִׁים מִשְׁתֵּה—(*mishteh nashim*)—From the text it appears that Vashti, while in the royal house, independently offers a separate but concurrent banquet to the women. None were compelled to accept the king’s invitation to his banquet, as
none are compelled to accept God’s proposed covenant of salvation. In an act of rebellion—Lucifer—while seeking his own honor—proffers a position contrary to God’s plan just as Vashti does by holding a banquet in seeming opposition to the king. Both Vashti’s and Lucifer’s cases result in subsequent banishment (Isa. 14:12-19; Moses 4:1-3).

Such women’s banquets have been previously documented in sources such as Plutarch, who records how the women of the Persian court were at times excused from a general banquet to a banquet of their own if there was to be excessive drinking (Hancock, 2013).

Yet, looking beyond tradition, this instance of the women’s banquet could indeed allude to Lucifer’s own presentation to those of God’s household. This collective body of God’s people has consistently been personified with a feminine gender in the Bible, whether as the city Jerusalem, the kingdoms of Judah, Israel, or God’s holy nation Zion. Terms such as “princess”, “widow”, “daughter”, as well as feminine-gendered terms like “slave” constantly reference God’s people in their various entities for which Lamentations 1:1-22 and Isaiah 3:16-26 are prime examples. This pattern of personification could thus equate the women of Vashti’s banquet to God’s covenant people.

Thus the wine used in the women’s banquet similarly could equate to the contract—or covenant—that the rebellious Lucifer sought to forge with those of God’s kingdom, seeing as wine was an essential feature of a covenantal agreement in the binding of two parties (Gen. 24: 54).

1:10—‘on the seventh day….the king…commanded seven chamberlains’—As already discussed, the number seven carries deep symbolic significance. Keil and Delitzsch mention how these seven counselors, who knew the times and were skilled in law, “form a counterpart to the seven Amshaspands, who saw the face of the king, i.e., were allowed direct intercourse with him” (Keil & Delitzsch, 2006). The Amshapands of Persia were esteemed as some of the highest ranking of creative intelligences within Zoroastrianism,
being considered similar or equivalent to the class of divine entities of Judaism’s Elohim, who served within God’s throne room to assist Him with His divine purposes.

In the postexilic period, Jewish apocalyptic literature describes seven archangels who stood in the presence of God (Tobit 12:5; 1 Enoch 9:1; 20:1-7; 40:9). This could plausibly find expression in these seven chamberlains to the king, as well as find tie with the seven angels who descend with adjudicated judgment at end time (Rev. 16:1).

1:10—‘heart…merry with wine’—יִין (yayin)—Though wine was commonly consumed, it was often used for sacred purposes (Gen. 49:11-12; Exod. 29:40; Lev. 23:13; Num. 15:5). As such, it was used literally as well as figuratively, becoming a symbol to convey ideas of covenant, celebration, rejoicing, as well as indulgence, wrath and judgment.


The consumption of wine links further with nakedness and judgment, as attested in Edom’s triumph over Zion resulting from broken covenants (Lam. 4:21), Noah’s uncovered state (Gen. 9:20-27), or the drunken revel of Babylon and treachery of Nebuchadnezzar in the “uncovering” or exposing many to shame (Hab. 2:15).

Feasting and wine are integrally interconnected, reflected by the fact that the Hebrew word for “feasting” is actually “drinking”, while demonstrating frequent collocation with yayin. Again, beyond its added connection with judgment, it also relates to joy in the; feasting of wine on the lees—well-aged wine (Isa. 25:6); the blessings of the messianic kingdom; and the height of Zion when mourning turns to joy (Jer. 2-14).

These therefore are the logical connections with what the wine—or covenant—produces (1 Cor. 11:25; Lev. 17:14). On one hand it produces joy with correspondent ‘merriment’, which is metaphorically reflective of covenantal redemption and salvation (Isa. 9:3; Ecc. 9:7; 10:19; Deut. 16:13-15; Zech. 9:11). Conversely, it also could produce judgment (Isa.
16:10), which is metaphorically suggested by the treading of the wine press or consuming
God’s cup of fury as suggested in Esther’s later chapters (Isa. 63:1-3; Jer. 15:15; Rev.
14:10; Prov. 4:17). This accounts for the dual aspects related by this word.

1:11—‘queen…king…royal crown’—כֶּתֶר (keter)—This word only occurs in the book of
Esther and equates to ‘crown’ in Strong’s, HALOT and BDB. As the king is the symbolic
embodiment of his nation, so likewise is the queen the symbol of the people in its
feminine embodiment. It is first noted being worn by Esther here and also in 2:17, then
later on when Mordecai is honored by the king in 6:8, where it will again be commented
on. It is possible that the author of the Hebrew text intended the use of keter with the
broader sense of implying ‘a lawful consort’ (Botterweck, Ringgren, & Fabry, 2001).

The keter crown is a significant symbol of royalty alongside the throne and scepter,
Rambam suggested in the Hilkot that it had a special connection to God’s promise of
royalty to David and his descendants. He further intimates that this gift, which he states
was comparable to priesthood, was restricted to those anointed for the purpose of
acquiring kingship for himself and his descendants as an inheritance forever, provided he
was wise and God-fearing, since it could only be acquired by the worthy (Hilkhot Tamud
Torah 3:1; Hilkhot Melakim 1:7). This appears to be further ratified in scripture by those
who qualify as the Bride (Rev. 2:26; 5:10; 20:6; 2 Tim. 2:12).

God utilizes the analogy of the Bride and Bridegroom to project the collective
relationship between Himself and His people. The psalmist describes a divinely royal
wedding involving the King with His Queen who stands at his right side in her royal
robes accompanied by her consort of virgins (Ps. 45:9-14) having been prepared to
receive Him and His kingdom (Rev. 19: 7-8; 21:9-10; Hos. 2:16-23; Matt. 25). This well
depicts God’s promise of inheritance and enthronement to those who are righteous. (Rev.
3:21).

The Persian king’s crown signified “a state of honor or dignity… because a kind of
divine aura emanated from the monarch’s crown and raised the wearer up to the most
exalted position” (Llewellyn-Jones, 2013, p. 60). He further explains that only the great king wore the *keter*, and describes it as a soft headdress wrapped around the head and worn in conjunction with the diadem.

This description pairs in similarity to the high priest’s headdress. The mitre was a linen piece of cloth wound around the high priest’s head when he was officiating. His tiara was engraved with the words “Holiness to the LORD” and attached around the headdress by two sets of blue cords (Exod. 39:31; 28:36). He further reports that in similarity with the Persian king’s lotus blossom scepter, the crown likewise contained suggestions of a flower (2013, p. 221), which Josephus noted as a golden calyx, or ‘lily’ (Whiston, 1889).

**1:13—‘those knowing the times’**—According to the Targum, this phrase refers to the Persian astronomers and astrologers who understood the “times” through their understanding of the signs and seasons. In conjunction with the Jewish laws, this enabled them to advise Israel according to the key timings propitious for needful actions (1 Chr. 12:32 ESV).

The Mesopotamians were masters of astronomy, as intimated in scripture (Dan. 2:21-22; Acts 7:22; Judg. 2:10). Such knowledge was essential in establishing the reliable timings and accurate assessments for appropriate agrarian practices in conjunction with ascertaining astronomic events specific to their worship. Such cosmic movements were crucial in calculating timing of events such as in the Magi’s quest of the Messiah.

The tribe of Issachar was also known for its astute astronomical ability in determining the intercalculations of the calendar, as well as their acute perception concerning the political tide of affairs emerging within the nation during the crisis of Saul’s death, and imminent timing for David’s kingship. With the ‘East’ being a key indicator connected with salvation as well as messianic import (Gen. 2:8; 10:30; 12:8; Zech. 14:4,9; Ezek. 43:1-5, 47:1), Issachar’s encampment position noted on the ‘East’ could be symbolically significant, especially since its territory ties primarily to the Jezreel valley. This ancient area has continually maintained importance as a crossroad for the control of empires and
as such will eventually mark the momentous end battle of the returning messiah in culmination of God’s plan.

1:14—‘see the king’s face…and sat first in the kingdom’—Llewelyn-Jones presents the ancient Persian king as a type for God, serving as an agent for both civil and divine order both as judge and lawgiver. He discusses how the Persian court created a lavish physical display of awe and magnificence to symbolize the king’s authority, but also made it one of successive barriers, which progressively restricted space towards the palace’s inner court in demonstration of the king’s God-given governance (2013, p. 26).

Llewellyn-Jones expresses how the king’s “unseen, but all-seeing” dominion, made him an obscure figure even to longstanding courtiers explaining such limited access to the person of the sovereign was required of Achaemenid monarchy. He reports “the physical separation of the king from his courtiers permeated every aspect of royal life, including dinners and feasts, where only a few individual were permitted to interact with the king” (Llewellyn-Jones, 2013, p. 44). He goes on to suggest that with such tight control the king was inaccessible, except to “a few honored members of the court who presumably were able to address the king directly as they ate and drank and therefore were in a position of favor and influence”. He reasons that this restricted access to royalty may have fostered a “region wide concept of royal invisibility,” as texts across the ancient Near East “express the desire of courtiers to behold the faces of their kings” (Llewellyn-Jones, 2013, pp. 44-46).

The psalmist affirms how God’s people were commanded to seek His face (Ps. 27:8; 2 Chr. 7:14). The Hebrew word for “face” implies His presence. Mankind, separated from God on account of sin, according to Hebrew theology could ascend back to His holy mountain and presence by seeking His face, but only with “clean hands and pure heart” (Ps. 24:3-6). Scripture does attest of those who so worthily did witness God, including Moses who saw Him “face to face” (Gen. 32:30; Exod. 3:6, 33:11), Aaron and the priests of Israel (Exod. 24:9), Isaiah (Isa. 6:5), Job (Job 19:26), and Solomon (1 Kgs. 11:9), as well as the leaders of Israel (Exod. 24:11).
Historical accounts do attest that some enjoyed the privilege of entering into the king’s domain. Burgan notes how relatives and descendants of the six men who assisted Darius in gaining the monarchy formed the Persian nobility, who acted as his advisors and had ready access to him most of the time (2010).

1:16—‘queen hath not done wrong only to the king, but also to all the princes, and all the peoples’—ﬠָוָה (avah)—This is a late Hebrew word for which HALOT suggests the meaning ‘to do wrong’, while one derived form means ‘to be bent’, ‘pervert’, and another means ‘to twist (as in the law)’. BDB further connects it as a denominative verb meaning ‘to commit iniquity’ or ‘sin’.

Iniquity expresses a premeditated choice of intentional disobedience or willful transgression of God’s laws. As such, the sense of ‘doing wrong’ or ‘twisting’ aptly ties with iniquity.

The scriptures constantly admonish how unchecked iniquity leads to men’s reprobate state of no “fear” of God, resulting in His punishment. Beyond this instance, all of this word’s other attestations give reference to something worthy of God’s wrath or deserving of His judgment either literally or figuratively. These include: Babylon, the state of distress of the wicked, the angst of God’s pending judgment upon those who pervert, the obstinate or rebellious, etc.

Vashti’s spirit of prideful rebellion was not unlike that of Satan’s for which he too was banished, being what foremost engendered the greatest harm to God and His kingdom. Scripture amply attests to the fact that as the great twister of truth, he purposefully perverts the ways of the Lord with desire to deceive and destroy the world (Acts. 13:10; Rev. 12:4, 19; 1 Pet. 5:8; John 8:44; Ezek. 28:15-16).

1:17—‘to make their husbands contemptible (despised) in their eyes’—בָּזָה (bazah)—Besides the meaning of ‘despise’, HALOT also suggests ‘regarding with contempt’.
Strong’s mentions this word deriving from a primitive root meaning, ‘to disesteem’, which is the opposite of ‘honor’ as in to show ‘no regard’.

God, however, will accord with honor those who honor Him. He declares, “those who despise Me will be lightly esteemed” (1 Sam. 2:30, ESV).

“Despise” denotes ‘to hold in contempt’, and in the context of law, implies willful disobedience to, or open disrespect for, the legislation of the court. Within the Biblical context it expresses willful conduct directed towards God or those typifying Him and His admonitions or law. Setting His law at naught was considered high treason.

Thus those who despise God are consigned to be “cut off” (Num. 15:31; Prov. 13:13), that being the antithesis of being “gathered to [one’s] people” (Gen. 15:15; 25:8; 35:29; 49:29; Num. 20:24; Judg. 2:10), which implied salvation.

Each of its occurrences suggest thematic parallel in context of willful contempt towards God, or His counterparts, resulting in a manifested severing such as Michal’s “despising” of David resulting with her being given as wife to another, and ill-fated as barren until her death (2 Sam. 6:16). Another example is Sennacherib’s despicable blasphemy resulting with the loss of his army and eventual murder (2 Kgs. 19:21).

Those who despise God by holding His commands in contempt are frequently mentioned as “broken off”, “cut off”, or “hewn down” (John 15:4-8; Matt. 3:10, 7:15-20; Jer. 17:8; Isa. 1:30; 27:11; Prov. 13:12-13; 15:4). This is suggestive of the severing of a tree or vine, which commonly typify Christ (John 15:5; Ps. 1:3; Gen. 2:9; Rev. 2:7). Trees metaphorically were often significantly tied to the major theological events and characters throughout the Bible. The withered branches rotten with disease, which are broken off and collected for burning, metaphorically are those broken off from the vine—heaven’s true Tree—for Divine judgment (Heb. 6:8; Isa. 9:5, Rev. 12:4-12). This reflects reason for both Vashti’s banishment as well as the casting out of Satan—the “abominable branch” (Isa. 14:12).
1:18—‘so there will arise enough contempt and wrath’—קֶצֶף (qetseph)—BDB suggests for this word ‘wrath’, while HALOT suggests ‘frustration’ or, regarding God, ‘anger’. Strong’s also includes from Gesenius for this word the concepts of: ‘altercation or strife’, ‘splinters’, from the idea of being ‘broken off’, which could suggest covenantal implications, and also ‘anger’ (of Jehovah). It is Vashti’s response of contempt which merits her banishment, whereas the related verbal form, קָצַף (qastaph)—meaning ‘to be wroth’ or ‘to be angry’ is used earlier in verse 12 describing the king’s anger at her refusal.

Keil and Delitzsch suggest this word refers to the queen’s actions, not her words: her actual act of rejecting the king’s command. They also observed that the phrase, “‘there will be enough contempt and provocation’: implies an outburst of anger, therefore a provocation to wrath” (Keil & Delitzsch, 2006).

‘Wrath’ therefore, as used in scripture, conveys God’s justifiable response to inexcusable sin and violation of His holiness and justice. Such wrath often spurs His vengeance demonstrated by expulsion as indicated in 2 Kings 17:18, which parallels the repercussive wrath exhibited towards Vashti and Lucifer for their contemptible acts of rebellion.

1:19—‘if it please the king’—This phrase intertextually points the reader to a setting that involves Nehemiah, a clear illustration for Christ, articulating a similar proposal. In humble supplication, Nehemiah, as the royal cup-bearer, seeks the king’s favor and royal commission asking, “If it please the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight that you would send me unto Judah, unto the city of my father’s sepulchers, that I may rebuild it” (Neh. 2:5). He then presents a plan to restore Jerusalem and its walls. With the cup being symbolic of blood, associated with life (Lev. 17:14), the “cup-bearer” thus symbolizes he who bears life. Nehemiah, who has been projected with messianic inference typifies as the “cup-bearer”, who ultimately restores Israel’s walls of salvation.
Esther likewise here is a divinely designated “cup-bearer” of sorts. This allusion consequently purposefully appears elsewhere in the Esther narrative.

1:19—‘that it [the law]… be not altered’—The idea of the irrevocability of law also echoed in Daniel 6:8-17, is undocumented in any Persian or Greek source (Berlin, 2001, p. 18). Some scholars have remarked how counterintuitive and even counterproductive it is for an empire to operate under irrevocable law. Other scholars infer that this aspect of the official Persian edict meant for it to be immediately and completely carried out. The verb used here usually means ‘transgress’, which could render the translation, “let a royal edict go out that will be written into the laws of Persia and Media and not be transgressed”. It also appears in Esther 3:3 when Mordecai refuses to show obeisance to Haman, and again in Esther 9:28 as a dictum to observe Purim. As Berlin then identifies, the sense of immutability resurfaces in Esther 8:5-7 with a different verb meaning ‘to return’ (2001). Katz surmises these two ideas are somewhat related, but with the nuanced difference of what should not be ‘transgressed’ and what cannot be ‘recalled’ or ‘revoked’ (Katz, 2003).

Herodotus describes the speed of the Persian’s horse-posting system, which has been estimated to take seven to nine days for royal couriers to transmit messages throughout the Persian Empire (Strassler, 2007; Silverstein, 2007). Katz deduces that the use of such wording therefore reflects Haman’s edict being irreversible because of the fact that the damage from the initial decree had already incurred, and whatever anti-Jewish sentiment had resulted could not be repaired or nullified effectively with just revocation. Instead, it would require sending of another decree to counteract the assault (Katz, 2003).

Similarly, only God’s countermand, carried out by Christ, could nullify the effects of man’s consequential use of moral agency, the catalyst for the Fall, and impacts of Satan’s usurped authority and machinations for mankind’s annihilation.

1:19—‘who is more worthy than she’—Samuel utters this same phrase to Saul, who despite being honored as Israel’s first anointed king, through disobedience to God has his
kingdom taken from him to be given to another who “is better than you” (Sam. 15:28). Some have suggested a broader application, with similarities between the account of Saul and David in the Books of Samuel versus what transpired between Satan and his host and Christ. This includes: an anointing (1 Sam. 10:1; Ezek. 28:14), disqualification through dishonor and disobedience (1 Sam. 15:1; Isa. 14:13-15), replacement by God, though discontinuation of rule (1 Sam. 16:10-13; Heb. 1:8), estrangement of the rightful replacement, and full loss of God’s kingdom to the newly anointed servant (1 Sam. 22:1-2; John 16:7; Rev. 19:11-14; 2 Sam. 5:3, 4; Dan. 7:13-14).

Similar to Saul, Vashti, likewise was noted in Midrash as vain and independent-minded. For punishment of her disobedience she was deprived of her royal station and title, which effectually severed her from contact with the royal court, whereupon Esther replaced her as a more worthy consort for the king. Similarly, Satan and his defiant hosts were fully cast out of God’s presence in the Garden for their rebellion (Rev. 12:7-9). Christ, the most ‘worthy’ one, became God’s chosen servant to carry forward His plan of salvation in ‘restoring the walls’ (Rev. 13:8; Mos. 7:47), which had been breached by the effects of death (Gen. 3:14-24).

1:20—‘when the king’s decree…great though it be’—This parenthetical interjection emphasizes the size of the empire for which the judgment is to extend.

God’s kingdom indeed exceeds all, extending from heaven to earth, for “that is in heaven and earth is [God’s], [His is] the kingdom; and [He is] exalted as head over all…[He] rulest over all” (1 Chr. 29:11, JPS Tanakh 1917).

1:20—‘all the wives will give to their husbands honor’—Paul often used the marriage metaphor to express the covenantal relationship between God and His people, making statements such as, “Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord” (Col. 3:18, NKJV) or “let the wife see that she respects her husband” (Eph. 5:33, NKJV). Peter in like manner employed this analogy using the phrase “wives, be subject to your husband” (1 Pet. 3:1 ESV).
This symbolizes a sense of ranking reverence to be rendered God, He being the ‘Head’ who sacrificed for all. It implied submitting in a domain of legal jurisdiction, with action of due accordance in recognition of His supreme authority. Through such metaphorical teaching He instructed how such a respectful relationship in marriage covenant rightfully reflected the proper submissive covenantal conduct requisite to effectuate a saving covenantal relationship with God.

1:20—‘When the king’s decree shall be published throughout the kingdom, great though it be…great to small’—Keil and Delitzsch propose that the phrase ‘from great to small’ signifies the range of the populace that the decree targets—basically projecting an all-inclusive statement reflected in the Semitic idiom ‘from small to great’, or the ‘least to the greatest’, reflecting social inclusion or totality (2006).

Other instances of the collocation also reflect a common opportunity of salvation with pending judgment. For example, in expressing the idea of the ‘greatest to the least’ in Exodus 11:5 and Exodus 12:9, it alludes to the judgment pronounced on Egypt from the highest ranking to the least of the kingdom (i.e. from Pharaoh’s firstborn of Pharaoh to the slave or captive’s child). In Jonah 3:5, it refers to all of Nineveh donning sackcloth and ashes in the wake of their imminent destruction and exile for their collective sin, which made them liable for God’s judgment. Ultimately, Egypt Nineveh and Babylon in rejection of salvation were places designated for God’s wrath and judgment.

Another attestation of the phrase describes those who will unavoidably die from the impending calamity and dire judgment of Babylonian captivity (Jer. 16:6). The last use refers to the universality of those who will stand for final judgment (Rev. 20:12).

Each of the passages utilizing the phrase indicate the implications God’s imminent divine judgment upon all who fail to secure a position of salvation with Him. This is the proclaiming of incumbent judgment that falls upon the covenant maker as consequence for unfaithfulness or non-alignment with God’s purposed and proclaimed salvation.
1:22—‘to every province, in its own language’—Llewellyn-Jones relates how the “smooth running of the Empire was facilitated by an excellent infrastructure…including roads connecting all the main satrapies with the imperial core” (Llewellyn-Jones, 2013). Periodic stations accommodated the change of fresh horses for the messenger carrying the official documents. Abundant archives of letter correspondence connected with the royal court demonstrate that the “official language of a centralized policy traveled far and wide,” attesting to the steady dialogue and effectiveness of the imperial administration across the Empire (Llewellyn-Jones, 2013, pp. 33-34). “The royal rhetoric recorded in the Old Persian cuneiform inscriptions to be widely disseminated across the Empire in multiple languages emphasized that all conquered nations were united in service to the Great King, whose laws they were required to obey and whose majesty they were obliged to uphold” (Llewellyn-Jones, 2013, p. 74). These communications, being broadcast first in the lingua franca of the day, were then translated for transmission throughout the various regions and provinces (2013)

This extensively interconnected dominion can easily be equated with that of God’s vast kingdom. The Son of Man was given “dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion [being] an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:14, ESV). God’s word likewise is effectively administrated and disseminated throughout His immense kingdom, with an array of messengers. Four horsemen (Zech. 6:7) and angelic messengers (Rev. 14:6-7; 16:12-16) are described as carrying forth God’s judgments. The Lord sends prophets throughout His kingdom to voice His commands (Judg. 6:8, Heb. 1:1). He also “sends the Spirit to convey His message to men’s hearts” (Gal. 4:6). Most importantly, God sent His Son, the embodiment of His Word, as His message to all mankind (John 1:14).

1:22—‘speak the language of his own people’—This final phrase has been viewed as unusual, with some suggesting altering or deleting. For example, the Cambridge Bible Commentary asserts, “it is doubtful if the text is sound” and recommends the “change of
not more than one Hebrew consonant” (Streane, 1907). With this transposition, the intended meaning would then be, “and shall speak whatsoever seems good to him.” In favor of this emendation it is pointed out that the new verb is one which, though not very frequent elsewhere, occurs in three other passages in the book (Esth. 3:8; 5:13; 7:4). On the other hand it is dubious whether the construction that it involves is permissible Hebrew. The LXX omits the words entirely while translating the preceding clause, “so that they might have fear in their houses,” with the apparent sense of meaning, “so that the husbands might be respected at home” (Streane, 1907). Both “fear” and “good” can link to covenant concepts of honoring God.

“Language”—rather than an articulated communication system—could possibly be reflecting here the systematic transference of theological understanding of the legal kinship covenants and laws requisite for God’s people. These were transmitted down through the generations by “the fathers” (i.e., the patriarchs), beginning with Adam to Noah, Abraham, David etc. All birthright and covenantal blessing were transmitted through patriarchal succession. If so, this could also explain why “conversation” in Philippians 3:21 actually connotes “covenantal citizenship” as well as could reflect the rightful ranking reverence due God in such a covenantal relationship with Him, so often Biblically portrayed by the marriage covenant setting as reflected above in verse 20.
ESTHER 2

This chapter centers on the choosing of Esther as queen as a prelude to the salvation narrative, with specific details concerning her and her guardian, Mordecai. This prelude is similar to the premortal prelude of God’s plan of salvation. Esther is introduced with two significant names and described as being “beautiful of form”, more beloved by the king than all others, and identified “without father and mother”—though her father’s name is revealed. Mordecai also is described as being a Benjaminite—“a son of the right hand”—whose genealogy discloses a tie with King Saul and the unresolved conflict with King Agag. Each of the defined attributes of Esther and Mordecai correlative to Christ. The chapter concludes relating a detail of Mordecai’s crucial involvement with the two door guards of the king, whose rebellion causes the king to evict and condemn them to be hanged on a tree after an implied inquisition, which could suggest man’s initial expulsion from the Garden.

2:1—‘After these things’—‘ahar ha-devarim ha-’eleh—This opening phrase, translated as ‘after these things’, occurs again in Esther 3:1. Scholars define this as a formulaic archaizing phrase, of “diachronic perception and recounting,” indicating the passing of an unspecified amount of time, and note this particular use of it also in Genesis 15:1; 22:1 and Kings 1:1 (Sokoloff, Pagis, & Sokoloff, 1994; Teugels, 2004). Not only does the phrase help to temporally locate the unbounded events, but its shared domain with the two other books also effectually produces a bridge which helps construct an acceptable setting and sequencing for Esther.

Genesis, a broad book of origin, introduces the beginning of God’s promised blessings, (life and deliverance to mankind), which will be realized through Abraham, the father of nations (Gen. 17:5). This phrase initially appearing in Genesis 15:1 references the rescuing of Lot, by Abraham from the battle of kings. Its next occurrence in Genesis 22:1, and ‘proving’ of Abraham’s faith in God and His promises, with the sacrifice of his only begotten Son. The Book of Genesis ends with Joseph, Abraham’s descendant, initiating these promises.
Next, the Book of Kings comes after Israel’s unification under David, with God promising Him a messianic king to establish His kingdom in order to fulfill Abraham’s promises. Focused on God’s city of Jerusalem, it chronicles Israel, God’s House, through its many monarchies. The book centers on the various kings’ failed efforts, the people’s recurrent apostasy, and their impending judgment. Ending with exile, the book creates some consternation regarding God’s actual omnipotence to fulfill His divine promises.

Esther—a book of those in exile—serves lastly to reaffirm God’s purposes, promises, and His perpetual providence by disclosing a story of great deliverance brought about by Him through the efforts of Esther and Mordecai. It ends with the outlining of continual commemoration for such divine blessing of salvation.

Together these passages successively seam together to provide a logical sequencing of the larger meta-narrative regarding God’s purposed redemption for fallen man. His plan for their salvation entailed a messiah with a two-fold manifestation. Christ opens His own mortal ministry reading from Isaiah’s messianic words ending with, “the year of the LORD’s favor,” alluding to Jubilee’s remission of debt and restoration (Isa. 61:2). Then prior to His forth coming death He equates His Second Coming to be like that of the destruction of Sodom “in the days of Lot,” who Abraham rescued (Isa. 61:1-2a; Luke 17:28-32).

2:1—‘when the wrath of the king was assuaged’—חֵמָה (chemah)—Both BDB and Strong’s indicates this word means ‘heat’, ‘rage’, ‘indignation’, or ‘poison’ (figuratively from the fever of a poisonous snake bite), as referenced in HALOT. Again, the biblical usages of the word do not project mere mortal anger, but rather pair with God’s perfect justice wrought towards sin. This stands in parallel with the king’s indignation and just removal of the rebellious queen Vashti in the opening chapter.

2:1—‘wrath…assuaged’—שָׁכַך (shakak)—This word includes the meanings to ‘assuage’, ‘abate’, ‘subside’, or ‘decrease’. According to the three lexicons “abate” comes from

Beyond the banishing of Vashti, and the impaling of Haman in the Esther scroll, which assuages the king’s anger, the context for its other three biblical attestations include: the receding of the waters after the flood cleansed the earth of corruption (Gen. 8:1); the quelling of tribal rebellion with the budding of the rod (Num. 17:20); and God’s judgment pronounced through Jeremiah against the wicked in their laying of snares, with the similar insinuation of Nimrod’s hunting of men (Jer. 5:26). Each of these passages share situations where God’s justice is executed against the iniquitous acts of the unrepentant rebellious. Here it entails the king’s banishment of Vashti, much like God’s expulsion of Satan for his rebellion.

2:1—‘…he remembered Vashti, and what she’d done’—זָכַר (zakar)—This word is listed as ‘remember’, ‘remembrance’, ‘remind’, and ‘record’, by Strong’s, while BDB adds the phrase ‘call to mind’, usually as affecting present feeling, thought or action, and ‘remember’ as in past experiences. This suggests more than a mere mental exercise to recall something, involving an implied impact on both present and future as well. Its biblical usage entails a specific recognition of God’s covenantal conditions pertaining to His people. This includes God’s covenantal remembrance of Noah and Abraham, which prompt His saving acts in their behalf (Gen. 8:1; 9:15-16; 19:29). This ‘remembrance’ is exhibited by a response of some appropriate action, whether in blessing or judgment, which for Vashti was the latter. In similar fashion, Satan’s rebellion also brings God’s remembrance in judgment as prophesied (Isa. 14:12; Ezek. 28:16; Rev. 12: 7-9; 20:3).

2:1—‘…and what was decreed against her’—גָּזַר (gazar)—The meanings of this word as rendered by Strong’s and BDB include: ‘to cut’, ‘divide’, ‘decree’, ‘determine’, ‘circumcise’, ‘primitive root’, ‘to divide or cut in two’, ‘to cut down or off’, or figuratively ‘to destroy’ or ‘exterminate’. 
The word conveys a metaphorical sense to cut down or be taken away. A good example is cited by Oswalt (Danylak, 2010) in his use of Isaiah 53:8, in speaking of the Servant who was “cut off from the land of the living”, implying the idea of inevitable death with the loss of salvation. For Vashti, this may only be projected in a figurative sense with exile, yet for Satan it is clearly reflects the actuality of his decreed removal (Danylak, 2010).

2:2—’let there be sought for the king young virgins’—בְּתוּלָה (bethula)—For this word Strong’s attributes the obvious reference to a woman who has not had sexual intercourse. However, such terms in scripture are semiotic tools of conveyance, such as the familial metaphor of the virgins with the Bridegroom. As Geis (2013) explains, “in the Hebrew Scriptures, there are two types of betulot—the true virgin, and the betrothed virgin or (betulah m’orashah). The betrothed virgin was often referred to as the man’s “wife” (ishah). The state of betrothal was just as serious and sacred as the married state where the difference between the two appears, in some instances, to be a mere formality” (Geis, 2013).

Consider its use within the Esther passage. The betrothal, as esteemed anciently by the Israelites being wholly binding, was secured by sacred oaths and covenants (Ezek. 16:8). Those then betrothed were considered married for all intents and purposes, but without the full rights of marriage. At the completion of the one-year betrothal period, the vows would be solemnized and accompanied by great feasting and celebration.

Similarly, at Sinai a symbolic betrothal was covenanted. After the bride price, or purchase of Israel, was paid by Christ’s atonement there was a wedding ceremony to follow with the Bridegroom appearing the second time to accept his betrothed. The second coming being the wedding ceremony for those virgins prepared to receive Him.

The king would naturally seek candidates from those meeting the requisite criteria as suitable consorts for him and his kingdom. Heaven’s king likewise seeks out those

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5 Romanization differs between Strong’s and Geis.
virtuous few for His kingdom, represented as virgins in the parable of the bridegroom (Matt. 25).

2:2—‘let there be sought for the king young virgins fair to look on’—Strong’s matches the Hebrew טוב/מראות (towb, mar'eh)—translated here as “look on”, is given the meanings ‘sight’, ‘appearance’, or ‘vision’. This last word BDB defines as ‘fair of appearance’, while HALOT suggests ‘appearance’.

As indicated in Strong’s, ‘towb’ as a verb is translated as ‘good’ 386 times of its 559 occurrences with a few instances of derivatives like ‘goodness’ and ‘goodly’. Another 80 times it is translated as “better” and “best”, with its remaining rendered with translations of “fair”, “fairer”, “favor”, “beautiful”, or other miscellaneous translations. The etymology of ‘good’ projects ideas of, ‘complete’, ‘excellent’, or even ‘virtuous’, but also aspects of ‘fitting’, ‘joining’, and ‘united’ in the sense of denoting a perfection which fits or fulfills its proper function. Its first attestation is God’s marking how He “saw the Light, that it was good” (Gen. 1:4).

Of the 103 instances of ‘mar'eh’, derived from ראה (raah) meaning ‘to see’, more than a third of its translations occur as “appearance”. Eighteen times it is rendered as “sight”, and eleven times each with the words “countenance” and “vision” (implying the more supernatural aspect of seeing).

The combination of these two words, however, in the conveyance of ‘fair’ occurs merely seven times, only three of which are outside the Esther text. Those in Esther are translated as “young virgins/maidens”, and refer to Esther directly, or inclusively. Two of the three remaining are in Genesis with the last in Daniel’s exilic text. In Genesis it involves Abraham commissioning Eliezer to seek a wife for Isaac in fulfillment of God’s promises, whereupon he meets the ‘fair’ young woman Rebekah near the well in answer to his prayer. By virtue of her willingness to draw water for him and his ten camels, she becomes Isaac’s betrothed.
Rebekah again is noted with fairness at the turning point with its next attestation in Genesis 26:7. Because of the famine in the land, Isaac goes to Abimelek, king of the Philistines in Gerar, in compliance with God’s command. There God renews Abraham’s covenanted promises of inheritance to be fulfilled, which is realized when King Abimelek, out of fear of retribution for the unintentional impropriety of unduly noting her fairness, allows Isaac to pitch his tents, build an altar, and dig a well at Beersheba with an eventual treaty.

The last attestation is in Daniel 1:15, when Daniel refuses the king’s meat and insists on eating only grain and water so that he will not be defiled, whereupon after ten days he stood before the king, with countenance more fair and exceeding all in wisdom and understanding. In all of the instances, ‘fairness’ is the common quality that secures the selection or salvation of each. This may also suggest preparatory qualities or characteristics inherently qualifying the betrothed bride for the Bridegroom’s selection (Ezek. 16:9-14; Eph. 5:25-27; Rev. 19:7).

2:3—‘and let the king appoint officers’—פְּקִידִים, פָּקַד (paqad, paqadim)—Used here as a plural, Strong’s lists this word as: ‘commissioner’, ‘deputy’, ‘overseer’, meaning “to attend to, visit, muster, appoint (with application to officers, supervisors, overseers),” while BDB further suggests “commissioner, deputy, oversee, for special duty”, and HALOT adds “install as superior”.

All but two of its biblical attestations outside Esther correlate to priestly temple roles, which could equate to those within God’s domain. The other two are in reference to an official court attendant to Pharaoh, and then to Shechem, son of Hamor the Hivite, and Prince of Shechem. Both of these find figurative connection to divine status typologically. Pharaoh both literally and symbolically marked a type for God, while Shechem as king likewise finds such association in the Near Eastern culture, as well as being the namesake of the city marking the site of Abraham’s altar after first arriving in the Promised Land, where God promised his seed (Gen. 12:6-7).
2:3—‘unto Shushan the castle’—שׁוֹשָׁן (shushan)—This word is described by Strong’s as “shushan, shoshan, or shoshannah, probably lily or any lily-like flower.” HALOT similarly relates for the word “lily, or lotus blossom,” and as used here, “an Elamite place name”.

2:3—‘let king appoint officers in all the provinces…unto custody of Hegai, the king’s chamberlain, keeper of the women’—הֵגֵא (Hegai)—The name ‘Hegai’, likely to be of Persian origin, is noted by Strong’s as the proper name of Ahasuerus’ eunuch, while HALOT suggests it denotes “overseer of the harem at the Persian Court”. Besides indicating it as a proper masculine name, BDB includes with it a similarly rooted word, הגג, with the meanings ‘murmur’, and ‘muse’, in comparison with an Arabic word meaning ‘burn’, ‘blaze’ (of fire), or ‘make a murmuring noise’ in burning.

Though both fire and wind were symbolic of divine presence in scripture (Exod. 3:2; Isa. 66:15; Ezek. 1:4; 2 Kgs. 2:11; Ps. 104:3-4; Heb. 12:29), they also were indicative of His servants who come from His presence (Ps. 104:4), particularly the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:11-12; Acts 2:2-3; 1 Thess. 5:19). This additional connotation offered by BDB with its meanings pair with characteristics similarly defining of the Holy Spirit as God’s official keeper, or “guard” of men and their souls (2 Tim. 1:4, 7; Acts 20:28-31).

Besides his custodial role as protector and purifier (1 Pet.1:22; Gal. 5:16), a few of the Spirit’s functions include: His role as a distributor of gifts (1 Cor. 2:12-13), His power to regenerate and renew (Tit. 3:5; John 3:5-8), or His duty to guide and counsel (Acts 11:12). Each of these roles as God’s constant aid as guardian and sealer of personal salvation for His people (John 14:26; John 3:5-8; Jude 1:20; Rom. 15:23; Eph. 1:13; 4:30) are likewise exemplified in Hegai’s activities as well.

The word פֶקִיד (paqid) פֶקִיִּדְם (paqidim) given the usual definitions of ‘overseer’, ‘deputy’, ‘commissioner’, noted above, is rendered ‘officers’ here. Its first attestation is in Genesis 41:34 concerning Pharaoh’s appointing of “officers over all the land.”
Just as the Holy Spirit’s role is vital in overseeing all God’s people in His kingdom, key officials like Hegai, as the king’s chamberlain were likewise entrusted with immense responsibility such as custody of all the royal women. Whether mortal functionaries or divine ones (e.g., the Holy Spirit, angels, heaven’s council), such officials were paramount to their kingdoms, especially those as large as Persia or expansive as God’s. As described in Persia, these officials functioned as the king’s ‘eyes and ears’, systematically reporting activities within the provinces to help maintain order. It is the same with God.

Haman also held high position as an overseer with the king, along with the seven chamberlains (Esth.1:10; 3:1-2), much like the eunuchs who historically served the Persian king. Two royal attendants and seven maids likewise assisted Esther.

The official title of ‘chamberlain’ identifies the head position of the royal working household as the one overseeing all its affairs. The term indicated responsibility which extended ‘into the chambers’, intimating closeness of proximity to the monarch’s domain, often within the living space. Clearly, the king had entrusted Hegai with preeminent position, indicated not only by his permitted proximity, ready access and sole supervision over all the castle’s royal women, but also his right to ‘advance’ them to the king’s presence noted in verse 9.

This position indicated both proximity and privilege of shared power, symbolized by carrying the king’s tokens of office, a white staff and key. Both in scripture symbolically represent God’s power, authority and anointing as symbols of investiture, which are conferred as He chooses to direct or officiate over His earthly kingdom (Ps. 45:6; 110:2; Isa. 5:29-31; 49:10; Heb. 1:8; Matt.16:19; Rev. 9:1, 20:1).

The purification and overseeing of the precious women (like Esther) of the king’s household, was delegated to Hegai. The Holy Spirit too was delegated such authority as God’s liaison for His house to oversee the purifying preparation and well-being in the sanctification process of His people’s precious souls, including Christ (2 Thess. 2:13).
2:4—‘the maiden that pleaseth the king’—More literally this phrase translates as ‘the maiden who is to be good in the eyes of the king’—יָטַב (yatab) ‘be good, glad, well, or pleasing’—ﬠַיִן (ayin) ‘eye’—According to Strong’s yatab is a primitive root meaning: “to be (causative) make well, literally (sound, beautiful) or figuratively (happy, successful, right):—be accepted, amend, use aright, benefit, be (make) better, seem best, make cheerful, be comely, be content, diligent(-ly), dress, earnestly, find favour, give, be glad, do (be, make) good.” HALOT reports this as an alternative form of טוב (tob).

According to Strong’s the verb tob means ‘to be pleasing or good’ to which BDB adds ‘glad’, and HALOT gives several other glosses depending on context, including: ‘desirable’, ‘appropriate’, ‘becoming’, ‘usable’, ‘merry’, ‘qualitatively good or efficient’, ‘friendly or kind’, ‘morally good’ and ‘good character and value’. Used as an adjective in verses three and seven, it is commonly translated “beautiful”.

Karlinsky (2017) argues that this word’s root ‘tet-bet’, carries an underlying meaning of “to prepare something to receive something.” He explains that “when God perceives that the necessary preparations for something which He has created is suitable as to its fulfilling of those purposes, He would then declare it ‘ki tov’, or in other words, it was ‘good’.” Therefore, in order for an entity to attain such a declaration of tov, it must fulfill God’s intended purpose for it as well as realize its intended created potential, in concurrence with God’s will.

This concept is exemplified in the Book of Kings, where Israel’s disobedient and idolatrous kings were classified as “evil in the eyes of the Lord” while the few who did rightfully honor God and sought to establish righteousness were identified as those who “did good in the eyes of the Lord,” along with occasional faithful lead figures like Joseph, Rachel or Daniel.

The phrase, “good in the eyes of the Lord”—as used in recounting the reigns of various kings—directly correlates to the phrase “in the eyes of the king” as used here. The kings
of Israel were typologically tied to God, He being the supreme sovereign whose kingdom the Bible speaks of. Esteemed as God’s representatives, Israel’s kings were expected to abide His laws and covenants and rule in righteousness. (Isa. 42:6-7).

Esther, by fully meeting the criteria and approval of the king and Hegai, was advanced in the king’s house. Christ, in humble faithful compliance, likewise “grew in favor” with God and man as he advanced in His journey back to His Father’s presence (Luke 2:52).

Additionally, the use of word “eyes” in this formulaic phrase references symbolic comprehension beyond mere physical sight, inclusive of notions related to truth, obedience and salvation (Luke 4:18; Matt. 6:22; Jer. 5:21). This is ratified further with its use denoting a spring or well, which also typify salvation (John 4:7).

2:6—‘There was a certain Jew…whose name was Mordecai the son of…Jair, Shimei, Kish’—Some scholars note how Biblical genealogies are not inclusive of all progenitors, sometimes being ‘telescoped’ for organizing narratives, listing only those significant, as is the case with Mordecai’s line. (Rendsburg, 1990). Others view the covenant to be at the crux of genealogy, as well as being at the “center of biblical theology,” and as such, genealogy has an “eschatological aspect focused on the ‘seed’ through the generations of God’s people ultimately to the Messiah” (Ray Jr., 2016).

Mordecai’s line of descent, as listed below with its meanings, seems to confirm this. The names listed link to the immediate ancestors and descendants of King Saul, which connects Mordecai to the ill-fated reign of this first king. Saul proved his own undoing by veering from God’s charge to eradicate the Amalekites, who sought His people’s destruction, which then ultimately omitted him from God’s divine plan, thus necessitating the anointing of David. This could also draw correlation with Adam as mankind’s and earth’s first king, who in transgressing God’s charge to not partake of the tree of knowledge led to his fall necessitating the anointing of Christ—the greater David.
‘Mordecai’— Some have linked the name “Mordecai” being linguistically similar to the names “Marduka” or “Marduki”, noted Persian officials, found in several Babylonian documents. Scholars also speculate of deity connection between Mordecai and Babylon’s chief god, Marduk, with whom parallels have been drawn to Christ. Perceived as a theophoric name corresponding with Marduk, it signifies a follower or servant of Marduk in Aramaic, as ratified by Daniel 1:6-7 in recounting how Jews in exile were assigned names relating to Babylonian deity. There is also conjecture correlating Marduk and Ishtar with that of Mordecai and Esther.

‘Jair’—This name means ‘one giving light’ or ‘one who embroiders’. In addition, BDB adds ‘awake’ or ‘arouse’. From the biblical record, Jair emanates from Gilead and the Tribe of Manasseh (1 Chr. 2:21-22). As described in Judges 10:3-4 he judged Israel for twenty-two years, and had thirty sons who rode ass-colts and possessed thirty towns. Both the ass and the numbers provide meaningful insights connected with concepts of deliverance and redemption. The ass was integrally intertwined in stories of deliverance and redemption including: Abraham’s offering of Isaac (Gen. 22:3), King Solomon’s coronation (1 Kgs. 1:33-44), Christ’s triumphal entry to Jerusalem and judgment at the temple (Matt. 21:2) or His prophesied triumphant coming in victory on the foal of an ass (Zech. 9:9), and Israel’s salvation from King Jabin and Sissera by Deborah and Benjamin—the tribe associated with the ass (Judg.5:10; 10:4). Meanwhile thirty—a magnification of three—likewise connects with concepts of redemption. David’s coronation took place at age 30 (2 Sam. 5:4). Christ began His ministry at thirty (Luke 3:21-23), which also as the price of a slave, was the purchase price for his life (i.e. His Bride’s price) (Matt. 27:3, 9; Zec. 11:12-13). It also reflects measurements for structures of redemption like the ark, tabernacle, or temples of Solomon and Ezekiel (Gen. 6:15; Exod. 26:7; 1 Kgs. 6:2; 7:23; Ezek. 40:17), etc.

‘Shimei’—This name according to Abarim, derives from the root, meaning “to hear, sound, report, or listen” with further connotations of ‘renown’ or ‘famous’. Shimei was the son of Ger through Levi who cursed David (2 Sam. 16:5), as a Benjaminite he is tied to Saul’s clan. In David’s pardoning of Shimei he vows he will not die (2 Sam. 19:23)
permitting him to remain until the end of David’s life. However, for his treasonous act, David instructs Solomon, “do not consider him innocent,” commanding him to “bring down his hoary head to the grave in blood” (2 Sam. 16:5; 1 Kgs. 2:9). All the key words of this passage, (vow, grave, blood, Solomon, and even hoary head in connection with death), find significant meanings connected with redemption.

‘Kish’—In Mordecai’s descent, the noteworthy ones were those tying the Benjaminite genealogical line back to Kish, Saul’s father. This connection prepares the reader for linkage between Saul and his archenemy Agag, of which antagonism Mordecai and Haman become the later embodiments. This fulfills the need to bring avenue for final resolve to God’s charge to “utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven” due to their determination to destroy His people, which threatened Israel’s divine favor (Exod. 17:8-16; Lev. 27:28-29).

‘a Benjaminite’—The Benjaminites played key roles at pivotal points for Israel’s preservation as a nation (1 Chr. 12:29; 1 Kgs 11:36). Benjamin literally means “the son of the right hand” which reflects the transcendency of God’s covenant with Abraham (Isa. 42:6; 48:13). Though Benjamin and Judah’s tribes both retained their identities, the Benjaminites, so closely aligned with Judah throughout the postexilic period, signified the authentic Jewish community, with Benjamin having legitimate claim to Judah. When fulfilling the vital roles of reestablishing the land and rebuilding the temple together with Judah, they were also allowed to reside in Jerusalem (Ezra 1:5; 4:1).

The Song of Deborah praises Benjamin’s men who helped secure Israel during the turbulence prior to the establishment of the monarchy at a decisive battle near the Kishon River in the Jezreel Valley (Judg. 5:14). This Canaanite stronghold of Megiddo, which controls the Jezreel Valley is where John envisioned the messianic battle of Armageddon.

The delineation of Mordecai’s genealogy as such in its purposeful tracing of connections to Saul as well as distinctive ties to Benjamin, Manasseh and Judah, all of which demonstrate redemption implications is significant. Being so tightly aligned with these
identities projects Mordecai for a potentially significant redemptive role in arighting Saul’s negligence, and fulfilling God’s covenant to Abraham (Gen.12:1-3). It also curses those who curse Abraham and his seed (i.e., the Amalekites)—the covenant being the dominant factor explaining God’s judgment of Saul, or nations actions concerning Israel.

2:6—‘captives carried away with Jeconiah’—Abarim reports Jeconiah meaning ‘Yah establishes’, or ‘Yah appoints’.

The mention of Jeconiah and Zerubbabel here further affirms ideas of restoration, whereas king Jeconiah initially marks the exile and Zedekiah is the last to be exiled. In God’s cursing Jeconiah’s line and likening him to the signet ring that He had pulled from His hand, He seemingly invalidated the Davidic promise of a reigning messiah, including Christ (Jer. 22:24). However it is Christ’s ancestor Zerubbabel, with whom Mordecai returns from exile, that actually marks the restoration for the Davidic kingdom (Ezra 2:2).

Beyond Zerubbabel’s restorative work for God’s temple (Ezra 3:8) his name meant “pressed out of Babylon”, prefiguring Christ, the Father’s true signet, because His atoning work was metaphorically a pressing process. Prophets also proclaimed that he messianically would play a vital part in God’s great work for mankind as he would “lay low the mountain” and “shatter the kingdoms of the world” as God’s chosen “signet” (Zech. 4:6-8; Hag. 2:21-23). These connections, as well as the eventual bestowal of the king’s signet to Mordecai, effectively associate Mordecai with the eschatological expectation of the Messiah, the chosen signet ring, who will again come to restore the House of David, which will again find discussion in the concluding chapters of Esther.

2:7—‘So he brought up Hadassah…that is Esther’—Esther’s former name, “Hadassah”, means ‘myrtle’, for which some rabbinic traditions also suggest ‘upright’. In Jewish tradition the myrtle essentially accompanied the cycle of life from circumcision at birth, to covenant at marriage, to protection at death. Finding connection with first-born redemption and refreshing of the spirit, it came to symbolize divine generosity, peace,
and promised recovery for the Jews. As anciently attested in wedding ceremonies, it was woven into a wreath for the bride’s crown.

Noted throughout scripture, God planned an eternal union with His beloved people He had redeemed, exemplified by the bridegroom and betrothed bride, which motif ties to divine kingship. The change of names from “Hadassah” to “Esther” also ties to the idea of divine enthronement, with the bestowal of names anciently was associated with royal rites. Ricks notes that “[t]he ancient view of God’s conferral of governmental power upon the king…—which stipulates that the monarch receive sacred names and powers—allows him to stand in the place of God before his people” (Ricks, 1999).

Isaiah uses hadassah in extending a restoring invitation to God’s covenant and blessing for salvation saying, “instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off” (Isa. 55:13). “The verse is an allusion to the parable of the bramble bush which relates the relationship between God, His people, and who magistrates them. However myrtle—the plant of purifying properties was a symbol of anointing, matrimonial sanctification and prosperity—is not specified in the parable. Instead its first mention is in Nehemiah 8:15 during Israel’s revival of the law and physical renewal at the Feast of Tabernacles, for which its branches were speculated to have provided their ‘covering’” (Berenbaum & Skolnik, 2007). This feast prefigures the Messianic reign with conversion of the nations Zechariah prophesied (Zech. 14:16).

Though used by Isaiah in the parable as representative of the true king, the application of its fulfillment is prophetically found in Zechariah 1:11, with the warrior on the red horse in the grove—the Messiah.

Haman is not unlike Satan or the arrogant bramble bush that treacherously sought to destroy those who got in the way of his arrogant quest for power. Ultimately, like the bramble bush who was eventually overthrown by a woman who crushed his head (Judg. 9:43), Esther topples Haman, as Christ will vanquish Satan when He comes to tabernacle with His people.
Esther’s first name noted here as ‘myrtle’ or Hadassah, signifies ‘anointing’. After her entrance into the king’s court it changes to connote a sign, meaning ‘star’, connected with Venus, in fulfillment of Jacob’s and Balaam’s messianic prophecies (and other nuances outlined in chapter 1). These two names aptly reflect her roles and also define and identify the messianic roles of He who the magi sought.

2:7—‘Esther, her uncle’s daughter’—דּוֹד (dod)—בַּת (bath)—Scholars have noted how the Septuagint translates bath, “wife” instead of “daughter,” quoting B. Megillah 13a (Fox, 1991, pp. 30, 275-276) which instructs to not read it as “daughter” (le-vat) but instead “as a home [or, wife]” (le-vayit)”. This could imply covenantal marriage. However, the use of daughter could as well note “in the language of the prophets the people of God” who are called “the daughter”, “the virgin daughter of Zion”, “the daughter of Jerusalem”, or “the daughter of Judah”, etc., where their relationship with God is commonly compared to that of a betrothed—implying those joined in covenant with Him (Edersheim, 1876).

The word דּוֹד (dod) translated as “uncle”, comes from an unused root meaning ‘to boil’ (metaphorically implying love) as Strong’s suggests. It has been speculated to derive from the nominal form of the root יָד (yad) meaning ‘to love’. Therefore besides being connected with ‘uncle’ it also bears connections with the connotations of ‘beloved’, or ‘romantic lover’, as the Syriac also implies, perhaps reflecting the uncle’s position in ancient Near Eastern culture as provider—ratifying of a guardian covenantal contract in a uncle-niece union.

2:7—‘and he brought up Hadassah’—וֹן (omen)—This masculine noun meaning ‘faithfulness’ is derived from וֹן ‘aman’ according to Strong’s, which narrows its meanings to ‘confirm’ and ‘support’. Yet it is glossed with words like ‘assurance’, ‘believe’, ‘carry’, ‘confirm’, ‘endure’, ‘establish’, ‘faithful’, ‘fulfill’, ‘guardian’, ‘nurse’, ‘trust’, ‘reliable’, ‘verified’. Here it is further glossed as ‘brought up’ or ‘bringing up’. 
Nevertheless, translations of “believe” and “faithful” account for a significant amount of its 108 attestations.

Though meanings can slightly differ depending on which verb stem is used, each attestation of this word conveys the basic concept of providing support or stability, whether conveyed in words such as ‘confirm’ or ‘establish’, or as an image such as ‘guardian’, ‘nurse’, or even ‘doorpost’.

Its first use is in Abraham’s response of faith when God, confirming His covenant with Abraham says, “and he believed in the, LORD and He accounted it to him for righteousness” (Gen. 15:6). Abraham’s attested acknowledgment was authenticated by his act of faith, combining the ideas of ‘believe and faith[ful]’, the two most frequent words used to translate aman.

Used in a related form, aman also depicts the temple doorposts. King Hezekiah, in order to spare his people, stripped the doorposts of the very gold he had them overlaid them with to give to the Assyrians. This faithful act of Hezekiah’s typologically foreshadows Christ’s own redeeming efforts (2 Kgs. 18:16).

Despite the variant nuances of meaning within the passages for this word, each reflects connection with God and His saving covenant—He being the singular being with whom such promises can be entrusted with faithful confidence to be fulfilled (Ps. 89:28).

2:7—‘and he brought up Hadassah, that is Esther, his uncle’s daughter; for she had neither father or mother’—Esther in Persian has been speculated to mean “star”, and stars biblically were perceived as signs (Gen. 1:14) connected with astronomy and revelation. This is why the magi sought the star of the East (Matt. 2:11). Nibley postulates that stars were sources of divine revelation—heavenly messengers—and that ancient temples were “astronomical observatories…to assist the temple priests in regulating the ritual calendar” (Nibley, 1992). Besides the star of the East marking Christ’s birth as the “king” the magi were seeking, He is well noted throughout scripture
being the “star of Jacob” (Num. 24:17), the “morning star” or “bright morning star” (Rev. 2:28; 22:16), and the “day star” (2 Pet. 1:19). Just as Esther, like a star, led her people out of peril from annihilation to safety and rejoicing, so Christ became God’s sign for the observance of His people to secure them from the curse of death, and led them to the blessing of covenantal peace and station again with Him (1 Cor. 11:25; Jer. 31:31-34).

2:7—‘neither father or mother’—This descriptive phrase distinguishing Esther has one other attestation in scripture, Hebrews 7:3, identifying Melchizedek the King of Salem (meaning peace), who typifies Christ, the King of Peace. Paul describes Melchizedek being “without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.” Just as Melchizedek was noted as both the King of Salem and priest to the most High God (Gen. 14:18), Christ’s messianic roles identified him as the King of Peace (Isa. 11; John 14:27) and the high “priest forever in the order of Melchizedek” (Ps. 110: 4; Heb. 4: 14-16; 7:2-10). While the office of the king is often associated with the reigning Messiah, which finds parallel with Mordecai’s end role, the office of the priest that so often typifies Jesus Christ’s intercessory role for mankind, distinguishes the role Esther plays for her people.

2:7—‘beautiful form’—This second descriptive phrase of Esther consists of the two words, יָפֶה (yapheh), rendered as ‘beautiful’ or ‘fair’, and תֹּאַר (toar), meaning ‘outline’ or ‘form’ as noted by Strong’s and BDB. Already observed in the notes for verse two and four, the concepts of ‘beautiful’ or ‘fair’ and ‘pleasing’ are intertwined with ‘good’, ‘towb/tov’. This is manifest with close inspection of the 43 attestations of ‘yapheh’, which reference a deeper divine intrinsic beauty often associated with Christ and His key lineage such as Sarah, Rachael, Joseph, David, and Abigail. It also modifies objects likewise representative of Christ such as: the olive tree, Eden’s trees, lovely musical instruments, virgins, sanctified Zion, Job’s fairest daughters, the bride, beloved or fair one, or God’s portion.
The word תאר, toar, finds connection with yapheh seven times out of its fifteen occurrences, linking to Rachel, Joseph, David, Abigail, the captive beautiful woman, and Pharaoh’s good kine, all bearing definite connection to covenantal redemption.

Esther’s exceptional outer beauty secured her initial selection as queen. However, her hidden intrinsic beauty eventually elevated her in the king’s eyes, unlike Vashti. Her wisdom, honor and selfless sacrifice is what gained the respect and admiration of the king, to be the one he “loved more than all the others,” not unlike God’s beloved Son, Christ (Esth. 2:17; Mark 1:11; Matt. 12:18).

2:7—‘Mordecai took for his daughter’—2:8 (Esther was taken into the king’s house)—Fox (1991) pointed out how Esther’s early character development is distinguished mostly by passivity and constant compliancy to Mordecai, her benefactor. This is accentuated from the beginning he suggests, with Esther being introduced as an orphan “taken” by him as a ward, and thus an object of Mordecai’s action (Fox, 1991).

Esther proves to be consistently subservient and obedient, without any assertion of self-will, until she eventually is “taken” into the king’s house and advanced. Then towards the center of the plot with the rising complications, this reverses. Fox (1991) notes how Esther, once queen, begins to boldly engineer salvation while Mordecai steps back from the foreground until the ending chapters when their characters, now united, become dynamic in purpose (1991). Likewise, the variant roles and responsibilities of the Messiah and those duties fluctuate. Early on, Christ demonstrates a submissive role such as being a willing sacrifice as God’s Lamb as the mortal Messiah. However, His role dynamically evolves just as Esther’s character does, when He will return as the Lion of Judah to judge and reign over His house as prophesied.

Each of Jesus Christ’s variant roles within the plan of redemption from His pre-incarnate identity as Jehovah, to His earthly journey as Jesus Christ, to His divine Messiahship, are all foregrounded differently at different times, but with the same unified end purpose: to
orchestrate Israel’s salvation. Esther’s and Mordecai’s separate but tandem roles in the salvation of the Jews—the House of Israel—readily demonstrate this.

2:8—‘keeper/guard of the women’—שומֵר (shomar)—Typically, as historically noted Persia’s imperial women enjoyed both respect and privileges (Llewellyn-Jones, 2013). Though there was no oppressive confinement, the king duly protected his royal family within His palace’s sound fortification. This ensured them the convenient access within the palace domain and privacy from having to traverse public space, yet with paramount security provided by his personnel. God, as a jealous God, is similarly and often portrayed as the Bridegroom ever protecting His bride (Hos. 2:19; 2 Thes.3: 3). His zeal is most prominent when Israel, as His special possession, succumbs to idolatry (depicting adultery).

Just as Hegai performed the role of custodian or guard to the royal women in king Ahasuerus’ court, as previously mentioned the Holy Spirit was authorized by heaven’s King as His ‘protector’ to zealously watch over God’s betrothed, with desire (Rev. 19:7-8; Jas. 4:1-5). This protects them from adversarial attack to help ensure the eventual presentation of a “spotless” Bride at the Wedding Supper of the Lord (1 Sam. 16:14; 1 Pet. 5:8; Acts 10:38; John 16:13).

2:9—‘the maiden pleased him and she obtained kindness’—חֶ֫סֶד (hesed)—According to both Strong’s and BDB, this word means ‘goodness’ or ‘kindness’. It is often translated “loving kindness”. It is constantly depicted relationally in the Bible, with more than two-thirds of its occurrences directly referencing God’s ‘hesedness’, in portraying Him as the performer of such ‘hesedness’ to His people. Often, it denotes His steadfast loyalty to His betrothed wife through His unwavering mercy and loving faithful actions in keeping His promises and covenants (Hos. 2:18-20; Isa. 54:5; Jer. 31:32).

In an examination of its usage, Belnap (2009, p. 10) states that the doctrinal principle of “hesed...embod[i]es both the manner in which Israel was expected to act and the true
nature of God. It is a covenant term with Christ being the surety, as noted in Psalms 89:28 (ASV).

Belnap points to its first use when God’s messenger warns Lot to flee from impending destruction, discussing a “pattern of the nature of hesed” involving deliverance from a perceived loss of life and futurity (with greater magnitude when deliverance is from death and hell), and an element of reciprocity…which governs and enables reliability in its action” (Belnap, 2009). He points to God’s most significant act of ‘hesedness’—the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage—being representative of the greater salvation from Satan’s bondage of sin and death (Rom. 8:2; Ps. 86:13). Belnap concludes that God performs such ‘hesedness’ because, beyond His covenantal work to deliver man in His mercy, it is also His glory (2009).

Such context for this word finds further confirmation from a related form appearing as the object of the sentence preceded most often by the verb nasah, which also has atonement implication. It expresses ‘lifting up and removing’, which is what Christ did, in lifting and removing mankind’s sins, sickness, and sorrow (Ps.104; Isa.53:5).

2:9—‘he speedily gave her ointments and her portions’ (rubbing/annointings)—תַּמְרוּקִים—(tamruqim)—According to Strong’s this connotes “a scraping, properly a scouring, i.e. with soap or perfumery for the bath; figuratively, a detergent: x cleanse, (thing for) purification (-fying).” In addition, BDB reports for it, a ‘remedy’ (for an injury) and includes its relation to מָרַק from a primitive root meaning ‘polish’, and, “to rinse in order to make bright, furbish, polish as with the utensils of the temple” as in 1 Kings 7:45. Reflecting its variant usage, HALOT also suggests ‘cleansing’, ‘purifying’, ‘aid to beauty’, as in implying a smearing with oil or ointment. But adds that, “it is not sufficient for this word to adopt just the one idea of massage as a cosmetic aid to beauty,” pointing out how in Songs of Solomon it intimates “a cleansing oil, meaning finest consecrated oil”.

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Ceremonial washings and ritual anointings held a prominent part in the biblical world. Recipients included: temple officiants entering the temple (Exod. 28:4; 29:4-7; 30:17-21; Lev. 14:7-8; 15:5-27), prophets (1 Kgs. 19:16), and kings (1 Sam. 16:3; 1 Kgs. 1:39). The anointings with sacred ointment represented sanction and consecration to become “holy…sanctified in similitude of the Messiah, or anointed one.” (McConkie & Parry, 1990). Myrrh, along with frankincense and spikenard, was a common consecrating oil used for sacramental and ritual coronation purposes, and noted symbolic sign of marriage. Christ, the Messiah (Luke 4:18) who was anointed by the Father for the salvation of mankind ( Isa. 61:1-3; Acts 4:27; 10:38; Luke 4:16-22) was also noted as being anointed during His ministry, first prior to cleansing the temple and His death (John 12:1-8), then at his burial prior to Kingship over death (John 19:13). According to Jewish eschatologically the ultimate Messiah will be “anointed” with holy anointing oil, to reign during the Messianic Age.

The connotations of this word find more cohesive clarity when viewed in the light of Isaiah 10:27 with the Israelites assurance that the Assyrian yoke of bondage and affliction will be lifted from off their necks and taken away because of the ‘anointing’ as an illustration of Christ’s absolving of sin.

Anointing was a sign setting Israel’s priests and kings apart as consecrated in holiness, and chosen by God to render some specific service (McConkie & Parry, 1990). Anointing could refer to a priest, king, or even the entire assembly of Israelites, referred as God’s “anointed ones” (1 Chr. 16:19-22), and holy priesthood (Exod. 19:6; Rev. 1:6). However, its ultimate realization referenced God Himself, the מָשִׁיחַ (mashiach), or ‘anointed one’, with its Greek equivalent ‘Christos’, meaning Christ (Luke 4:17-26), who would fully restore Israel and restore His sacred city (Dan. 9:26, NIV).

King David, the early deliverer of God’s people, was often noted as ‘the anointed’ (Ps. 28:8). He was the preeminent type for the Messiah who would liberate His people from Satan’s yoke and establish His eternal kingdom (2 Kg. 19:34). King David was Israel’s only king to be anointed three times. The first was his appointment by God (1 Sam.
16:13), the second by the house of Judah (2 Sam. 2:4), and finally seven years later (seven signifying culminating completion); he was fully accepted as king over all Israel being anointed at Hebron by the priests of Israel (2 Sam. 5:3). This progressive sequencing of David’s three anointing’s closely mirrors God’s three appointed roles for Christ: first as the premortal Jehovah, God’s chosen officiator over His kingdom; next, as Jesus, the Atoning Redeemer and king of the Jews; and finally, the Christ and Messiah, rightful reigning monarch of Israel, His earthly kingdom.

Though this is applied to David, it more significantly marks the greater David—Christ—as reflected by the roles of Esther and Mordecai with her anointing, and Mordecai’s later ceremonial investiture and anointing as disclosed in the Septuagint.

2:9—‘gave her ointments, with her portions’—מָנָה (manah)—The use of this word in the Old Testament, typically rendered by Strong’s as ‘portion’, or ‘part’, seems to suggest pertinence to the privileges and responsibilities of those consecrated. This is inclusive of the firstborn rites and priesthood, and interconnected with specified consecrated offerings to ensure restoration, peace, and fellowship with God, and ultimate inheritance with the Firstborn (Deut. 18:2).

The primary use of “portion”, as integrally entwined with such ceremonies, involved the induction of those consecrated into the priesthood and the discharge of their functions, as seen in the following passages:

- “After you take the breast of the ram for Aaron’s ordination, wave it before the LORD as a wave offering, and it will be your share.” (Exod. 29:26, NIV).

- “Moses also took the breast, which was his share [portion] of the ordination ram, and waved it before the LORD as a wave offering, as the LORD commanded Moses.” (Leviticus 8:29, NIV).
Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and all her sons and daughters, but to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, because the LORD had closed her womb.” (1 Samuel 1:4, NIV).

Levenson (1997, pp. 60-61) points out that the ‘delicacies’ (manot) refer to food given to candidates for queenship and also foreshadows the food gifts mentioned at the Jew’s joyful feast commemorating their deliverance (Esther 9:19, 22).

Baker’s Evangelical Bible Dictionary (Elwell, 1984) entry for manna the “bread from heaven” reports that it is commonly derived from man, an expression of surprise meaning, "What is it?" but is more probable to be derived from ‘manan,’ meaning, “to allot,” and hence denoting an “allotment” or a “gift.” (Elwell, 1984). Strong’s also reports manot, deriving from man, as identifying the gift of food allotted Israel by God during their wanderings in the desert, with a “‘double portion’ supplied on the day preceding the Sabbath.” It is frequently associated with Christ, the true bread of life, who was received from heaven as the ‘unmerited’ portion bestowed by the Father, He being the peace offering through whom all are reconciled to God, and whose sacrifice typifies the ultimate communal meal (John 6:53-56).

Christ likened the ‘gift’ to Himself as He typified the designated free offering (John 4:10; Eph. 4:8). The gift is that sacrificial portion God provides. The portion is ultimately aligned with the idea of consecration and divine inheritance (Num. 18:12, 20), which God conveys through the symbolism of specific offerings.

These offerings, such as the peace offering with the associated wave (sheaf) and heave offerings—offered from the ram of ordination and given in conjunction with tithes—constituted the priestly provisions allocated by God as an everlasting endowment bestowed upon Aaron and his house (Num. 28:11; Ezek. 45: 6, 7; 48). They symbolically implied consecration and dedication to God, and in detail typified Christ’s redemption of
the Firstborn. They also tied with messianic prognostication to timings of the New Year and Feast of Tabernacles on 15th day (Ezek. 45:23-25; Zech. 14:16-21).

The elements of these offerings of reconciliation and consecration depict Christ as the one who restores mankind’s peaceful accord with God and establishes His messianic kingdom of priests. When the aspects of these are viewed together, they help provide a clearer perception for the meaning of ‘portion’ and what is provided (and required) of the recipient for their part in this priestly feast.

2:9—‘and the seven maidens...given her...from the king’s house’—שֶׁבַע (sheva)—The number seven, traditionally seen as the number of perfection, both physically and spiritually also found correlation with the concept of ‘rest’ (relative to divine creation), as well as association with the ancient temple.

Beyond the seven days of creation, its use in scripture is replete, commonly finding tie with temple typology like: seven feast days, seven days of temple dedication, seven lampstands, seven trumpets, blood sprinkled before the veil seven times, or the seven required days to atone for the altar purification. Furthermore, specific timings of restorative events are also marked with the number seven. For example, the seven-day Passover observance reinstated by King Hezekiah, the restoration of Job’s seven sons, the seven day march of the priests bearing the ark to destroy Jericho’s mighty walls and begin establishing the Promised Land. This is evident even outside the Bible. The Book of Enoch mentions seven archangels associated with the cosmological temple, while an Apocryphal book relates how the high priest requested seven virgins to make the temple veil. Seven again finds ready connection with God, His domain, and purposes within that sacred sphere.

2:9—‘he advanced her and her maidens’—נַﬠֲרָה (naarah)—This term biblically finds common use in description of those desirous to meet the bridegroom within the covenantal drama. Its first attestation refers to Rebekah in meeting Isaac (Gen. 24:14). Biblically, the maidens exemplified women of marriageable age, as well as typified
faithful upright servants like Ruth, or the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31:15. Conversely, they also portrayed anti-types such as the prostitute or concubine (Amos 2:7; Judg. 19:3) who literally and figuratively shared in aspects of a marriage union but without the legal status of a wife. With the word רָאָה (raah) used here as an added qualifier, it seems most likely these were those “maidens” who, by virtue, qualified for a covenantal marriage, like those awaiting the Bridegroom.

2:9—‘who were meet’—רָאָה (raah)—According to BDB, this passive participle has the sense of “to be fitting, or suitable.” However, it translates more directly as the “seeing maidens” rather than the “maidens who are seen.” Those maidens prepared to meet the bridegroom with the ‘trimmed lights’ (Matt. 25:10) are those who will be seen, and will see the bridegroom and enter to abide with Him (Ps. 33:12-14; Prov. 15:3; Job 34:12).

2:9—‘advanced her to the best place’—שָׁנָה (shanah)—The connotations for shanah translated here as “advanced” include: ‘to repeat’, ‘second time’, ‘change’, and ‘year’. Connections between these perhaps are not readily perceived, yet they all share aspects of renewal and a sense of duality. This word is consistently used to indicate both repetition and alteration, reflecting the results of either a positive nature of rectifying conformity, such as repentance, or negative repercussions from incongruity, such as consequential judgment. Jewish life evolved around the aspect of change, each year integrally involved in a cyclical repetition of sacred times such as the Sabbath, Passover, Yom Kippur, and Rosh Hashanah. Each event disclosed aspects of the divine help needed for transformation, with the hope that eventually through this process of a ‘new creation’, there would be ultimate reunion with God. A similar purpose is being served by this word here in Esther.

2:9—‘to the best of rooms’—The word used to convey the idea of ‘the best rooms’ is 토 (tov) discussed earlier. A castle anciently provided secure accommodation for the king and his entourage from outside invasion. Likewise, the ancient wedding guests of the Near East journeying, (sometimes days), to celebrate a wedding feast, would be given secure lodging for their provision and protection.
This may also be a subtle allusion of the ancient marriage custom where, after the betrothal nuptials, the groom goes to ‘prepare his bride a place in his father’s house’. This is the imagery of John 14 in Christ’s assurance to his beloved, “…in my Father's house are many mansions…I go to prepare a place for you.”

The phrase here literally translates to something like ‘the good house of the women’, consisting of the words “good”, tov, bayith (Hebrew for “house”), and “women” (nashim).

The word “woman” was often used scripturally to symbolize Israel, as those of God’s house. However, ‘house’ finds association in scripture to multiple things including: a dwelling or habitation like a shelter, house, temple, body (as a house of clay), or places such as a fortress, or Sheol, and even the word “daughter.” It also commonly can designate ‘family’, or find identification with tabernacle or tent. Each of these concepts can find correlation with salvation. Rabbinic commentary for the Megillah of Esther noted substitution of “home” le-bayit, [or wife] in lieu of Esther being reported as a “daughter” to Mordecai.

Each of this phrase’s nuances ties together the idea of God’s covenantal work to rebuild and restore those within His kingdom.

2:10—‘Esther had not made known her kindred’—מֹלוֹדֶת (mowledeth)—This word is used in Esther (2:10, 20; 8:6) to reflect birthplace, and, by implication, lineage, native country, and family, whether begotten or kindred. HALOT reports the concepts of ‘descendants’, ‘relations, the relatives’, and ‘descent’, rendering further glosses between the text and translation of, “relations born/not born in the same household, those related to the father, and the land to which one originally belongs”. The word is derived from יָלַד (yalad), connoting to ‘bear’, ‘bring forth’, ‘beget’, ‘gender’, and ‘travail’, as reported by Strong’s.
Biblically, this word shows up consistently in conjunction with individuals or locations regarded as covenantal with the House of David like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Ruth, Jerusalem, etc.

In this verse the word projects the sense of “related by birth.” Ruth uses this word (in 2:11) but also (in 3:2) a related word meaning ‘kindred’, or ‘kinship’ from the verb ‘יָדַע’ yada, meaning ‘to know’ (covenant terminology further explained below). Just as Esther’s timing was not yet come to make known her ‘kindred’ and lineage, there are specific timings for the Messiah to establish and make known in the fulfilling of all His covenant promises to those He ‘knows’. For God’s plan of salvation for mankind included both ‘birth’, and ‘rebirth’ achieved through Christ’s resurrection, atonement and participation in His messianic kingdom (John 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:3-4; Rom. 8:2).

2:10—‘Mordecai had charged her that she should not tell it’—צָוָה (savah)—As noted by Strong’s and BDB this word means to ‘lay charge’, ‘give charge’, ‘command’, or ‘order’. Just as Esther did not reveal her identity to those in her domain, nor to the king, until a pivotal point, Jesus Christ did not disclose His identity early in His ministry, specifically instructing his disciples, and others like the leper He healed, to do likewise (Matt. 8:4; Matt. 16:20.) This charge of Mordecai parallels a time where Christ strictly ‘charged’ his disciples to not reveal His identity (Mark 8:30). Knowing that Roman reaction would be sufficient reason to not publicly proclaim His Messiahship, He strategically chose to not reveal His identity to ensure the proper timing, crucial for His atoning role in the Father’s plan. Mordecai seemingly intimates similar concerns when charging Esther to refrain from declaring her true origin. By not drawing attention to her identity, it allowed her to strategically use her royal power in averting the national crisis she was facing.

2:11—‘Mordecai walked every day…to know what would become of her’—הָלַך (halak)—This word generally can be used to express the literal meaning of ‘to go’, ‘come’, or ‘walk’. Other derivations related to this root mean ‘the path one walks’, which is used to denote Jewish Oral Law, suggest it has fuller implications.
God in the beginning “walked” with man in the Garden (Gen. 3:8). Abraham is commanded to “walk” faithfully and blameless before God, marking his relationship with God as one of trust and right conduct (Gen. 17:1). Isaiah (2:3) tells of those who will come to the Mountain of the LORD to learn His ways, and walk in His paths. Metaphorically it also can suggest the idea of acceptance, when paired with שָׁמַּא shama, ‘to listen’ as in Psalms 81:13, connoting the idea of ‘obedience’. Christ walked with perfect obedience before God’s court, to secure salvation, the fruit of that obedience, while admonishing His disciples to do the same, so all would ‘be well with them’ (Jer. 7:23; John 1:6), which well-being is likewise Mordecai’s concern here.

Another ancient Near Eastern aspect of ‘walking’ is the custom of “walking the land” to indicate or formalize legal ownership or possession of that land (Gen. 13:17). Black (2013, p. 17) quotes Nahum Sarna regarding this saying: “early Jewish exegesis understood this traversing of the length and breadth of the land to be a symbolic act constituting a mode of legal acquisition”. He further mentions how the kings of the early Egyptian and Hittite empires would “take a periodic ceremonial walk around a field or a tour of his realm in order to symbolize the renewal of his sovereignty over the land,” and how transference of property was signified by the owner lifting his foot from his property while the new owner stepped on the same spot while the deed was drawn (Black, 2013). Deuteronomy 11:24 is a reflection of this and plausibly also exhibits the territorial notion behind Satan’s “walking to and fro” in Job 1:7, 2:2, indicating Satan as staking his claim and ruling right over earth’s realm (2 Kgs 4:35).

These aspects of walking reflect significant implications with Christ who fixes the bounds of man’s abode and who Mordecai typifies in his daily walk before the king’s court.

2:11—‘walked every day’—This phrase literally translates as “day and day.” The Hebrew word יומ yom, meaning ‘day’, often implies more than just the marking of a 24-hour period,
and can be used to indicate an unspecified period of time, just as God’s Day of Salvation also reflects an unspecified period of time.

2:11—‘Mordecai walked…before the court’—Courtyards are reflective of enclosures for houses, fields, or even temporary encampments. Ancient Mesopotamian dwellings often exhibited central courtyards that provided easy access to the surrounding auxiliary rooms while secluding their inhabitants from immediate contact with the outside. The usage of חָצֵר as discussed in Esther 1:5 most often reflects temple enclosures while the plausibility for the need of a ‘walling off’ would be congruent with the idea of successive holier spaces within a temple context. However, as mentioned previously, the court also conveyed royal and judicial formulaic aspects, and a proper place to ensure legalities, which again will become integral in Esther’s concluding chapters. Such an identified locale is also suggestive of the nature of God’s covenant as a legally binding agreement between Him and His people.

2:11—‘to know how Esther did’—דעת (da‘at)—This word derived from the verb ידוע (yada) meaning ‘to know’ conveying ‘knowledge’ and as Strong’s demonstrates implied a wide variety of meanings from ‘know’ and ‘acknowledge’ to ‘relation’ etc. depending upon its contextual usage. For those of the Ancient Near East cultures, it signified a more intimate or personal type of ‘knowing’, implicative of a covenantal relationship, in the carrying out of a specific charge, task, or responsibility agreed upon (Gen. 18:19; Gen. 4:1; Exod. 4:35). The ancient Semites well understood the covenantal sense entwined in this root, as evidenced by some Hittite treaties, denoting a covenantal relationship between two parties like a king and his people, or the Bridegroom and His Bride. Mordecai and Esther in tandem represent Christ’s different roles during the various phases of the nuptial ceremony with covenant Israel. Such covenants were considered to be like a marriage contract, not to be broken without severe consequence.

2:12—‘the turn of every maiden was come to go to king Ahasuerus’—The verb meaning ‘to go into/to enter’ in this expression has been noted to convey sexual overtones (cf. 2 Sam. 11:4; Ruth 4:13). As such, this helps ratify association with covenantal connections
like a marriage contract, since the virgins were betrothed to Christ, the Bridegroom (2 Cor. 11:2).

2:12—‘twelve months...anointing accomplished...with six months with myrrh’—The number twelve in scripture often typifies ideas of completeness, God’s power, authority, divine rule, and perfect government, or Israel as a whole. Six, being one less than seven (representing completion or perfection), is often seen as implying imperfection, flaw, or being incomplete. It marks God’s first creation ending with man, and is noted in oppositional forces to God.

While twelve marked the entire period of time needed for the virgins full ‘anointings’ to be completed prior to entering the king’s house, it could represent the requisite time period for the full realization or completion of the process of salvation and divine perfection before union with God. The two six month periods of separate anointing might then reflect specific aspects or timings within that purifying process relative to man’s final sanctification.

2:12—‘myrrh’—Myrrh had various uses in the Ancient Near East from ritual incense to medicinal needs. Related to the Semitic root meaning ‘bitter’ it found connection with embalming purposes for the dead, signifying the promise of resurrection, and by extension prosperity. It was also used at birth with circumcision and became an important source for ancient cosmetics and perfumes for ceremonial nuptial purposes (Ps. 45:8-9; Prov. 7:17; Song 1:2), often connected with the ‘Beloved’ which finds symbolic applicability to Christ in His ‘marriage’ to His betrothed, Zion. Certainly Hadassah, who becomes Esther, finds these same connections.

As for the two separate anointings, insight might be gained by what they distinguish, particularly in relation to Christ, and His relevant anointings. Besides being used for embalming the dead, myrrh was a main ingredient for the Holy Anointing Oil to ordain priests and kings, all of which finds application in Christ. The second anointing, noted as בֶּשֶׂם besem, likewise connects solely to an anointing concoction. Besides pure olive oil,
four spices including cinnamon, cassia, calamus, and myrrh, were considered to constitute the Holy Anointing Oil (Exod. 30:23-25). One telling passage for its use is with the beloved Bride being summoned to the heights of the mountain of ‘spices’ to dwell there forever with her beloved, who is most often linked to the Messiah (Song. 8:14).

Schroeder’s (1996, p. 417) study of Psalms 45 points to the setting of a ritual festival culminating with a kingly enthronement in its description of a marriage consummation at the house of the bridegroom. He notes various ritual marriage texts in the ancient Near East, citing the use of such anointing oil as part of the marriage rite, where in this Psalm God anoints the bridegroom in conjunction with the bridegroom anointing the bride (Ps. 45: 8-16).

Esther’s anointings replicate this long identified purifying process prior to entering into the presence of a king, or God, in order to become part of His realm. After Christ’s anointing by the Spirit (Acts. 10:38), as inferred to earlier He was anointed twice more in His mortal Messiahship, once by Mary prior to his crucifixion and then when His body was wrapped with the embalming myrrh and aloes Nicodemus supplied in preparation for burial before His ascension to the Father (John 19:39; Rom. 11:26; Jude 1).

2:14—‘she came unto the king no more except he delighted in her’—חֵפֶץ—
(chephets)—This is one of the most common terms for “delight” in the Bible, which means ‘to delight’ or ‘pleasure’ according to both Strong’s and HALOT. Another source lists the word as used here with a sense of “bending towards, or to be inclined towards [an object or person]” (Elwell, 1984).

The word most often finds connection to God. Its various contexts reflect what is ‘delightful’ to God such as: His law (Ps. 1:2), His purposes (46:10), His people (Ps. 16:3), obedience (1 Sam. 15:22), salvation (2 Sam. 23:5), justice (Eccl. 5:8), righteousness (Job 22:3), 1 Kgs. 9:11, 1 Kgs. 10:13), or His delight in those who take His covenant (Mal. 3:12).
Isaiah 62:4 uses this word to prophesy of Zion’s future glory, where the bride no longer will be perceived as forsaken and desolate, but instead called His ‘delight’, characterized in the consummate union at the Lamb’s marriage in Revelation 19:7. This again could relate to the virgins who are called into reside with the king in Esther.

2:14—‘except...she were called by name’—Isaiah mentions how Zion, “shall be a crown of glory and a royal diadem…and be called by a new name”, expressing how her old names will be exchanged for new names of glory. “Hephzibah” means ‘the Lord delights in her’ and “Beulah” means ‘married’, the respective names for Zion and Jerusalem (Isa. 62:1-4). With a spiritual transformation of nature a name is given, often noted as the new name given to match it (Rev. 2:17; 3:12). This is reflected in the passage of Isaiah saying, “fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine” (Isa. 43:1, ESV). This could find easy parallel with those virgins who are called to permanently reside with the king.

God likewise ‘calls’ by name those chosen and designated to covenantally join Him in His house and work of salvation. Some of them being ‘called’ twice by their name include Abraham (Gen. 22:11-13), Jacob (Gen. 46:1-4), Moses (Exod. 3:1-10), Samuel (1 Sam. 3:1-10), Simon Peter (Luke 22:31-32), and Paul (Saul) (Acts 9). God is the “…King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful” (Rev. 17:14). Being “called” therefore could project both personal salvation as well as an invitation of participation in salvation. This finds relevance with Esther and Christ in their obtaining preeminent position with the reigning monarch and then fulfilling their roles in securing salvation for their people.

2:14—‘into the custody of Shaashgaz’—Hitchcock et al. suggest for this name the meaning of ‘pressing of fleece’ or ‘shearing of sheep’, as related to the word for shearing (Hitchcock, Talbot, West, Eadie, & Cruden, 1900). To shear means to cut the hair, fleece, or wool, or to cut with a sharp instrument, or deprive or strip. In the scriptures it can be a sign of shame, subjugation or mourning (Deut. 12:12; 1 Cor. 11:5-6).
The Hebrew word *gazaz* mostly translates “to shear” in connection with sheep, with a few other references to the cutting of hair, like Jeremiah 7:29. Various scholars have pointed to the distinct connection between the shearing sheep or the cutting of one’s hair with ideas of slavery, mourning and being ‘cut off’ (Ezek. 34:3; Lev. 7:25). Hair is noted as being regulated in the Bible according to certain observances or obligations, with implications beyond mere fashion (Song 4:1; Gen. 24:65; Gen. 38:14; 2 Sam.14:2).

In Deuteronomy 21, regarding the taking of a captive woman for a wife, there were various laws and regulations outlined, including the cutting of her hair as a sign of her subjugation and mourning (vs. 12). The performance of these specified actions were to be symbolically representative both of mourning as well signaling the residing in a foreign nation and becoming part of the House of Israel. Shagazaz therefore could fittingly represent a steward of those in such a state, not only reflective of those virgins outside the king’s immediate domain, but also typifying those who have not yet been received unto the bridegroom of the king’s house.

2:15—*daughter of Abihail*—According to Abarim, two different names in the Hebrew Bible identically translate as “Abihail”. One was used to denote men, like Esther’s father, conveying the meaning ‘Father is Might’, while the other applied only to women with the meaning of ‘Father of Light’. Both of these could be descriptive of the God the Father, a being of light, whose mighty acts secure salvation. Only after being “summoned by name”, in her formal presentation to the King is Esther’s father’s name actually mentioned in the record.

Just as Esther is formally presented in the name of her father to the king, likewise ancient door rites ceremonies allude to initiate candidates being introduced by the ineffable nature or name of a supreme God for recognition, or names of gods being used for passage rites in ancient Egypt.
2:16—‘Esther was taken into the king’s royal house the tenth month…of seventh year’—Ten in the Bible appears to signify concepts such as divine authority, law and order, obedience, testimony and completeness, or responsibility and accountability. Examples of its use include: The Day of Atonement (the tenth day of the seventh month) marking sin’s removal before Rosh HaShanah, which finds parallel with Satan’s removal before the ushering in of the millennial reign (Rev. 20:1-2) or the law of tithing distinguishing accountability and responsibility. Jesus Christ often used this number in His teachings regarding God’s kingdom (i.e. 10 virgins, lepers, talents, commandments). Here it seems to signal the selection of Esther for a specific role, much like the selection of the Passover lamb on the tenth day of the month (Exod. 12:3), paralleling Christ’s own designation (John 12:28-29; 1 Cor. 5:7).

2:16—‘Esther was taken into the king Ahashuerus…royal house…month of Tebeth’—According to BDB, this Assyrian loanword, derived from ebetum, means “month of sinking in, or muddy month”. Psalm 69 conveys a profound sense of sorrow, as David recounts how he “sinks in miry depths, where there is no foothold,” foreshadowing Christ, the greater David, and His own despair as He descended into mortality and the morass of men’s sins. It also marks the winter solstice, and the time of the temple wood offering, as well as the first of the months for the singing of the Passover Hallel, all of which are significant with salvation and atonement import. Tebeth also was the fateful month when the King of Babylon besieged Jerusalem with intent to destroy the temple. As the tenth month, Tebeth, flags the timing as one of imminent trial, tribulation, and possible destruction, which not only accurately depicts Esther’s immediate circumstance, but rightfully portrays Christ’s plight and arduous undertaking of the atonement to save His people. Although it marked for Israel the darkest time of its cyclical year, it also occasioned the coming forth of light and life with the radiant rebirth of the sun, symbolically as well as literally.
2:17—‘King loved Esther above all the women’—As the king dearly loved Esther, Jesus Christ as attested in scripture (e.g. 2 Pet. 1:17), is the most beloved of heaven’s monarch, the Father.

2:17—‘so he set the royal crown upon her head’—כֶּתֶר (keter)—The Bible utilizes three words for “crown”: atarah, nezer and keter. Jewish tradition expressed the difference of these words through the physical properties and thematic natures of each. Nezer, which merely encompassed only a portion of the head, finds tie to anointing, as does keter, (possibly a Persian word) which also demonstrates the idea of anointing but denoting a royal crown. The first mention of a crown in the Bible (nezer) is related with the construction of the tabernacle in correlation with the high priest’s headdress (Exod. 25:10-11; 24; 30:3). Atarah, which covers the head, can likewise denote a royal crown but also reflects positive and negative aspects of sovereignty as well as position and presence of honor (i.e. the wife is the crown of her husband (Prov. 12:4).

From early rabbinic sources, keter finds association with the word “diadem” as a sign of distinction, virtue, or royalty. The concept of the crown in relation to God, revealed in Jewish thought through Torah and early rabbinic texts, involves Divine knowledge (in the context of undisclosed divine free will), divine splendor (which God may bestow on man), and the idea of it being an attainable virtue.

The first mention of the crown is in relation to the construction of the tabernacle in Exodus (25:10-11; 24; 30:3) after which it finds reference in various ancient rabbinic texts.

Anciently the Jewish bride wore a wreath or garland circled around her head at the Jewish nuptial ceremony. Being regarded as a king, the bridegroom also wore one. The Hebrew word for bride (kallah) has been connected with possible Aramaic origin from a word meaning ‘totality’, or to Akkadian verbs meaning ‘to conceal the head’ (with possible connection to veil, bride, or crown. Rabbinic traditions also postulate connection of the bride completing the groom (Gen. 11:31; 19:12).
The bride signifies the righteous who will be sealed to the bridegroom. In Songs of Solomon concerning the reward of the righteous it says, “therefore shall they receive a glorious kingdom, and a beautiful crown from the Lord’s hand” (Song. 5:16). It will again resurface in Esther’s later chapters.

2:18—‘the king made a feast…Esther’s feast’—Integrally involved with feast days was the Sabbath, The Sabbath heads the enumeration of the appointed holy seasons or feasts (Lev. 23:3). The significance of Shabbat beyond the seventh day lies in it being both a day of rest and of remembering. As a commanded memorial day to observe, it was a token of Israel’s perpetual covenant relation to God (Exod. 31:16-17), noting both creation and the commemorating of freedom from slavery (Gen. 2:1-3; Exod. 20:11; Deut. 5:15). Ultimately, its symbolic fulfillment lies in the idea of Divine amnesty—the earning of God’s favor and salvation to possess as an eternal inheritance: The Promised Land (Isa. 55:7; 43:25; Luke 1:31-33; Heb. 4:1-10; Rom. 7-8). Thematically these express the underlying intent of such a feast and give rationale and purpose to its commemorative celebration in Esther’s honor.

2:18—he ‘made a release to the provinces’—Strong’s indicates for this word ‘a giving of rest’. HALOT instead reports ‘appeasement’ and ‘release from taxes’, which reflects the majority of this verse’s various interpretations: “giving release to the provinces” and “granting a remission of taxes”. A few translate it as “proclaiming or declaring a holiday”.

Overall, it carries the sense of an official pardon or amnesty extended within the domains of jurisdiction (such as involving tribute or required servitude). The idea of amnesty is that of absolution of an offence extended to group in comparison to the compassionate pardoning of an individual’s misdeed.

Just as there was a great banquet in Esther’s honor, with the granting of amnesty for the provinces of the king’s domain, Israel’s feasts significantly parallel with proclamation of
such liberty to the ‘captives’ (Isa. 61:1-3). The Passover feast marked the beginning of Israel as a nation set free from bondage by the Lord God of Israel, while the seventh and final observance (Lev. 2), the Feast of Tabernacles, marked the culmination of this redemptive story of Israel, bringing full amnesty with complete release of debt and servitude and guarantee of their preservation.

2:18—‘and gave gifts’—Strong’s gives this word the following meanings: ‘burden’, ‘collection’, ‘sign of fire’, ‘great flame’, ‘gift’, ‘lifting’ ‘up’, ‘mess’, ‘oblation’, ‘uprising’, ‘utterance’ or ‘portion’. Related to the word ‘nasa’, meaning to ‘lift up’, (i.e. things taken or lifted up, hence ‘portions’ or ‘gifts’).

Clarke (1832, p. 331) in his commentary, refers to this word being “an oblation, things carried to the temple to be presented to God” and continues saying, “the sufferings and death of Christ were the true maseoth, or vicarious bearing of the sin of mankind” (1832, p. 331). In relation to this, he references Leviticus 10:17 and Isaiah 53:4,12, which utilizes the verb nash, noting Christ “taking up” pain and suffering and dividing the spoil with “portions” (Clarke, 1832).

2:19—‘king’s gate’—Berlin (2001, p. 31) suggests that the word “gate…more than reporting Mordecai’s physical location”, is referencing his official position in the royal court. She hypothesizes that he was part of the king’s secret official informers referred to as the “eyes or ears of the king” of those who would report any seditious acts in the kingdom, as mentioned in both Aramaic papyri and in Greek sources.

Just as various officials managed the affairs of the Persian kingdom; there was an orchestration likewise of the affairs of God’s Temple. In relation to the Second Temple, the Mishnah reports of appointed officers who orchestrated various responsibilities, such as the seven who oversaw the treasury, or supervised things like libations, allotments, announcements, instruments, incense, vestments, etc. One of the said responsibilities was a strict watch and priestly guard by those who attended the opening and closing of the gates (1 Chr. 9:22) (Singer, 1965). This position, beyond allowing entrance and exit, was
crucial for the security of the entire city and protection against enemy. Just like the holders of this position in the Persian Empire, Jesus Christ is the trusted and noted gatekeeper who protects His people and kingdom (Ps. 141:3; John 10:3-13).

2:21—’two of the king’s chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh’—The etymology and meaning of the names of these two chamberlains and gatekeepers to the king are of Persian origin, and thus have no specific meaning in Hebrew. Abarim gives possible connections to the word as follows: Teresh (תֶּרֶשׁ) could be a truncated form of the name Tarshish (תַּרְשִׁישׁ), the famous city, or related to the Persian title tirshatha, usually translated as “governor” (Ezra 2:63, Neh. 7:65). BDB reports it may have connection with the Persian word tarsta, meaning the ‘feared’ or ‘revered’, or tarsa, a noun meaning ‘desired’. Jones accepts tarsta as well translating the name as “Severe” or “Austere” (Jones, 1997).

For the etymology of the name “Bigthan” Jones reports this name’s origin from a Sanskrit word baga meaning either ‘the Sun or Fortune’ or ‘Given of Fortune’ (Jones, 1997), whereas BDB gives it the meaning of ‘Gift of God’.

While the priests, as stated above, were primarily charged with keeping, or guarding (שָׁמַר, shamar: to keep, watch, preserve) the sanctuary (Num. 3:7), Adam was likewise so entrusted by God to ‘keep’ the Garden (Gen. 2:15).

Adam and Eve played significant primal roles with God in the Garden. However, because of their direct disobedience to God in partaking of the tree of knowledge, in response to Lucifer’s suggestion, God cast them out from the garden and His ‘presence’ (Gen. 3:8; Gen. 3:21-24; Moses 3:17). Similarly—for such disobedience—king Ahasuerus likewise banished his two eunuchs for their treachery and deposed the queen. The most important events pertaining to mankind are the Creation, the Fall, and the atonement as the enabling essence of man’s salvation through Jesus Christ. This correlates to the “fall” of the previously mentioned guards and queen as the preface to the ‘atonement’ of Mordecai’s penitence and Esther coming into positions of power and saving God’s people.
2:21—‘kept the door’—םַף (caph)—This word is most frequently translated as “door” or “threshold”, followed by “bason”, “posts”, “bowls”, “gates”, and once as “cup”. It has the sense of containing or holding blood or wine.

Trumbul discusses how this stems from the ancient door threshold covenant between two parties—the establishing of a sacred boundary. Once the covenant terms were set, it entailed sacrificially halving an animal at the doorway of a home and allowing its blood to drain into a trough at the threshold, empting into a basin where it was collected. The parties stepped across the threshold while vowing on their life to complete the specified actions, or else become like the slaughtered animal whose blood they had crossed over to enter the house (Trumbul, 1887). Christ is the “door” (John 10:9-16), whose blood is “stepped over”, as typified by Passover (Exod. 12:22), with Zephaniah purporting punishment for those who try to “leap” the threshold (Zeph. 1:9). Bigthan’s and Teresh’s act of violence at the threshold merited the king’s swift punishment for their overstepping the bounds.

Scripture attests to Adam and Eve’s prominent positions at the Garden of Eden’s threshold while God Himself outlined the initiation of His covenant Plan of Redemption for this primal family, as well as their willful transgression of some of those commands.

2:21—‘sought to lay hands on king Ahasuerus’—שלח (shalach)—The verb used here is to convey ‘sought to lay hands on’. It reflects the root meaning of ‘to send away’, or ‘out’ with numerous equivalents given by Strong’s, including: ‘appoint’, ‘bring’, ‘cast (away, out)’, ‘forsake’, ‘leave’, ‘let depart (down, go, loose)’, ‘reach forth’, ‘send (away, forth, out)’, ‘set’, ‘shoot (forth, out)’ and ‘stretch forth’. By itself, it is often utilized within a context of salvation, denoting either a positive or negative evaluation as to aspects of its realization. Its passages often refer to the sending of God’s messengers or prophets like angels, the Spirit, Moses, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, or in issuing things like bread, letters, the word, the hand, or the waters of Siloam etc., all having commonly noted connection with concepts of salvation.
The idea conveyed by the phrase ‘to stretch out hand’ denotes use of force and power, as with Jehovah instructing Moses in his various interactions with Pharaoh, (Exod. 7:19), or in Ezekiel’s prophecy against Edom (Ezek. 25:13), with the verb נָטָה (natah) commonly marking the exertion of such power as divine.

The BDB suggests for this word the definitions of, ‘set apart’ i.e. (by implication), ‘to send out’ (properly, on a mission, ‘send’ (away, forth, out), ‘set’ (at liberty). Thayer lists: ‘to order’ (one), ‘to go to a place appointed’, ‘to send away or dismiss’, ‘to allow one to depart’ (that he may be in a state of liberty), ‘to order one to depart’, ‘send off’, or ‘to drive away (Thayer, Grimm, & Wilke, 1996).

Consider its use in this phrase, which literally translates as “sought to stretch out the hand”, or “send forth hand.” “This phrase is often connected with the violent intents of harmful contact” or “hypothetical acts of violence against the king or the ‘anointed of Yahweh’, which are explicitly described as taboo (1 Sam. 24:7-11; 26:9-1; 33; 2 Sam. 1:14)” (Calabro, 2014, pp. 233-234). Besides rebellion against a king it next appears in the Esther text where it “describes acts of violence against humans or plunder of goods” (Calabro, 2014, pp. 144, 233). The phrase as it first appears in Esther 2:21 includes a slight variance of the additional word ‘wroth’ קָצַף qatsaph translated as ‘to be angry’ saying, “wherein the two chamberlains were wroth and sought to lay hands on the king.” The 34 Biblical instances of קָצַף, qatsaph reference the rebellion of underlings. It is again exhibited in chapter six during the king’s sleepless night of ‘remembering’ in recalling the act of these two prominent door guards.

Adam and Eve “rebelled” against God in the Garden of Eden, by direct disobedience in partaking of the tree of knowledge. This necessitated their expulsion from the presence of the tree of life, “lest they put forth their hand” and take from it (Gen 3:22-24).

Two other occurrences of this same formulated phrase involve Haman’s intent to “lay hands on” Mordecai and his people (Esth. 3:6), and the King’s decree regarding the Jews
preparatory defense to “lay hands on” those seeking their destruction, but to not “lay hands on” the spoil (Esth. 9:2), hinting at the notion of God’s war of justice.

Life, precious to God, is what Satan seeks to destroy. As the author of sin, he likewise sought to ‘send forth his hand’ to destroy God’s plan and mankind.

2:21—‘Bigthan and Teresh…were wroth’—קָצַף (katzaph)—BDB suggests for this noun, ‘snapping’, or ‘splintering’, an example for which would be the account of Samaria being cut off and carried away like a broken twig in retribution for Israel’s sin, or the stripping of bark of the fig tree analogy in Joel 1:7. The fig tree, being the only directly specified tree in the Garden, not only typified Adam’s first covering but also was a metaphor for Israel itself (Hos. 9:10; 1 Kgs. 4:25), seeing as the minor prophets warned of how Israel would be stripped bare standing fruitless in symbolic punishment (Mark 11:21-21; Matt. 24: 32; Rev. 6:13).

When this word occurs it often reflects the anger towards a subordinate, such as used here to express the anger of the king in reaction to actions of the two door guards, or with Pharaoh’s anger towards the two officials he imprisons. It also entails some imminent or immediate consequence, often with exilic repercussions. Similarly, the transgression of the insubordinate Adam and Eve evoked God’s repercussive just expulsion from the Garden and His presence.

2:22—‘told in Mordecai’s name’—Scripture makes clear there is only one name by which salvation comes, because He alone has all authority (Matt. 28:18; Acts 4:12, NIV).

2:23—‘hanged on a tree’—This concept reflects the punishment of those perpetrating capital offense, as thoroughly explained by McLaughlin (2006) in his article regarding the context of the law in Deuteronomy 21: 22-23. As detailed in Deuteronomy, capital offenders were subject to justice on both an earthly and heavenly level with all its social and theological implications.
On a social level, the practice of executing criminals by a public display of hanging was a graphic deterrent of future crime. It provided a vivid reminder of ignominious death to those Israelites who flagrantly disregarded God’s covenantal law. The central concerns of the passage in Deuteronomy are theological in nature—those ‘hung on a tree’ being under God’s curse and the injunction to ‘not desecrate the land’.

The Mosaic Law made it clear that blatant covenant breaking and disobedience to God’s law incurs His wrath and curse, which ultimately results in destruction (Lev. 25:14-39; Deut. 28:15-68). Since stoning was the normal means of capital punishment, hanging was merely for disclosure purposes, providing potent reminder of the terminal separation from God and His community.

However, just as God’s people must be separate from effects of sin, so was the land’s sanctity also to be preserved, hence why the body was not to be left hanging so as to prevent further defilement of the land. As McLaughlin (2006) indicates, the Promised Land was analogous to God’s temple, hearkening back to idyllic Eden, where God’s presence and kingship were exercised. A decaying body incurs defilement and would thus need to be removed as well.

Quoting from Paul, McLaughlin (2006) elaborates on this in connection with Jesus Christ, the ultimate curse bearer from Galatians 3:13, and how He bears the curse by being hung ‘upon a tree’, becoming the vicarious curse-bearer for all mankind. Being so crucified on the ‘tree’ he became the needed propitiation to satisfy God's wrath for the sin committed in order to redeem mankind from law’s curse. He also bears the cleansing of the land, with the removal of His defiled body in resurrection to again allow for God’s presence.

Adam and Eve’s willful transgression of God’s law effectively caused and necessitated their removal from His presence in the Garden. However, Christ would become the vicarious curse-bearer to bear Adam’s (or mankind’s) curse as expressed representatively by the tree in scripture.
The concept of a cursing and blessing in association with a tree is first alluded to in relation to Adam and Eve’s eating from the forbidden tree where it states, “of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:17) or suffer death and be cut off from God’s presence. Conversely, a blessing associated with eternal well being saying, “blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Rev. 22:14).

A tree was involved with the entry of death in the Garden, and likewise a tree was associated with the assurance of life through Christ (and His atoning work on the cross), being ‘the tree of life’. As Paul expressed, “for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:21-22).

Transgression of God’s law brought death to all of Adam’s posterity, whereas Christ’s atonement restored life to all mankind. Thus now with Adam (mankind) in a fallen state, the focus of the drama of man’s salvation turns to a divine substitute to accomplish the aspects of redemption for God’s own.

In the story of Esther, this finds parallel as Haman attempts to hang covenant Israel (typified by Mordecai and the Jews) on a tree, foreshadowing Christ’s suffering as the vicarious curse bearer to fully satisfy and redeem mankind from the endless banishment and sin’s curse to which mankind was consigned to.

2:23—‘written in the book’—Just as the ancient Persian kings kept records of ancient accounts in their royal archives, God is noted in also keeping names recorded in His ‘Book of Life’, sometimes called “Book of Remembrance”. It records those redeemed as well as those whose names, which will be “blotted out” in judgment (Rev. 3:5; 20:11-15; Mal. 3:16; Phil. 4:3; Ps. 69:28; Exod. 32:33). This book was also called the “Lamb’s Book of Life” as it contains the covenanted names of those redeemed by the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 13:8; 21:27).
ESTHER 3

It is only after Mordecai’s apprising of the assassination plot to the king that Haman is promoted in hierarchy. This promotion then generates a conflict of power concluding with a looming death warrant which he devises, leaving the citizenry of Susa in a quandary. Mankind similarly faces negative impacts of a Fall into Satan’s domain with its dilemma of imminent death and final judgment.

3:1—‘after these things did King Ahasuerus promote Haman’—גָּדַל (gadal)—As listed by Strong’s this word means to ‘grow up’, or ‘become great’. HALOT suggests, ‘to be great’, ‘become strong’, ‘become wealthy’. Or in its piel form used here in this verse meaning ‘to raise’, ‘to make greater’, or for this verse specifically, ‘to praise’. It is often translated as “important”, “make powerful”, “be magnified”, “promote” or “do great things”.

This word is used biblically most often in context with key individuals, situations, or pivotal events that are literally or figuratively significant to the advancement of God’s covenant people as a ‘great nation’. Its first occurrence is found in Genesis 12:2, concerning God’s paramount covenant with Abraham in making him a great nation, which entailed promoting a holy nation of priests unto Him (Exod. 19:6).

Words derived from gadal include גָּדוֹל (gadol) meaning ‘to become great’, ‘enlarge’ or ‘high’, hence the high priest being referred to as the kohen hagadol. De Vaux compared its usage in Maccabees as “a technical term regularly applied to all the high priests” (De Vaux, 1961).

De Vaux (1961) further explains it denotes “a man whom the king appointed as head of the state… used for an official and for men of high rank” and in some texts it connoted “a loftier meaning, of a prince or a leader appointed by God” (Dan 9:25; 11:22), including the high priest (1961, p. 398).
Satan—though considered “ruler” or “god of this world”—has no power except what is committed to him John 12:31; 2 Cor. 4:4). God as supreme sovereign allowed Satan to operate within the limits God established (Job 1:12; 1 Cor. 10:13). Likewise Haman’s jurisdiction even as principal minister was limited.

Here, Haman mirrors Satan’s own auspicious beginning of rising to prominence, but then likewise plummets rapidly. Berlin (2001, p. 33) points out how “Haman’s career reaches its high point at the start” then immediately declines after chapter 3, with just a few “moments of illusory glory.”

3:1—‘and advanced him, appointing his seat according to all the princes with him’—נָשָׂא (nasah)—This word is defined by Strong’s as ‘to lift’, ‘take’, or ‘carry’, to which HALOT adds the meanings of ‘exalt’ or ‘promote in rank’. It also carries additional meanings, some of which include: ‘elevate’, ‘aid’, ‘bear’, ‘burden’, ‘take’, and ‘raise’. Its first attestation is related to Cain’s inability to lift God’s judgment and subsequently being driven across the face of the earth and from God’s presence for killing Abel (Gen. 4:13).

Much like Vashti’s inability to annul the king’s decree against her resulted in her banishment from Ahasuerus’ kingdom, Lucifer likewise suffered being severed from his seating amongst the elect of God’s kingdom, restricting Satan’s access to God’s protected domain. However this was somewhat annulled after his fall, when God allowed him limited administrative agency on earth which then afforded him some rank of influence as Job’s record attests, wherein he is referred to as “god of this world.” The act of the king conferring Haman his ring symbolically extended him some authority and jurisdiction, just as God allowed Satan certain initiative.

3:1—‘promote Haman Son of Hammedatha, the Agagite’—הแมน (haman:Haman)—אֲגָגִי (agagi: Agagite)—Haman’s name inclusive of the title here serves to more clearly identify Haman, linking him with ‘the Agagite’ (see following entry).
The name Haman, הָמָן, according to Abarim was most likely Persian and transliterated into Hebrew, deriving possibly from verbs such as הָמָה hama, meaning ‘unrest’, or ‘to be noisy’, with particularity to ‘them’ denoting a multitude, or אָמַן aman, meaning ‘to confirm’. Abarim also points to its strikingly similarity to the Hebrew spelling of הָמָן hamon, meaning a ‘noisy troop’. However, with scholars contesting its etymology, and its original meaning lost, Abarim proposes that to a Hebrew audience it may have either suggested ‘certainty’ or ‘multitude’ or ‘noise’. They further note “that the death of Haman in the story appears to serve as the death of theological dictatorship in favor of the perpetual quest for truth (in its broadest sense and application).”

Though his name without sufficient Persian attestation leads to a lack of clarity for its etymology, as an anti-Christ figure, his character demonstrates little ambiguity. Strong alignment beyond aspects of his name, including his position, use of power, his great pride, intense hatred, and his eventual demise, are equally identifiable in Satan.

Haman is identified in Esther by the appellations of both “the accuser” and “the wicked” (Esth. 7:5). Satan is frequently referred to in scripture by these very same attestations (Rev.12:10, Matt. 13:19). Correspondingly, where in Esther the king acknowledges Haman’s position of prominence, we discern from verses in Ezekiel chapter 28 and Isaiah chapter 14 Satan’s held high status as Lucifer the light-bearer before his fall from heaven (Isa. 14:12). John 5:19, Revelation 13:27, and other scriptures attest to both Satan’s imminent power as well as his correlative designs to destroy God’s people (1 Pet. 5:8-10, Luke 8:11-12, Zech. 3:1-2). Mordecai’s refusal to bow incensed Haman’s pride to the extent of plotting to annihilate the entire Jewish population, which ultimately led to his own demise. Equally Satan’s proud and blasphemous words as recorded in Isaiah 14:13, Daniel 7:8, and Revelation 13:5 cost him to be cast out first from God’s presence, and then will likewise bring his ultimate destruction. In addition, the fact that Haman’s name is understood as an ethnonym connected to the Amalakites—the Jews archenemies (or by projection, Christ) and mankind—further endorses him as an overarching type for Satan.
3:1—‘Hammedatha the Agagite’—Abarim offers no meaning to this name, however Hitchcock et al. (1900) suggest for it “he that troubles the law”. Strong’s distinguishes it only as the “father of Haman”, which the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia also concurs except for noting its connection with the term “Agagite”; which they identify as Persian signifying, ‘given by the moon’ (Orr, 1939). This name also finds ready connection to Satan.

3:1—‘Agagite’—אֲגָגִי (Agagi)—This ethnonym was derived from Agag, king of the Amalekites and ultimate enemies to the Israelites who initially attacked them without warrant after crossing the Red Sea. The term Agagite either refers to Agag’s literal descendants or to those of an anti-Semitic disposition, thus coloring Haman as an adversary to the Jews (Esth. 3:10; 8:1; 9:10, 24).

For Amalek’s evil actions against Israel, God devoted them to destruction, cutting them off from His land with imminent judgment and death. Satan’s evil intents likewise resulted in the expulsion of him and some of heaven’s host, being similarly cut off from God’s presence and doomed for final destruction.

Complete annihilation of the enemy included women and children as well as the destruction of their substance and settlement to inhibit further pollution of God’s holy people and place (Deut. 20:19).

This linkage to Agag, also connects Haman to Saul’s tragedy in failing to fulfill God’s specified annihilation decree against the Amalekies, which ultimately triggers his own eventual downfall as Israel’s first designated king.

3:2—‘all the king’s servants… were in the king’s gate’—שַׁﬠַר (shaar)—Strong’s translates this word mainly as “gate”. Its first occurrence for initial meaning is Genesis 19:1 regarding Lot’s location before receiving deliverance from God’s judgment of sin upon Sodom (Gen. 19).
In ancient Israel, gates were significant; they were the city’s entrance and a part of its defensive design (Gen. 22:17). As the main point of thoroughfare they marked the central place for the community’s witnessing of legal transactions, heralding of announcements (1 Sam. 4:18), or engaging of business. In a culture where law was paramount—transparency was vital—official agreements and negotiations transpired here, such as Boaz’s claim for Ruth (Ruth 4:1-11). It was here that prophets declared their pronouncements, elders sat in judgment (Deut. 21:18-21), and kings displayed their splendor (2 Sam. 18:1-5). Therefore, the city gates were the most fitting place for public officials and public transactions.

Biblically, gates mostly referenced those of Jerusalem, God’s realm or heavenly temple, the temples of Solomon and Ezekiel, the king’s palace, or tombs and Hell. With each of these symbolically denoting places significant to salvation, the use of “gate” figuratively demarcates the locale where God and His agents conduct or execute His official transactions for His subjects. The Garden of Eden also suggested such a gated entrance being near God’s throne and secured by noted cherubim like Adam and Eve, as well as Satan’s—the once glorious “anointed cherub”—intermittent presence, (Ezek. 28:12-25; Isa. 14:12).

This also sheds insight as to Mordecai’s continual presence at the gate being reflective of an official capacity (Esth. 2:19), as well as to giving explanation likewise for Haman’s recurrent proximity. Similarly it significantly points to Christ—the acknowledged gatekeeper for God (John 14:6)—who likewise refused to worship, or “bow” to his reappearing archenemy, Satan (Matt. 4:9).

Adam was originally charged to “keep” the Garden of Eden, meaning to “guard” in Hebrew (Gen. 1:26-31). Albeit, Satan rapidly managed to alter this initial chain of command contriving to assume authority, but Christ strictly refused to “bow” to Satan’s power or offers of what he had power to bestow.
3:2—‘the king’s servants...bowed down and prostrated...but Mordecai bowed not
down nor prostrated’—כָּרַע, (kara: bow)—שָׁחָה (shachah: prostrate)—For kara, Strong’s
and HALOT give the meanings of ‘to bend one’s knee’, ‘kneel down’, ‘sink down’, while
for shachah they suggest to ‘bow down’, ‘kneel down’, or ‘prostrate’.

It appears that Haman’s new status implied homage supported by the king. Satan singly
sought veneration and preeminent position wherein all would become subject to him,
which posturing God allowed, but to which Christ refused to yield (Isa. 14:13-14; Job
1:12; Matt. 4:8-10).

The form of the verb שָׁחָה (shachah) used here connotes more than bowing: it more
specifically implies prostrating oneself before a monarch, superior, or God in worship.

In Persia it was a common custom to prostrate oneself before someone of significantly
higher rank (Webster, 1913, p. 11). Though the Bible declares that God alone should be
worshipped, some passages display such obeisance to humans, as with Ruth and Boaz
(Ruth 2:10), or Nathan to King David (1 Kgs. 1:23). However, these could be seen as
representative of God. The specific delineation of Mordecai as a “Jew” (vs. 4) might add
further reason to Mordecai’s objection since Haman as an Agagite and descendant of the
Jew’s foremost adversaries, declared for annihilation, theologically would disqualify
Haman for such honor.

Satan intended for Christ to “bow” to him (Matt. 4:9), whereas Christ, determined to
secure God’s people and kingdom, bowed His will in honor only to God (Luke 22:42).

3:3—‘but Mordecai bowed not’—Abarim suggests the name Mordecai should be
regarded as an adjective based on the name Marduk, the principal Babylonian deity, who
after conquering the monster of primeval chaos, Tiamat, became Lord of the Gods of
heaven and earth.
They suggest that the name—not of Hebrew origin—can be constructed from Hebrew elements to determine meaning. One way Abarim suggests to obtain the name and its meaning is from the first part as derived from the verb מָרַר (marar), meaning ‘be strong or ‘bitter’, with the second part coming from the adjective דַּ (dak), which means ‘crushed’ or ‘oppressed’. A final yod marks the difference between the two names of Marduk and Mordecai, which Abarim ascribes to the noun דֱּכִי (doki), meaning “a crushing”, which world occurs only in Psalm 93:3 regarding the sea’s pounding at the established throne of God. For its cumulative meaning they suggest ‘pertaining to Marduk’, connoting ‘bitter oppression’.

Each of these tie significantly with connection to Christ, as the “suffering servant” in Isaiah, who was the bitterly oppressed in facing the crushing judgment of God for mankind (Isa. 53:7-9). The sea, being emblematic of nature’s most turbulent forces and symbolically representative of “people, multitudes, nations, and tongues” (Rev. 17:15) is a fitting personification of the tumultuous roaring voices of humanity and oppositional powers which rise up in enmity to God’s omnipotence as so often portrayed in scripture (Exod. 15:7; Ps. 65:7; 89:9; 93:3).

3:5-6—‘then was Haman full of wrath…it seemed contemptible in his eyes to lay hands on Mordecai alone…[therefore] Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom’—With Mordecai’s refusal of obeisance, Haman’s pride and ambition filled him with such rage that he sought not only to destroy Mordecai, but all the Jews throughout the kingdom. This he undertook, perceiving that if he did not unseat Mordecai, it would be the cause of his own fall (Esth. 6:13).

This reflects Satan’s own designs to obtain God’s throne, power and glory in directing his efforts to not only unseat Christ but also to destroy His people (2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 12-13).

Corresponding to Haman’s efforts in thwarting Mordecai, Satan similarly “blinds minds” towards Christ (2 Cor. 4:4; Esth. 3:8), with objective to destroy whoever follows him (1 Pet. 5:8-10). As Jehovah’s greatest enemy, with hatred inflamed in knowing that Christ
will destroy his own intents (1 John 3:8) and ultimately ruin him (Gen. 3:15; Rev. 12:12), he finds comparison with Haman (Esth. 6:13), seeking war against any and all who are aligned with God (Rev. 12:17; parallel with Esth. 3:9).

The king essentially gave Haman authority throughout the empire to do with the people as he saw fit (Esth. 3:11; Rev. 13:7; 1 John 5:19). Similarly, God allowed Satan limited ‘rule’ or jurisdiction upon the earth until eventually God Himself would bring judgment against the Beast (Rev. 17:17).

3:7—‘In the first month…Nisan in the twelfth year’—נִיסָן (nisan)—Nisan, an Aramaic word related to the Hebrew word nizan, meaning ‘bud’, was the name of the first month of the Babylonian calendar. This month is commonly referenced in the Torah two other ways; as Aviv, the month of spring commonly typifying rebirth with the budding of new life, and also simply as the first month.

Shortly before their Exodus, God’s first command to the nearly redeemed Israelites was to reorder their accounting of time. Regarding this changing of their calendar it states in the Torah, “this month shall mark for you the beginning of the month; it shall be the first of the months of the year for you” (Exod. 12:2). The events of both Passover and Exodus ultimately marked the month of Nisan with redemption, and the beginning year of God’s holy nation. This change served as a continuous reminder of the miracles, which led to their redemption from Egypt and the inauguration of the tabernacle; the structure symbolizing God’s presence with His people while in the wilderness, which acted as a microcosm shadowing what was to be.

Nisan was again integrally entwined with Passover, suggested not only by its apropos astral sign of the lamb, the first of constellations (which the Jews connect with God’s Sheep and Christians to the sacrifice of God’s Lamb), but also in further connection to Abraham’s binding of Isaac, the promised son, and earlier rescue of Lot (Zohar 2:183b, Reshimot 7).
‘twelfth’—Scripture is replete with understanding that twelve and its multiples (i.e. 24, 144, Rev. 1:6; 5:10) are representative of divine leadership in the government of God’s kingdom, or of its fullness, as attested by its various connections to Israel’s tribes, the twelve apostles, and such (Exod.18:25; 24:4; Lev. 24:5, Num. 7; Deut. 1:23, 1 Kgs. 4:7; 7:44; 18:31; Luke 22:30; Rev. 12:1; 21:12). The twelve tribes symbolized Israel’s completeness as God’s Holy nation with Jacobs’s twelve sons serving as the heads or princes of these tribes. Many other attestations are equally relevant, such as Christ’s age when noted as teaching the elders in the temple, or the age of accountability before the law for a Jewish female—which significantly ties to Israel’s qualifications as the intended betrothed bride.

A significant portion of the instances of twelve falls in the book of Revelation, most of which have pertinence to the New Jerusalem (Rev. 7; 21:14-20).

Use of such indicators like these key numbers, or specific timings like Nisan and Adar so purposefully mentioned here, are just important symbolic signifiers representatively marking God’s plan and its timing.

3:7—‘from day to day, from month to the twelfth month’—Keil and Delitzsch add insight to this phrase saying that these words “must not be understood to say, that lots were cast day by day and month by month till the twelfth; but that in the first month lots were at once cast, one after the other, for all the days and months of the year, that a favorable day might be obtained” (2006). They point out that the words: “from month to the twelfth month” may be due to transmission error—suggesting it rather as “from month to month till the twelfth month”.

Time and its cycle of reckoning is God’s effective instrument for revealing His divine plan and purposes for man’s redemption. According to His appointed times it will run its course alongside moral agency until both His judgment and salvation are fully brought to pass at the established end time which He has fixed.
3:7—‘they cast pur, that is, the lot’—All eight occurrences of the word pur fall in the Esther text. According to all three lexicons, it means ‘lot’. With its origin unknown, various aspects identified with it as listed below help to more accurately assess its intended meaning.

Strong’s reports pur stemming from the primitive root פּוּר (puwr), given the meaning of ‘breaking’ or ‘annulling’, with its three attestations being expressive of outcomes reflected in not abiding or the breaking of God’s covenant. Abarim suggests this proper root yields the noun פוּרָה (puwrah) meaning ‘winepress’, and פָרוּר (parur), meaning ‘boiling pot’, both being emblematic of divine judgment for the covenant breaker not ‘walking’ before God.

Not being distinctively identified as a Hebrew word, פּוּר (pur) can be further defined by its modifier, גוֹרָל (goral) in this phrase. According to Strong’s goral means ‘allotted’, ‘portion’, ‘territory’, ‘land’, ‘choice’, ‘lot’, or ‘lots’ (as in cast for the decision of questions, like dividing land or for designation of persons either for service or punishment, or assignment of property, etc.).

The early usage of goral in Palestine seems to coincide with the use of small stones to dictate decision, fate or destiny. The use of small stones or objects in determining unforeseeable divine decisions entailed them being drawn either from the fold of a garment (e.g. the high priest’s breastplate), or from within a vessel to be drawn or cast. Such a procedure for governing decisions was demonstrated against Achan in determining his judgment of execution for high-handed defiance against God (Josh. 7). Lots were also used for the selection of Saul as Israel’s first king, as well as for identifying his son Jonathan’s ignorant sin of partaking honey from which inadvertent offense he was ultimately excused. Other pertinent examples employed in biblical text are listed below:

- To determine judgment against the wicked like with Achan or Gibeah (Josh 7; Judg. 20), the wicked nations (Isa. 34) or spiritual adulterers (Isa. 57; Acts. 1:26).
• To identify and determine one who had transgressed with incumbent penalty (Jon. 1:7; Josh. 7:14).

• To determine leadership delegation (Acts 1:26).

• To determine the tribal distribution of inheritance and spoils after battle (Num. 31:27; 33:54).

• To determine division of the priesthood with officiating duties and assignments for the sanctuary (1 Chr. 24:5; Neh. 10,11).

• To elect and determine who would reside in Jerusalem (Neh. 1:11; Josh. 18:10).

• To confirm blessing or permanent standing of the righteous (Dan. 12; Ps. 125).

With its usage overall suggesting aid for making decisions or judgments for final resolution to demarcate division and boundary, designate function, or determine standing in a kingdom’s affairs, it reflects God’s administrative assessments concerning man in his ‘walk’ or path in life.

Two highly significant passages also utilize this word: the casting of the gorals on the Day of Atonement—יהוה הַכִּיפּוּרִים (Yom Ha Kippurim)—for assignment and removal of Israel’s sins (Lev. 16); and the casting of lots for the final procurement of the Messiah’s vestment (Ps. 22), an emblem of His station and authority.

Torah’s יומ הַכִּיפּוּר (Yom Ha Kippurim), when the high priest makes atonement for Israel, marks the day when God decides each person’s fate for the coming year: whether they will “live”, being written in the book of life, or be condemned to death. For the second symbol, John’s recognition of Christ’s robe (Rev. 1:13; Lev. 16:4; Exod. 39:27-29) helped signify Christ as the High Priest who, as the perfect sacrifice for sin, opened the way for mankind to “live” in God’s presence (Heb. 2:17; 9: 11-12), being clothed in His righteousness to inherit such rights. Though Lucifer as an angel of authority offered redemption (Mos. 4:1), the “lot” of redemption and those redeemed ultimately fell to Christ who could claim mankind, or those who so qualified. Thus goral grew also to imply the allocation of
property of the victor, as well as involving the idea of destiny or fate being associated with it.

Hence the *goral* or casting of *pur* seems to suggest the outcome of a people’s choice, and its resultant “share” or “lot”. When God created the world, His plan involved the aspect of choice, or moral agency, to choose what coincides with or stands in opposition to that plan for man’s redemption and salvation. Man’s commitment from his position below, attested by his covenant to God above, can ensure man’s deliverance from Egypt (bondage of death and sin) affording him the opportunity of divine Sonship which then allows him place and portion within God’s dominion.

As the *pur* were being cast throughout the year, Haman’s prideful path and egregious schemes ultimately determined him the lot or decision of death. On the other hand, Mordecai’s integrity secured him station with the king. Thus their destinies are typologically projected here, being determined either with final judgment and termination, or Sonship with incumbent inheritance in station and standing with God.

3:7—‘they cast pur…before Haman from day to day…to the month of Adar’—אדר
(adar)—This word as identified by Strong’s, BDB and HALOT is a late Hebrew Babylonian loan word conveying ‘the twelfth month’. They suggest possible etymological ties to *adaru*, meaning ‘to be darkened’, or ‘eclipse’, or with *adru*, meaning ‘threshing floor’. As a proper noun, all of its eight attestations are found in the Book of Esther.

Unvoweled, the Hebrew verb רָדָה (adar) could appear homographic. From its primitive root etymology Strong’s defines it meaning ‘wide’, or to ‘expand’ i.e. ‘be great’ or (figuratively) ‘magnificent’, (become) ‘glorious’, or ‘honorable’. The three times it occurs it is in direct relationship to God’s power of redemption. It appears twice referencing YHWH’s supremacy or magnificence in the Song of Moses concerning God’s power in behalf of His people (Exod. 15: 6, 11), and once again in the Servant
Song of Isaiah (42: 21), referencing the purposed righteousness and fruition of God's salvation.

The Talmud declares, “when Adar comes, joy is increased.” This idea is rooted in a Talmudic passage regarding the decrease of joy from the tragic destruction of the temple in the month of Av, commemorated by fasting and mourning (Zech. 8:19). Conversely, the same passage tells how joy is increased in the month of Adar, which ultimately comes from the removal of the mourning of sackcloth and fasting (b. Ta‘anit 29a). Its increased joy comes from the transformation of the solemn fast day into a promised day of “joy and gladness”, which often finds association in temple texts and with the coming of the Bridegroom (Isa. 35; 51; Jer. 33; Ps. 45). Judah connected this with the messianic rebuilding of the temple (Zech. 8:19), when such mourning would be removed and exchanged for rejoicing.

Haman’s casting of lots for Judah’s annihilation, which instead auspiciously turns into a day of feasting, and gladness (9:22) prophetically exemplifies the reversal of sorrow into joy with the final messianic redemption, just as Christ’s suffering in His first coming turns to His glorified magnification with His second coming. (Perhaps this could explain the seeming contrast associated with the proper noun adar, of ‘threshing’ and ‘darkened’, and those reflected by its verb adar, of ‘magnificent’, etc.)

Marking the last month of the year and of captivity for Israel prior to their Exodus, Adar with its victory against Pharaoh and miraculous deliverance signaled new beginning. As the month preceding Rosh Hashanah, the New Year, of the first temple period, it was a time of choice and resolve to turn from sin in preparation for Passover.

The 14th of Adar marked Purim, which was celebrated a month before Passover, with both Purim and Passover traditionally marking celebration of God’s deliverance. The Sages instituted four specific Torah readings for the Sabbaths during the season of Passover and Purim to help Israel recount their moral obligations to God. Aspects of these readings significantly intertwine with key elements regarding divine salvation in the
Esther narrative such as: Adar, Nisan, the census and shekel contribution, and the red heifer.

The 13th of Adar was the day determined for the Jews’ extinction. Instead, through faithful adherence to specified protocol and divine providence it became a propitious day marking their redemption. Several themes tie Adar to the idea of redemption, a noteworthy one being Nicanor Day, a celebration of the final defeat by Judah Maccabee of the Syrian-Greek military general known for his hatred of Jews (Talmud—j. Ta’anit 2:12 18b). The similarity of the day with that in Esther is more than calendric coincidence: both mark the symbolically ignominious demise of two hostile adversaries who actively sought the Jews’ captivity and destruction. It also suggests a similar theme in God’s salvation under Christ notwithstanding Satanic adversity.

3:8—‘There is a certain people scattered and divided among the peoples in all the provinces’—פָּזַר (pazar, scattered) and פָּרַד (parad, divided)—The word pazar is given the meaning of ‘scattered’ or ‘dispersed’ by Strong’s and HALOT. In the scant ten verses where this word appears biblically it consistently expresses God’s actions in dealing with His people (Jer. 3:13; 50:17; Joel 4:2; Ps. 53:6; 89:11; 112:9; 141:7; 147:16; Prov. 11:24). For the word Parad, on the other hand, Strong’s and HALOT give the meanings ‘separated’ or ‘divided’. It comes from a root meaning to ‘burst’ or ‘break through’.

In biblical description of the division of people into various groupings, other related verbs are often used to indicate actual physical separation, or metaphorical division of the land as an inheritance or possession. However, parad, from its attestations implies more the idea of division of God’s posterity in relation to His purposes as suggested by the following: the division of Noah’s or Adam’s sons into nations (Gen. 10:32; Deut. 32:8); Abraham separating from Lot (Gen. 13:14); Rebekah’s “striving” twins representative of two manner of people “separated” (Gen. 25:23); separation of those who do iniquity (Ps. 92:9); and God’s purposeful division and scattering of His people for the ultimate
purpose of binding them back to Him in covenental Holiness (Lev. 20:22-26; Eph. 2:12-14).

3:8—‘neither keep they the king’s laws’—Since Persian rule prized law and justice, the monarchs were more tolerant and inclusive of their conquered people, particularly under the Achaemenid Empire. This fact would logically render this verse invalid in describing general Jewish defiance rather than Mordecai’s specific act of contempt. However it finds greater congruity in assessment from Romans 3 where Paul asserts that none by deed of law can fully be justified and thus become guilty before Yahweh as “all have sinned”. The ‘law’ being referenced is God’s covenental law, which none can perfectly keep.

3:8—‘not the king to suffer them’—שָׁוָה (shavah)—This verb translated “suffer” is what Strong’s sets forth as a “primitive word meaning ‘to level’, i.e. ‘equalize’; or figuratively, ‘to resemble’; and by implication, ‘to adjust’ (i.e. ‘counterbalance’, ‘suitability’, ‘compose’, ‘place’, ‘yield’, etc.).—‘avail’, ‘behave’, ‘bring forth’, ‘compare’, ‘countervail’, (be, make) ‘equal’, ‘lay’, be (make, a-) ‘like’, ‘make plain’, ‘profit’, ‘reckon’.” HALOT suggests ‘to be (become) the same’, ‘to be appropriate’, or ‘be in accordance with’. With further explanation, HALOT notes the original root meant “to arrange for; bring about,” and then by comparison to become or “give rise to; or achieve,” which developed into “to be the same; similar”.

This verse finishes with the phrase, לְהַנִּיחָם — where shavah is used in conjunction with the ending word which expresses meanings of causing ‘to rest’, ‘set down’, or ‘remain’.

God’s intended salvation is to cause man, though not His equal, to find rest or remain co-equally with Him, as an inheritor in His realm.

3:9—‘if it please the king’—This phrase which occurs repetitively in Esther 1:19, 3:9, 5:4, 8, 17, and 7:3 occurs only two other times in the Bible, in Nehemiah 2 verses 5 and 7. Both are reporting Nehemiah’s presence before the king as the royal cup-bearer
requesting his commission to restore the walls of Jerusalem, which is symbolically representative of Christ’s own salvation efforts for the House of Israel.

The Cup-Bearer for God was Christ (Matt. 26:39), who was commissioned to consume God’s cup of wrath for the benefit of humanity (John 18:11; Rev. 14:10; Isa 26:1-2).

3:9—‘I will pay...silver into the hands of those that have the charge of king’s business’—Silver was the common commodity for buying and selling in the ancient world. Silver is commonly paired in the scriptures with the idea of redemption. Thirty pieces of silver was the price of a slave, which Zechariah prophesied would be thrown into the temple and given to the potter (Zech. 11:12-13). This amount was what Judas returned to the temple priests who then purchased the potter’s field for the burial of strangers, exemplifying Christ’s redemption for all (Matt. 27:3-7).

Redeem means to ‘buy back’. In saving the Israelites firstborn from their bondage in Egypt, God stated in Exodus that all the firstborn sons belonged to Him, and that “their redemption price...[was to be]...five shekels in silver” (Num. 18:14-16). Therefore they were freed from slavery, including sin’s bondage through a ransom of silver (Exod. 6:6, Lev. 25:47-49).

Related to “firstborn”; is the word “firstfruits”, which has implications with resurrection and salvation, metaphorically being redeemed from Egypt (Exod. 13:16). The firstborn was paramount within the culture of Israel, marking not only their dedication to the sanctuary’s service, but also in designating them primal position as the father’s representative, allotted His blessing and double portion (Deut. 21:17; Gen. 27: 1-41; 48:17-19).

Like Haman, Satan also proposed an offer of redemption for mankind. Instead Christ—as God’s Firstborn who received the Father’s blessing and being the Firstfruits of the resurrection—secured those who would rightfully co-inherit with Him the blessings of the Firstborn.
3:9—‘I will pay ten thousand talents of silver...into the hands of those who have charge of the king’s business’—This amount is echoed in the parable in Matthew 18:23-35 with the unmerciful servant who owed the king ten thousand talents of silver. This immense sum of silver was to illustrate the utter impossibility of the ever satisfying such an inconceivable debt, thereby reflecting man’s inability to eradicate his amassing account of offenses on God’s ledger. Such an accruing debt could only be abolished through an offer of forgiveness given by the king. Ahasuerus also instructs Haman to keep the silver. However when the king’s servant persecutes another unable to pay his debts, the king in the end hands over the unmerciful servant to the jailers to be tortured.

Satan, as the great deceiver in assuring man’s redemption, desired only to dethrone God and therefore also solely sought man’s destruction (1 Pet. 5). God alone absolves sin and redeems man, releasing him from the bondage of debt and eventually sends Satan, the one without mercy, to the lake of fire for eternal torment (Rev.14: 11; 20:10).

3:9—‘bring it into the king’s treasuries’—גֶּנֶז (genez)—This word derives from an unused root meaning to store precious treasures and is given the meanings of ‘treasure’, or ‘chests’ by Strong’s. HALOT also offers connotations of ‘blankets’ or ‘boxes’ or ‘woolen’ (citing the Targum’s reference of Ahasuerus’ grand feast for his ministerial subjects for Esther 1:3). It reoccurs only three times, twice in Esther and once in the Lament of Tyre in Ezekiel 27:24, for which Bible scholars have suggested treasures of twisted yarn, alluding to the high prized luxury commodities of dyed and woven embroidered garments or textiles or “chests for such rich apparel,” which Cambridge Commentary discounts, offering instead, burial clothes (Fuerst, 1975).

The textile industry thrived in Mesopotamia, fine twined linen being a luxury item for royalty or even to adorn god-like statues. The high priest likewise was so clothed in such costly apparel.
Just as kings amassed wealth in their kingdom to display and authorize their power, God’s “peculiar treasure” comprised those he covenantally redeems (Exod. 19:3-6; Ps. 135:4; 1 Pet. 2:9-10). This was the immeasurable expression of His ultimate majesty, defining Him as God, since He alone paid to purchase it.

3:10-12—‘the king took his ring from his hand and gave it to Haman…and sealed’—תַבַּﬠַת (taabbath)—This word is given the meaning of ‘ring’, or ‘signet’ by both Strong’s and HALOT. A signet ring was sunk into clay or some impressionable material in order to leave its authoritative imprint.

Its first occurrence expressed the royal favor Pharaoh accorded Joseph with the bestowal of his ring in token of his absolute authority (Gen. 41). The word also specifies the gold rings that served to attach the breastplate to the ephod, which held twelve tribes names engraved “as on a signet” (Exod. 28:17-21). Elsewhere it refers to the golden rings fastened on the various tabernacle furnishings, such as the ark, table and altars. Each of these items keenly typify Divine redemption.

The ring, being circular had extensive universal conceptual meanings of infinite perfection, totality, or divine completion and such. Its gold often found symbolic connection with God displaying the pure, incorruptible attributes of divinity. It could therefore also depict a false or counterfeit representation of God such as an idol, or Satan (Exod. 20:23; Deut. 7:25; Ps. 115:4; Rev. 9:20) (See 1:6). However, accordingly, such rings so physically fastening the various items reflective of divine atonement served to metaphorically secure or seal those efforts of propitiation.

Other references of the rings signify the nose ring given to adorn the bride (Ezek. 16:12; Gen. 24:12-14, 22), or the token of honor—the signet ring (Gen. 41:42; Dan. 5:16).

The signet was often used biblically to express metaphoric manifestation of authority for those figuratively holding it such as the twelve tribes, the high priest, Joseph, etc. (Exod. 28:21, 36; Gen. 41:42; Hag. 2:23). The preeminent signet in the Bible—Zerubbabel—
will be discussed in greater detail elsewhere. Use of this word is directly connected with allotted authority involving those under God’s covenant.

The signet was an important tool to mark authority and proprietorship, and to designate honor and heritage (Hag. 2:23; Luke 15:22). Seals certified the authenticity of an official decree or document (e.g. 1 Kgs. 21:8; Dan. 6:17). The ring itself, as a symbol of authority, also empowered anyone it was delegated to with equivalent jurisdiction of its owner, like Pharaoh bestowed to Joseph in Genesis 41:42.

The signet is also used metaphorically both substantively and as a verb. It is used to confirm or ‘seal’ God’s remembrance of sin against the sinner (Deut. 32:34). It was also used as a token to substantiate or ratify possession, such as implied in Revelation 7:2-4 where it records those being sealed of God on their foreheads. The seal can also be a metaphor for something shut or secured until some requisite time as in Revelation’s seven seals (Rev. 5:1) or when Daniel would ‘seal’ the book till end time (Dan. 12: 4, 9).

Christ gave Peter the keys of God’s kingdom to bind or seal, which according to the rabbis, was merely the legislative authority to determine what to permit or not permit. This sealing power represented those appointed and invested with such administrative keys to officiate in God’s work. This empowered them to act in His name and authority in executing His laws in the affairs of His kingdom with permanence (1 Cor. 5:4), just as Mordecai ultimately comes to exhibit in the kingdom of king Ahasuerus.

3:11—‘The silver is given to thee, the people also, to do [with them] as it seemeth good to thee (in your eyes)’—This phrase appears almost as a stock statement in the Bible (e.g. Gen. 16:6; Deut. 6:18; 12:28; Josh. 9:25; 1 Sam. 11:10; 2 Sam. 19:28). Beyond being expressive of independent choosing, its various passages are more suggestive of theological understanding of reflecting the choice whether to comply with God’s purposes, often implying consequential situations of pending separation, i.e. death, banishment, or destruction. As stated earlier, when God created the world His plan
involved choice, and with the choice of agency to choose the “good” in order to “know” Him (covenantal sense) and attain salvation.

Attestations in Judges (21:25; 17:6) state that when there is no king, then the people do whatever is “right or good in their own eyes,” suggesting that law, which a king magistrates, is an implicit basis for choosing to perform duty. Without magistrate, there is no law, or duty.

However God’s plan operates on law, and the acquisition of such “inheritance” would be realized legally as detailed by another instance with this phrase in 1 Chronicles 21:23 when in response to David’s request to fully purchase the threshing field, to stay his people’s plague, Ornan says, “let my Lord, my king do that which is good in his eyes.”

3:14—‘be ready against that day’—The phrase, “that day” most often is equated with the “day of the Lord” when He will intervene decisively in culminating judgment for the salvation of His people in order to inaugurate His eternal universal rule (e.g. Isa. 24:21-22; Jer. 46:10; Ezek. 30:3-4).

3:15—‘posts went forth in haste’—Persia was known for its efficient communication system. Darius’ royal mounted couriers traversed the nearly 2000 miles of distance within seven days.

Four such dispatches from the king are included in Esther. Initially the royal couriers are sent forth spurred by the king’s expulsion and deposing of Vashti (Esth. 1:22). Next, bulletins are sent out declaring that, “Every man is master of his own house” therefore whatever he dictates, should be abided. This edict, written by the scribes, is in response to Haman’s decree to annihilate all the Jews on the thirteenth day of Adar, and plunder their possessions (vs. 13). The next dispatch discharged is in chapter 8: 10-11, under Mordecai’s direction, sealed with the king’s signet, to authorize Jews to stand in defense of their life, and initiate assault on any seeking to slay them. Finally after Esther’s petition, and the Jews subsequent defensive retaliatory response, Mordecai sends one last
dispatch sanctioned by Esther, shortly after Haman’s sons are hung, wherein he establishes or decrees obligatory commemoration of their overcoming annihilation (Esth.9:20, 29-32).

Just as warning dispatches from the king were crucial regarding the securing of preservation for those threatened within his dominion, God likewise apprises mankind of the vitally essential aspects of His covenant plan of redemption regarding their salvation.

Such dispatches call to mind other such riders recorded in scripture: In Revelation there are four horses dispatched with various edicts and like authority to loosen a seal (Rev. 6:1-8).

In Zechariah 6:2-4 steeds are mounted by four “spirits” who swiftly ride as emissaries of judgments, which also find connection with Daniel’s vision. Revelation 19:1-16 speaks of one on a magnificent white horse with vesture dipped in blood leading a host of others also clad in white linen who come in judgment. The rider has often been identified as the Messiah coming with His host in battle against the Antichrist and opposing forces of evil before his reign, but also finds a parallel in Ether 6:8 in the figure of Mordecai abjectly led through the streets on the king’s steed dressed in his regal vestments.

Thus, horses and their riders prominently feature in prophecy often with important roles and function for end-time judgment.

3:15—‘king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Shushan was perplexed’— Whereas “walking” denotes direction and movement, in scripture “sitting” denotes a state of remaining or abiding. It is a projected posture at the banquet table (1 Sam. 16:11; Gen. 43:33; Luke 14:8-9), which has covenant or treaty implication (Gen. 26:30-31; 31:22-55; Exod. 24:10), and can also signal position for discourse over divine word (Matt. 5:1; Luke 2:46; 4:20). But it also denotes God’s post for judgment (Isa.28: 6; Rev. 20:11; Dan. 7:9-10), which prominently figures with the New Year liturgy in Nisan, when God sits in initial judgment to determine mankind’s fate for the coming year. All of this finds
applicability regarding God’s encounters with Satan in the commencement of His plan of salvation.

The many contexts for this verb are varied; expressing dwelling by Egypt, proximity near the fleshpots, abiding amidst uncleanness, or temporary booths. The large majority of its usages connect with pagan Canaanite areas, the lush Promised Land which Israel was to conquer and inhabit.

Haman furtively sits down with the king to connivingly set into motion his plans to spoil the Jews. Similarly, a necessary meeting between Satan and God is hinted at in Job after Satan’s going “to and fro” at the end of which encounter God concedes in allowing aggression against Job (Job 12).

As Shushan was thrown into a state of “perplexity” at the news of the king’s decree in anticipation of such a great slaughter, in like manner heaven was thrown into turmoil (Rev. 12) with all mankind destined for earth and the ultimate impact of Satan’s devouring intents upon men’s souls (1 Pet. 5:8).

Though God’s plan of redemption inherently involved moral agency, Satan’s opposition became integral. In conjunction with the Fall and Satan’s continual operative ability to battle agency, all things were placed under judgment. Heaven’s host was adversely impacted since the Fall not only produced degenerative and hostile conditions for mankind with physical and spiritual death (Eph. 2:1; Rom. 8:7) but all of creation was likewise impacted, and “groaned inwardly”. Thus it was necessary for all to submit to a state of waiting in prospect for a time of redemption and possible restoration from the consequences of such cursing (Gen.3:17-19; Rom. 8:22-23). Until then all creation would abide the adverse conditions, which would continue until their projected chaotic climax when there would be another but final encounter with Satan.

Just as Haman dynamically figured prominently in key involvement with the king throughout Esther until his final demise, so it is with Satan, who likewise continually
schemes to carry out his evil agendas until he eventually encounters the termination of his role with the annihilation of himself and his hosts.

3:15—‘but the city of Shushan was perplexed’—בּוּ (buwk)—Strong’s lists for this word the meaning of ‘perplexed’ or ‘entangle’, while HALOT adds to ‘be agitated’, or in reference to its passage in Exodus 14, to ‘wander around in confusion’.

Only two other verses utilize this word. One (Exod. 14:3), relates Israel’s departure from Egypt when God leads them southward, and the sea seemingly hems them in, which emboldens Pharaoh to intercept and overpower them. However, the Egyptian’s over-confidence proves to be their bane as God throws them into a state of confusion wherein they could not elude His hand of destruction.

The other attestation is found in Joel’s prophecy concerning the locust plague, which has stripped the land, leaving the cattle moaning and milling about without pasture. The locusts are emblematic of punishment: this passage portends God’s coming Day of Judgment with its great chaos and calamity.

Both passages express God’s bookend judgments of human history. Egypt symbolizes man’s initial fall with penalizing descent into the bondage of sin and death, which God helps to abate. The locusts project incumbent destruction of end time judgment which mankind inherently faces without response to God’s grace. Satan’s evil designs to thwart God’s plan of redemption began initially with his intent to bring man and his agency into captivity, and climax with his final assault to bring creation into chaos and destroy mankind in the culminating chapters of their salvation.
Both the anguish of Mordecai and Esther mirror Christ’s own in performing His variant atoning roles for mankind. In this chapter Mordecai and Esther execute great efforts in tandem for the salvation of their people. Upon going into the “midst of the city” Mordecai rends his clothes to don sackcloth and ashes with great lamentation while Esther being “exceedingly pained” asks her people to fast for her three days.

4:1—‘When Mordecai knew all what was done’ יָדַע (yadah)—This verb, as previously mentioned, within the Semitic languages could suggest a covenantal sense, like the relationship represented between the Bridegroom and His Bride—the house of Israel. In such ancient cultures based on covenants, “to know” was part of their legal language referring to a contractual understanding between God and His people.

In response to what he knew in anguish Mordecai dons sackcloth. Such dire distress finds a parallel where David, clothed in sackcloth, faces the agony and anxiety of adversaries who also spoke against him and wrongfully “hated [him] without cause” and wept earnestly seeking salvation and deliverance from their malicious intents (Ps. 69:4,10-12). The scenario is similarly reminiscent of King Hezekiah and Joshua—also illustrations for Christ—in their agony over sin and its effects.

David’s troubled anguish and Mordecai’s dilemma find fuller application with Christ in His suffering of false accusation, maltreatment and contempt of powerful adversaries such as Satan who spitefully sought His destruction (John 15:24-25; Matt. 27:33-34). These verses foreshadow messianic fulfillment with the deliverance of Judah and assembly of the Firstborn, and restoration of Zion, which finds parallel with Mordecai in the ending chapters of Esther.

4:1—‘rent his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes’ שַׂק (saq)—This noun listed by Strong’s and HALOT as ‘sackcloth’ was a coarse cloth, usually made from goat’s or camel’s hair. It was customarily worn as an outward sign of mourning, debasement or
repentance. Worn in conjunction with ashes often at a time of collective fasting, it signaled the repentance of God’s people with remorse over neglecting His Law and lamenting resultant consequences.

Wearing sackcloth as a sign of deep repentance was often the prophets’ specified dress, since the denouncing of sin and sinners was a principal part of their prophetic office in declaring repentance and God’s judgment. Therefore donning sackcloth suited symbolic expression of both judgment and lamentation (e.g., Isa. 20:2; Rev. 11:33; Matt. 3:4).

Here Mordecai evokes both Daniel’s and David’s penitence in representing their people before the Lord. It likewise mirrors Psalm 35, (which ultimately attests to Christ, the greater David), in the characterizing of enemies’ “false accusations.” In David’s beseeching of God to defeat them, he prays for his adversary to be ensnared in his own trap with swift unanticipated destruction, which is realized with Haman’s downfall.

Christ instructively uses the rhetorical device of antithesis in paralleling sackcloth with its opposite, that of “soft raiment worn in king’s palaces” (an allusion to temple robes, e.g. Matt. 11:8-10; 17:2; 28:3; Rev. 19:4) to confirm John the Baptist’s office as a prophet, and define John’s role as the Messiah’s forerunner in efforts of salvation.

The association between sackcloth and being clothed in robes of glory (Ps. 30:11-12) comes from certain clothing carrying connotations implicit of salvation, while the changing of clothing from sackcloth to robes is reflective of sanctifying purification necessary for salvation. Mordecai dresses in sackcloth prior to Esther’s donning of royal robes to stand in the king's inner court on the third day (Esth. 5:1), as well as His own eventual enrobing at the end in regal attire (Esth. 6:8-11; 8:15).

Other associations with sackcloth include personal and national disaster; repentance and prayer for deliverance (Jonah 3:5-7; 2 Kgs.19:1-2; Neh. 9:1); and death (Gen. 37:34). For example, subsequent to a rebellion by Israel (2 Sam. 15:1-12; 2 Sam. 3:27; 18:14; 20:10), God decrees a three-day plague and sword for the purpose of national repentance. David
supplicates God in sackcloth in order to stay the sword of destruction stretched out over Jerusalem (1 Chr. 21:18-22:5). This expresses a foreshadowing of Christ’s own atoning efforts.

In addition, Israel’s sin and their own rejection of God caused the heavens to be “clothed with sackcloth” (Isa. 50:3) This allusion to heaven’s mourning of sin Spurgeon and others have tied with Christ’s atoning sacrifice (Spurgeon, 1969).

Sackcloth is also often interwoven with the judgment of Babylon, typifying sin (Isa. 3:24-26; 37:1-2; Jdt. 4:10-14). Each of these passages portrays God’s people, or magistrates, positioned at the gate or forefront of the temple while supplicating in sackcloth, similar to that of Mordecai, but exemplified by Christ.

Thus sackcloth signals connection with death, sin, judgment, and repentance, all of which were inclusive aspects of necessary reparations assumed by Christ in His atoning role.

4:1—‘put on sackcloth and ashes’—אֵפֶר (epher)—The wearing of sackcloth, often noted in conjunction with putting ashes on oneself, signified one’s inward heart’s condition of humility or intense grief over desolation, ruin or death.

The ordinary Hebrew term for dust, meaning a minute finely divided thing, finds association with various concepts including; the state of the afflicted, the dust of the grave, or even the Babylonian concept of food for those in the underworld. The scriptural record reports that all created living things, including man, were formed from ‘dust’ (Isa. 40:12; Gen. 2:7) and will also return to such an elemental state (Gen. 3:19). In ancient cultures just came to visibly mark grief or mourning of such—being symbolically associated with death or extinction.

The sacrifice of the red heifer resulting in ashes signified dissolution of sin; the ashes were symbolically used for the ritual purification from death’s defilement—the effect of sin (Num. 19:9-10). The red heifer without spot or yoke typified Christ’s sinless and
voluntary sacrifice to redeem man by assuming sin upon His own sinless nature. The heifer, wholly consumed into ashes, represented the complete destruction of sin and sinner (Mal. 4:1, 3) typifying Christ’s efficacious sacrifice wherein He not only suffered destruction in the death of the body but also suffered His soul to be consumed in the second death of hell (2 Cor. 5:21; Isa. 9:18; 53:12; Matt. 10:28). Yet, being sinless He was empowered to overcome such death unharmed in order to enable others to do likewise (Rev. 2:11; Rev. 20:6).

Therefore in response to genuine mourners with such ashes of repentance, reflective of atoning sacrifice, God reciprocates by removing the sackcloth and replacing it with robes of righteousness and salvation. This process is depicted by the roles executed in unison which Mordecai and Esther portray throughout chapters 4-8.

4:1—‘Mordecai rent his clothes’—קָרַע (qara)—According to Strong’s, qara is one of the Hebrew words with the meanings of ‘to rend’ or ‘to tear’. It is often used in reference to kriah the act of tearing one’s outer garment (signifying the body), in conjunction with the presence of death either physically or figuratively. This ancient tradition—according to the Torah—was an essential element in expressing deep contrition, intense grief, or anguish at the loss of a loved one or of one’s own soul. The tearing of the garment near the breast figuratively allowed one an opening to release the intense feelings of the heart.

The frequent co-occurrence of the tearing of one’s garments with wearing sackcloth as a central motif in several biblical narratives implies they are directly related, with the one preceding the other. Use of the word qara thus bears association with sin, all of which gives added perception into Mordecai’s status projected in this verse, as well as to his eventual change of garments with his ending status.

Specific behaviors of the high priest were prohibited while officiating if they would appear to counteract God’s justice and divine judgment or imply a breach or corruption of his integrity (Lev. 10:6; 21:10).
However, in Exodus 28:32, *qara* is used to express how the high priest’s garments were purposefully woven to prevent inadvertent tearing. The un-torn garment signified the Priest as God’s representative and official intercessor between Him and man, and indicated his condition unblemished and considered worthy to officiate in the office he bore (Lev. 6:15). Conversely, the leper’s garment was to be torn to witness of uncleanness (Lev. 13:45) and needful removal of what embodied or typified sin and death. In Leviticus 13:56, *qara* is used to outline possible purification for such unclean tainted garments, if the spot being torn out (*qara*), showed proper purification under priestly supervision.

Christ—the true High Priest—was the only righteous one wholly without sin. Yet, He also alone comes to have all sin “laid” upon Him (Isa. 53:6). Here Mordecai representatively demonstrates the intensity of anxiety and grief over such condition, which leads to ultimate dissolution and destruction.

4:1—‘*in the midst of the city*’—An exact iteration of this phrase is found in the messianic Psalm 45 concerning the Bridegroom King’s wedding feast. Addressed to the priests and virgins (Ps. 46:5), it recounts God being in the “midst of the city”. In reflection of David’s victories over his enemies the psalmist sings out a song of confidence in God’s power and protection being present with His people.

Mordecai positions himself in the midst of the city mourning with acute lamentation over the plight of his people. The word “midst” originates from a Middle English word meaning “in the middle”. Christ as mankind’s ever-present help assumed position for mankind with passionate agony for their salvation in the (Moses 7:46). Whether in deep anguish from the midst of the Garden or in excruciating pain hanging from the cross at the medial hour within His beloved city, He came in the meridian of time to earnestly suffer for His people (Moses 7:46).

Further messianic echo of this phrase is found in Ezekiel 9:4 and Revelation 7:3 concerning those who God designates for salvation.
4:1—‘and cried with a loud and bitter cry’—זָﬠַק (zaaq)—מַר (mar)—According to Strong’s the noun zaaq means to ‘cry’, ‘cry out’ or ‘call’, while HALOT suggests for its specific meaning here ‘to call for help’. Elsewhere HALOT also renders it as ‘to summon’ or ‘to raise a battle cry’. Gesenius suggests for it the nuance of ‘expression of sorrow’ or a ‘cry for aid’. All nineteen of its occurrences directly or indirectly reference a cry for salvation or of anguish from those doomed to destruction from judgment of sin. It often infers the sound of lamentation and anguish arising from Egypt, Babylon, Moab, or the ‘pit’ when salvation is confounded by impending judgment or destruction. Conversely, it is used twice denoting Zion, either expressing Zion’s state of righteousness evidenced by the lack of such anguishing cries, or the Lord’s attentiveness to His covenanted city’s cries at times of such calamity.

The next word for examination in this sentence is מַר (mar)—here in its feminine form, מָרָה (marah)—Strong’s, HALOT and BDB all give this adjective and substantive the meaning of ‘bitter’ or ‘bitterness’.

In scripture, ‘bitter’ and ‘bitterness’ often denote sin and its effects (Jer. 2:19; 4:18; Acts 8:23; Heb.12:9-17). Its first attestation is Esau’s bitter response to the loss of his Father’s blessing of the birthright as described in Genesis 27:34 which is expressed in a strikingly parallel to that of this verse: “he cried with an exceeding great and bitter cry”. Some have suggested for this passage the aspect of a tandem redemptive role. Despite Esau’s tearful repentant response of his lost birthright, nothing he was able to do could restore that. Similarly, the natural man cannot restore what was lost without divine aid. Jeremiah’s prophecy of the voice “heard in Ramah” describes such a bitter cry with anxious hope for restoration (Jer. 31:14-15).

This phrase, reiterated with such purposeful exactness, projects definite overtones of redemption of the first born, with possibility of messianic fulfillment.
4:2—‘he came before the king’s gate’— East of the Achaemenid palace in Susa was the Great Gate through which all entered. Israel’s tabernacle displayed 30-foot multi colored woven panels clearly marking its eastern gate as the only entrance into God’s sacred space. Likewise the gate in the eastern wall of Jerusalem, facing the Mount of Olives, was its most direct access to the Temple Mount. According to Middot 1:3, it portrayed the palace of Shushan and signified a portal of salvation for Israel, being the designated gate for the sanctifying sacrifices of the scapegoat and red heifer as well as the gate which Christ first entered and through which the Messiah would return (Num. 19; Ezek. 43:2; 44:2; 46:12; Zech. 14:4). The porch of Solomon’s temple, or Ulam, was also entered on the East (1 Kgs. 6:3). Only through God’s gate could the repentant sinner desiring atonement gain access to the court of God’s holy house, in order to make his offerings.

Hastings suggests that it was not improbable that “gate” was used both in Daniel and Esther “by metonymy for ‘palace; or ‘king’s court’” (2004), being a place wherein legalities were transacted, and for one like Daniel, the station from which judgments or introductions were rendered.

Barnes, Murphy, Cook, Pusey, Leupold and Frew, (1996) noted that common practice throughout the East precluded entering the king’s gate clothed with sackcloth, in order to ensure nothing injurious was imposed on the monarch. The wearing of sackcloth, associated with mourning or a crisis of some severity like death, prohibited him from advancing into the king’s court farther than the gate.

Christ was led outside the walls to suffer in sackcloth outside the gates of Jerusalem to fully sanctify and “make [His] people holy through His blood” and justify them with His execution (Heb. 13:11-13 (NIV); Lev. 16: 27; John 19:17-20).

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4:3—‘whithersoever the king’s commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning’—Great mourning and lamentation is the noted predominate response for both Christ’s historical death as well as His return in woeful judgment.

The call for fasting and sackcloth signifies such mourning when occasions turn to sorrow—as in verse 1 above. Shortly before His death, Christ speaks of mourning when the bridegroom is ‘taken away’ (Mark 2:18-22). From the beginning, God had decreed that death would follow sin (Gen. 2:16-17). Christ’s intimation of the bridal party’s mourning over the Bridegroom’s removal is confirmed in Luke 23:26-31 reporting that a “great multitude of people...mourned and lamented him,” after a “certain man” carried His cross on that day of atonement to Calvary’s Hill (Mark 15:21).

Joy for the wedding-feast ceased—with mourning extending through a long night of expectation—until midnight when the cry would again be raised, “Behold, the Bridegroom cometh” (Matt. 25:6), and joy can then return when death is no more.

Then again, with end-time judgment Jeremiah forewarns how the voice of the bride and bridegroom would be heard no more (Jer. 7:34), and instead—somber weeping and great lamentation in sackcloth for both Babylon’s wedding party as well as those awaiting God’s deliverance (Rev. 18; Zech. 12; Isa. 15, 22:12; Joel 1:8; 2:12-13; Amos 8:10; Ezek. 7:27). Then the Jewish nation will realize the persecution of the Messiah, as the entire earth will likewise share in lament when they see the Son of Man come (Rev: 1:7; 18:9; Joel 2; Zech. 12).

4:3—‘many lay in sackcloth and ashes’—יַצַע (yatsa)—Strong’s defines this word as ‘lay’ or ‘spread’ with the added suggestion from HALOT of ‘spread out like a bed’. It occurs three other times in the Bible:

- The triumphant exultation over conquered Babylon: “Maggots are spread out as your bed beneath you, and worms are your covering’ (Isa. 14:11-12). These worms signify the putrefaction of the grave (Job 7:5; 21:16).
• Idolatrous Israel’s empty ritual, which leads only to corrupting death, instead of real repentance wherein they could obtain peace (Isa. 58:5).
• Jehovah’s influence and endeavors for the psalmist spread from the highest of heavens but also to the deepest abodes of death (Ps. 139:8).

The apparent sense of this word expresses the idea of the corruption of death within sheol—the pit—where sin and its effects lie. This further attests to the idea that the garment of sackcloth is also entwined with corruptibility, which is what Christ took upon himself with the sin of mankind, “becoming the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2). Likewise, mankind ‘lays’ in such corruption until raised to immortality with final resurrection (1 Cor. 15).

4:4—‘the queen was exceedingly pained’—חַוּל (chuwl)—חִיל (chiyl)—Strong’s suggests this as a late Hebrew or Aramaic verb with ‘bear’ as its foremost meaning, but from its primitive root many other meanings apply including: “to twist or whirl (in a circular or spiral manner), i.e. to dance, to writhe in pain (especially of parturition). Bear (make to) bring forth, fall grievously (with pain), sorrow (-ful), travail (with pain), or be wounded.” BDB and HALOT further add to these ‘to be in anguish’ and ‘to be seized by fear’ suggestive of a physiological reaction.

This word reflects a precarious sense of anticipation, anxiety or perplexity connected within contexts of judgment, the bringing forth of birth or of death. The notions of travailing, writhing, twisting, trembling, pain, anguish, and fear coalesce in reflecting the efforts of continuance within the circle of life, often associated with God (Job 22:14, Isa. 40:11) either with birth suggestive of deliverance and redemption, or conversely, death with its discontinuance and judgment (Job. 25:20-23; 1 Chr. 10:3; Isa. 66:7-8; Ps. 55:3-5; Jer. 51:25).

There is also ancient evidence of notions involving the continuance of life being connected to the ideas of a sacred round dance, or a prayer circle and concepts of suffering, a sacred altar, sacrifice, marriage, along with circular movement representative
of the motions of the cosmos. Various scholars have associated these findings—often referred to as the ‘ring dance’—with the sacramental rites of Adamic origin assuring participants propitiation and salvation.

Just as Esther honorably conformed to her guardian’s authority and request, Christ honored his Father’s will by complying in obedience to carry out His plan for man. This involved Christ’s own incarnation, physical sacrifice and agonizing atonement (John 12:49, 14:31), as well as His agonizing prayer in shouldering man’s sins emotionally and spiritually in submission before God’s altar in the Garden—all of which Esther and Mordecai mirror jointly.

4:4—‘and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai’—בֶּגֶד (beged)—לָבַשׁ (labash)—Strong’s gives the noun beged the meaning of ‘apparel’. HALOT also lists for it, ‘garment’, ‘covering’, ‘to deal treacherously with’ or ‘depart treacherously from’. The second word—the verb labash—will be examined subsequently. It originates from a primitive root meaning to ‘wrap around’, for which Strong’s and HALOT both report the meaning of ‘to put on’ as in a garment or armor, or ‘to clothe’ or ‘be clothed’ either literally or figuratively.

Clothing and what is done with it (i.e. donning, anointing, rending, removal, cleansing, burning, or changing etc.) plays a prominent role in scripture, often denoting some degree of standing with God (Gen. 35:2; Exod. 19:10; 29:21; Rev. 22:14). This is immediately apparent with God’s clothing of Adam and Eve in the Garden with skins as part of their necessary covenant restoral with Him, essentially signifying the atonement on their behalf to ensure future reunion with God (Gen. 3:21).

Outward attire in scripture often projected inward symbolic significance such as the ‘donning of sackcloth’ previously discussed to display mournful repentance or national tragedy (Job 16:15; Jer. 6:26) or the exchange of ‘filthy garments’ for ‘clean festal robes’ signifying the removal of iniquity which allowed the ability to withstand God's presence
(Zech. 3:4). Being clothed in a ‘robe of righteousness’ signifies being granted salvation (Isa. 61:10-11; Rev. 19: 7-8).

The removal or donning of such attire also appears to have an implied sense of ritual order. Scripture suggests that one first needed to remove, rend, or tear off a former filthy covering (symbolic of corruption) to allow the putting on or donning robes of righteousness which in turn permitted one to approach God (2 Chr. 34:27; Zech. 3:4).

Here the fact that Mordecai refuses the offered change of clothing could possibly indicate a state of ceremonious ineligibility to accept certain replacement garments, reflected by a current condition of remorse, contrition or process of sanctification. Scripture dictates how none with sin’s filthiness could be ushered into God’s presence, nor was there remission of sin except through complete repentance and removal of sin and its effects (Rev. 21: 27; 1 Cor. 6:9). As none were able to fully justify themselves before the law, God’s saving efforts provided through the atonement were required (Rom. 3:23; Rom. 2:13; John 14:6; John 3:3). These are represented through the aggregate efforts orchestrated by Mordecai and Esther. Esther’s royal robes symbolized full sanctification whereas Mordecai’s donning of sackcloth exemplified the needed removal of man’s unrighteousness (1 John 1:9; Eph. 2:8-9; Rev. 3:21).

The removal of the outer cloak or robe anciently also was needful in order to gird oneself to perform specific tasks. Mordecai’s girding of sackcloth is reminiscent of Christ’s conduct during the Last Supper when He girded a towel to wash His disciples feet, initiating His final hours and work of redemption (John 13:4). The word for ‘towel’, at times translated as “linen cloth”, denoted a working servant’s towel or apron. However, unlike fine costly linen, it was a rougher coarse cloth, which those undergoing crucifixion donned (Thayer, Grimm, & Wilke, 1996). This finds applicability with Christ in His atoning role as God’s servant for mankind.
Since the outer garment was also emblematic of one’s station, its removal could signify the laying aside of His own glory and honor as Deity, in preparation to fully complete the task of expiation in atonement His Father had given Him.

Throughout the narrative Mordecai dons two contrasting sets of apparel. Initially he refused to change from the sackcloth he had put on in expression of grief and anguish concerning his people’s dilemma and dire straits. Yet later on at the end he is extolled in Shushan arrayed in the king’s robe and royal crown after being presented to the king.

Both nouns בֶּגֶד (beged) and לְבוּשׁ (lebush), which is derived from לָבַשׁ (labash), are used to reference raiment. As one of the broadest terms for a covering, beged is used over two hundred times and displays wide variance of description and usage. Though it is most often rendered as ‘garment’ it also is frequently translated as ‘covering’, ‘raiment’, ‘apparel’, ‘clothes’, or ‘cloth’.

In comparison, there are only thirty-three biblical attestations of the masculine noun lebush also signifying an outer garment, with similar connotations. Despite how both of the masculine nouns—beged and lebush—share some similarity, there does seem to be a slight nuance of difference of connotation. Between the limited thirty-three occurrences of lebush and over two hundred attestations for beged only a handful of them co-occur including: Isaiah 63, 2 Samuel 1, 20, Psalm 22, 45,102, and Proverbs 27, as well as those in Esther.

Repetition, such as the rhetorical structure of parallelism, is often used in scripture, both in poetry and less frequently in its prose. Here the uses of the apparent near synonyms beged and lebush likely focuses emphasis on something like the actuality of salvation.

All attestations for lebush also appear to involve figurative covenantal concepts such as: blood, red, wine, scarlet, lambs, wool, goats, light, clouds, honor, vestry, seal and such (Ps. 45:13; Prov. 27:26; Jer. 10:9; Job 38:9; Isa. 63:2), or typify covenantal affiliation (Ps. 45:13, Prov. 31:22, 25; Isa. 63:1-2; Ps. 22:18; Mal. 2:15). Yet the context for the passages
most often involves scenarios for judgment or death (2 Sam. 1; 20; 2 Kgs: 10; Jer. 10; Isa. 63; Job 24; 30; 31; 38; 41; Ps. 69; 102, Lam. 4).

Though the majority of the attestations of lebush fall in the texts of Job and Psalms, there are several in Esther also. Each of these specifically reference the king’s robe bestowed to Mordecai. However it co-occurs with beged in chapter four as cited below:

- “When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry” (Esth. 4:1).
- “So Esther's maids and her chamberlains came and told it her. Then was the queen exceedingly grieved; and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him: but he received it not” (Esth. 4:4).

Though the donning of sackcloth can demonstrate covenental covering it does not signify incorruption or immutability. However, it does affirm of a prior apparel as well as a condition requiring the stripping of such, which in Christ’s case, would have been indicative of Him divesting Himself of His own glory, while also eradicating man’s sin.

Such a change of nature is reflected, much like the change of clothes in Psalms 102, wherein God ‘changes’ the old to be a new vesture, the source for which image comes from Isaiah 5:6 regarding God’s infinite righteousness and salvation.

Christ metaphorically took on the covering for sin (goat hair, saq) so that man through Him could become righteous (represented by the finer linen) (2 Cor. 5:21).

Both of these terms are likewise used in regards to Mordecai’s clothing as he physically displays a changing of apparel between the two antithetical sets. Similarly, the high priest dramatically changes his attire during Yom Kippur, the day noted for repentance with intense fasting and prayer for atonement. This is because the high priest represents both
the individual ‘Jew’ among Jews, much like Mordecai, but he also serves as the holy vessel and representative for the community, as does Esther.

Thus it seems plausible that the changing and exchanging of apparel noted in Esther mirrors the various protocol of the Yom Kippur ceremony requiring the changing of the high priest’s vesture which ultimately reflects the rectification process and completion of Christ’s atonement.

4:4—‘but he accepted it not’—קָבַל (qabal)—Strong’s lists this word as meaning ‘to receive’ or ‘take’ while HALOT adds ‘gift’. Being a late word, it appears only eleven times outside Esther.

The first two attestations for this word are in reference to the ten curtains that form the inner covering of the tabernacle. The curtains were to demark the space of service where God met man to fulfill His purposes and intents of sanctification for a newly created nation. The curtains were to be joined (received) together into one unit by gold clasps, which then served to seal the two as one, so that “it may be one tabernacle” (Exod. 26:6).

The material, color and number of the loops all symbolically tie to redemption, since they connect or secure the two separate parts to be fully connected into one integral unit, creating in essence a canopy. This symbolically reflected the reciprocal bonds needed for God to re-create His place of union with man anew—exemplifying the marriage of the bridegroom and bride under the chuppah canopy.

Several instances of this word relate to sanctification and salvation and associated concepts such as silver, blood, uncleanness, sacrifice etc. (1 Chr. 12:18; 21:11; 29:16; 22; Ezra 8:30; Job 2:10; Prov. 19:20). Each projects the receiving and taking of efforts jointly in order to achieve a desired union or restoration.

Consider one of these instances from Esther (9:23, 27). Because of Haman’s plot to destroy them, the Jews received—or took upon themselves—what Mordecai had written
unto them. He had admonished them to observe the ordained days as commemorative of their enemy’s defeat—when their sorrows were turned to joy. This they received to take upon themselves for a perpetual remembrance from year to year as testimonial for what was done in their behalf (Exod. 13:3-8).

Each of the co-occurrences recounts detrimental circumstances that were then emended or rectified through some shared responsibility. They exemplify coordinated corrective efforts expended between a culpable party and a specified agent, such as David, Hezekiah, Ezra, Job, Mordecai (typifying Deity) or God Himself. The last passage mentioned above (Prov. 19:20) prescribes just such a pattern for the ‘wise’ who hearken to God’s counsel for welfare of their soul and its salvation, by receiving or abiding God’s stipulations.

This verse, however, indicates a lack of “receiving”, with Mordecai’s refusal to exchange his sackcloth for Esther’s offer of clothing. Perhaps this is just reflecting the need of preemptive timing for such full resolution, in the fact that Esther and Mordecai play essential roles in the atoning reparations, which must be achieved independently—but in tandem.

4:5—‘chamberlains came and told her’—םָרוּס (saris)—Though this word is translated as “chamberlain” here, according to Strong’s and HALOT it indicates either a ‘high official’ or at times, ‘eunuch’. They also suggest that since some parts of the Near East practiced castration, it could indicate an official in charge of some Oriental monarch’s private chambers who had been deprived of the ability to procreate. It most commonly was translated with terms such as “officer” or “official” denoting a trusted servant within the king’s inner circle of the Near Eastern courts (Gen. 37:36; 2 Kgs. 9:32; Jer. 39:3) or sometimes a “military commander” (2 Kgs. 25:19).

With castration being strictly prohibited in Judaism (Lev. 21:20; Deut. 23:2; Lev. 22:24), its biblical usage most likely reflected a palace official unless more specifically noted. Though their charge over the palace’s private chambers probably ascribed them as
chamberlains—the seeming historical situation here—they could also have been appointed other legislative duties such as administrative officer, supervisor, counselor, guardians, or military aides (2 Kgs. 25:19, Dan. 1:3, 7, 11).

Such titles and positions easily could also be descriptive of one of the divine beings among God’s pantheon assisting him in the administration of the cosmos and orchestration of His divine plan for man’s salvation mentioned earlier (Ps. 82:1).

4:5—‘to know what this was, and why it was’—This phrase brings to mind Isaiah 66:18, where God, (Jehovah), knows what and why men do what they do. In His deliverance of Jerusalem He declared, “For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory (Isa. 66:18).”

The word “know” is implied here in the Hebrew, though appears in the LXX, but its inclusion is necessary for the passage to make sense. This Isaiah chapter expresses God’s assurance of national restoration and the certainty of His people’s deliverance of His people and vindication in judgment of His enemies, for He [knows] what and why they do what they do, and He will gather all to know who He is in His glory.

4:5-6—‘Esther called for Hathach...and Hathach went forth to Mordecai’—
Throughout the narrative there is an oscillating focus shifting between Esther and Mordecai. However with Mordecai’s donning of sackcloth in this chapter, which inhibits him from going beyond the king’s gate, there becomes a virtual barrier separating the two with marked discontinuance of direct communication between them. Further interpersonal exchange is henceforth conducted through court intermediaries who could access both individuals.

This is also the marked procedure in scripture for communication between separated but connected spheres of earth’s realm and heaven’s domain. Esther and Mordecai’s communication continues through an interagent until the concluding scenes of the book.
Then in chapter 8, when there is a rejoining of the two, there is also a commensurate side-by-side alliance between them. Albeit, after Haman’s demise and the king’s entrusting of Esther with Haman’s estate and sending forth of his edict there is a definite and marked foregrounding of Mordecai. With appointed stewardship from Esther, and bestowal of the king’s reclaimed signet ring, Mordecai leaves the king’s abode in splendor and celebration.

This fluctuating focus between the two in conjunction with their merging unification, yet with Mordecai’s distinctive personal promotion is suggestive of the separate but ultimately united roles demonstrated throughout Christ’s own Messiahship.

4:6—‘went forth to Mordecai unto the broad place of the city, which was before the king’s gate’—רְחֹב (rechob)—Both Strong’s and BDB list for this noun’s meanings: ‘a broad open place’, ‘plaza’ or ‘street’. This word intimates places or situations where precarious circumstances are restored or resolved through the realization of judgment, jurisdiction, or deliverance, which is further strengthened by its co-occurrence with “gate” here. The root for this noun is the verb רָחַב meaning ‘to grow wide or large’, which has connotations of God’s deliverance and salvation (i.e. 2 Sam. 22:20; Ps. 4:1; Gen. 26:22). However, it also evokes the wide jaws of Sheol’s domains (Isa. 5:14; 30:33). One instance exemplifying of this concept comes from the book of Revelation which states, “And their dead bodies are to lie in the broad street of the great city which spiritually is designated ‘Sodom’ and ‘Egypt’, where indeed their Lord was crucified” (Rev. 11:8, WNT). Christ’s crucifixion in completion of the atonement fully satisfied God’s law of justice to redeem all from the jaws of Hell.

4:7—‘the money that Haman promised to pay’—שָׁקַל (shaqal)—This verb meaning ‘to weigh’ according to Strong’s is also the root for the noun sheqel, the common unit of weight and also the temple contribution with which the public sacrifices were paid (Exod. 30:13). According to Deuteronomy 25:13, precious things were weighed on a two-scale balance against a bag of hard stones. Mankind and their salvation were the “precious things” of God (Ps. 72:14). Despite Christ being referred to as the “stone of stumbling
and offense” (1 Pet. 2:4-8), He was also the “precious stone” (1 Pet. 2:6), the“cornerstone” (Isa. 28:16), and stone of help (1 Sam. 7:12). As such in God’s sanctuaryHe was the stone of justice for man in the scales so man would not be found wanting(Acts 4:10-12; Lev. 19:36; John 16:33; Dan. 5:27).

The verb shaqal is also used in Genesis 23:16 and Jeremiah 55:2 describing howAbraham and Jeremiah, as non-property-owners, both make unusual purchases of fields in Machpelah and Ananoth respectively, and which both come to symbolicallyauthenticate God’s promises of redeeming and restoring His people.

Other occurrences of this word similarly allude to an accounting of something being weighed in the balance, such as: a ransom for the king’s son (2 Sam. 18:12), the price for seduced virgin in the law of social responsibility to make her a wife (Exod. 22:16), the price of wisdom and integrity (Job 28:15; 31:6), or the free will offerings given from the king, his counselors, princes, comprising all Israel’s offerings of silver and gold for God’s house (Ezra 8:25-26).

Each instance with its connection to shekels or association to silver as the source of payment implies the idea of redemption. Redemption had particular applicability in the ancient world with the practice of bondage or slavery, an apt symbol for the effects of death and sin.

4:7—‘Haman had promised to pay the king’s treasury’—גִּנְזֵי (genez)—Strong’s denotes this as ‘treasury’ or ‘chests’ while BDB adds ‘chests of variegated cloth’, and HALOT suggests ‘royal treasuries’, ‘woolen coverings’ or ‘blankets’.

Besides the two times this word is used in the Esther text it is also used in the lamentation of Tyre (Ezek. 27:24). This has been variously interpreted to mean ‘exquisite articles of finery or beauty’, ‘rich clothing’ or ‘embroidered fabrics or materials’, noted with implication of significant hierarchical status.
Ezekiel’s detailed description denotes prized finery or merchandise in Tyre indicated as sealed with a “signet” and shipped in chests of cedar, possibly to prevent decay or damage. According to the Targum, such finery may reference the famous splendid purple ceremonial robes of Babylon.

The high priestly vestments and temple items—such as the veil—were similarly described as “finely woven embroidery” since such accouterments were symbolic of heaven’s hierarchy in God’s kingdom of priests (2 Chr. 3.14). Josephus—a priest himself—depicted the veil as a “Babylonian tapestry” a curtain embroidered with a “panorama of the heavens” (Barker, 2003, p. 188).

Just as Haman schemes for political position and offers to negotiate a price to the king’s treasury for the Jews’ demise, Satan likewise subtly seeks to negotiate his own preeminent position by offering man’s redemption yet ultimate demise (Moses 4:1). Anciently redemption, with the ransoming of war captives from slavery being a common practice, implied “buying back”. However, it also implied atonement (1 Tim. 2:5-6). God’s treasury would be redeemed, not by bribe but rather by legal transaction effectuated by Christ, the Son of Man. He came to “give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45), or as Paul described, “God purchased his people with his own blood” (Acts. 20:28), which price He paid to God (Heb. 9:14; Rev. 5:9).

4:8—‘he gave him a copy of the writing of the decree’—This is a Persian loanword through Aramaic, which HALOT lists as ‘copy of a letter’. Besides the three times used in Esther, it appears one other time in the book of Ezra. There it refers to a copy of an official document in the form of a letter from King Artaxerxes given to Ezra the priest permitting the exiles to carry forth the temple’s silver and gold taken back from Babylon for the restoration of the temple (Ezra 7:11-16). Often the prophets in various contexts used these metals as figures of speech to symbolically connote the concepts of refining and redemption (1 Chr. 21:25; Isa. 48:10; Prov. 27:21).
4:8—‘to charge her to go into the king to make supplication’—חָנַן (chanan)—This is an Aramaic verb in late Hebrew and is given the following connotations from Strong’s: ‘to be gracious’, ‘show favor’ and ‘pity’ while HALOT includes a derived meaning for this verse of ‘to implore’, ‘favor’ and ‘compassion’. Such connotations imply an inclination of mercy that is indicative of the word’s consistent use referencing God’s bestowal of grace, or redemption from enemies, evils and sins, or in His extended favor to the poor and needy.

4:8—‘and to make request…for her people”—בָּקַשׁ (baqash)—HALOT interprets this word with varied meanings such as ‘discover’, ‘to call on’, ‘attempt to do something’ or ‘try to possess’, but specifically identifies it for this verse as ‘request’. Strong’s also suggests for this verb other meanings such as to ‘seek’, ‘desire’, ‘require’, ‘secure’. BDB adds the further variant connotations of ‘aim at’, ‘demand’ or when used with either rulers or God ‘seek the face’.

Despite this word being commonly translated as ‘request’ under BDB’s last suggestion, the actual phrase would literally translate as, “to seek or request from ‘before his face’ concerning her people.” The phrase “to seek his face” often communicates the Hebraic idea of having access to God, implying to be before Him, or in His presence, which in this typology could then find significant application in this verse.

4:11—‘who is not called…that he be put to death’—As reported by both Herodotus and Josephus, according to Persian law only a select few of the king’s court and subjects could approach his throne without prior summons to be called and announced. Otherwise they risked punishment by death unless the king stretched forth his scepter to receive them (Keil & Delitzsch, 1968).

Accessing God’s presence has likewise been noted to have such restrictive boundaries, as evidenced in His instructions to Moses at Sinai to strictly charge the Israelites to not ascend the mountain or even touch its outermost border lest “many of them perish” (Exod. 19:21). Moses, when imploring God to display His glory, was promptly told that
“no man can see Me and live” (Exod. 33:20), which fully explains the response of Isaiah and Jacob in their encounters with God (Isa. 6:5; Gen. 32:30).

4:11—‘shall come to the king in the inner court’—פְּנִימִי (peniymiy)—This word as listed with the meaning of ‘inner part’ or ‘innermost part of the house’ by HALOT is noted both by Strong’s and HALOT as being derived from פָּנִים (paniyim) meaning ‘before’, ‘face’, ‘presence’, ‘sight’, ‘countenance’. All 32 occurrences of this word—besides the two in Esther—are in direct reference to the inner holy chamber specified in the temples of Solomon and Ezekiel, the majority of which reference the latter.

4:11—‘except to whom the king shall hold out the scepter’—שַׁרְבִיט (sharbit)—This word is cognate with שבט, (shebeth) meaning ‘rod’, ‘staff’, ‘club’, ‘scepter’, and ‘tribe’ according to Strong’s. HALOT also makes note of ‘shoots’ and ‘branches’ from 37:17 of Joshua ben Sirach’s text, which brings to mind the vine’s branches of Ezekiel 19:11 which fit for a ruler’s scepter.

This word is utilized only in the Esther text with specific reference to the king’s scepter. However, the cognate, shebeth is first mentioned in Jacob’s blessing to Judah: “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come” (Gen. 49:10). This rod-like emblem of monarchs denotes authoritative protection and power that developed from the idea of kings being equated as shepherds over their people (Isa. 14:5; Zech. 11:7).

This prophecy of Jacob directly refers to the Messiah’s lineage and kingly authority. God extended His authority to Christ, His Son, to whom all things became subject for judgment until He would deliver the kingdom back to the Father (John 3:35; 5:22; Eph. 1:20-22). Thus the king’s extending of His scepter to Esther could mirror the Father’s benevolent and confirming extension of His absolute authority to Christ, who likewise found favor as the one whom the Father loves (Luke 2:52; John 3:35).
4:11—‘I have not been called to come into the king these thirty days’—שְׁלוֹשִׁים (shaloshim)—The number thirty, is not to be perceived numerically but rather with special understanding, which from its many scriptural attestations is reflective of redemption. Zechariah (11:12-14) prophetically projects Christ’s betrayal of thirty pieces of silver (also referenced in Matthew 26:15; 27:3; 9-10). Thirty shekels was the noted price of a female slave, with silver being symbolic of redemption (Exod. 21:32; Lev. 27:4).

A few other examples include: thirty was the age for Aaron and his sons (the tribe of Levi) to enter the tabernacle’s service of salvation (Num. 2:2,3); Christ began His ministry to bring salvation to mankind at thirty; thirty was Joseph’s age when he stood before Pharaoh to facilitate his family’s salvation (Matt. 1:21, Gen. 41:46). Certain temple furnishing measurements and specifications were also in increments of thirty (1 Kgs 6:2; 1 Kgs 7:23) including the tabernacle curtains, noted as thirty cubits in length and made of goat’s hair typifying of atoning sacrifice in Lev. 16:9. Finally, Ezekiel’s future temple for cumulative salvation is also recorded having thirty chambers (Ezek. 40:17).

4:13—‘think not in your soul that thou shalt escape in the king’s house, more than all the Jews’—דָּמָה (damah)—HALOT and Strong’s both suggest separate entries for this word. For the first entry HALOT lists, ‘to be like’, ‘resemble’ or ‘to compare or liken’. Strong’s lists a second entry of ‘to cease’, ‘cause to cease’, ‘cut off’ or ‘be destroyed’. HALOT also adds ‘to be silent, or still’, ‘to come to rest, come to an end’, or be ‘obliged to be silent’, but also suggests from this, a third entry of ‘destroy, or be destroyed’, such as with ‘cease to exist’.

Abarim also acknowledges two entries but lists just one verb דָּמָה (dama) which “essentially describes the untimely cessation of a natural evolution, (or growth) and that can happen because (1) whatever was growing gets killed, or (2) an observer turns the naturally changing thing into an artificial fixed representation of it” or as they suggest, a dead effigy.
The nominal form is used to describe God’s intent to make man in His image (Gen. 1:25; 5:1) and Seth being denoted in Adam’s image (Gen. 5:3). Finally, they relate it to Ezekiel’s famous inaugural vision where he sees God in the image of man (Ezek. 1:26).

The second entry Abarim recognizes for this verb דָּמָה (dama II) projects a cessation or halting of something. They suggest it means a premature stopping, such as with Jeremiah’s seeing the untimely ending of the daughter of Zion (Jer. 6:2; Hos. 4:5-6). They submit this verb is mostly used to describe the untimely ending of nations or people, which in their prime suffer termination as with Moab and Edom or with Isaiah’s own self-evaluation of his impure state before God (Isa. 15:1; Oba. 1:5; Isa. 6:5).

Derived from damah is the word דֻּמָה (doom-mah), which infers something silenced or quieted by destruction, as implied in Ezekiel’s lament of Tyre’s destruction (Ezek. 27:32). A related word, דְּמִי (demee), used in Psalms 83:1, solicits God to not keep silent, nor hold His peace against His enemies like the Amalekites (Ps. 83:1-9). Similarly, Isaiah attests that assuredly God will not rest, or be “kept silent,” but instead will establish Zion and Jerusalem as a “praise in the earth” restoring them with shining glory (Isa.62: 6-7).


The actual silence typified with physical termination thus either conveys the nuance of a time of waiting silently for salvation and hope of justification and glorification, or conversely waiting in unproductive silence of premature cessation when cut off from God’s hope of salvation. With God as the ultimate viable agent who generates continued growth and progress for man, any other likeness for man merely degenerates into destruction and silence for his soul.
Just as Queen Esther’s Jewishness before the law served to equally condemn her to death, the human side of Christ’s dual nature also dictated He too would suffer dissolution (Heb. 2:14; 1 Pet. 3:18; Phil. 2:8). However, He alone could restore and deliver all from such.

4:14—‘For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time’—חָרַשׁ (charash)—Strong’s, BDB and HALOT all indicate two separate senses of meanings for this word including; ‘to cut in’, ‘plough’, ‘engrave’, ‘devise’, and secondly; ‘silence’, ‘silent’ or ‘deaf’. The contexts for its first sense infer a work or plan to produce something substantial, fruitful or of value. Its corresponding noun denotes those who have some key knowledge or special skills like workmen, artisans and craftsmen to perform valuable labors (Exod. 28:11; Luke 11:52; Matt. 16:19), or are specifically anointed like those who build the House of the Lord (Exod. 31:1-6). It likewise can find application to idolaters and their image-making abilities.

Metaphorically, God is noted as engraving His word on men’s souls or plowing their hardened hearts to cultivate and sow seeds to make them fruitful (Heb. 10:15-16), or devising ways to bring back the banished (2 Sam. 14: 14). The most common translation of charash in the Bible comes from its second sense, ‘silence’, inferring the holding of one’s peace, or to be still, but with an implied sense of expectation, such as salvation.

During the Israelites’ flight from Egypt they were trapped between Pharaoh’s approaching army and the Red Sea. To allay the heightened fears of their anticipated destruction Moses tells them to stand firm and not fear saying, “The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent” (Exod. 14:14 ESV).

Jeremiah likewise counsels silence when awaiting Jerusalem’s destruction (Jer. 8:14). Yet he also affirms the hope of salvation claiming the “Lord is good unto them that…hope and quietly wait for [His] salvation” (Lam. 3:21-26). Christ exemplified such silent responses to secure salvation. Throughout His trials His silence was of equal significance to His utterances.
In ancient Israel, the inviolability of one’s word or testimony was established through oaths and vows (Num. 30:20). However, when concerning a vow silence can actually imply assent, and effectively link he who was silent to the vow (Num. 30:4-5). Christ’s silence at certain points actually implied His consent and accountability as the responsible party. Herod’s civil jurisdiction over Him was negligible, however before the two authoritative representatives of God and man’s law for which He was accountable, His response was crucial. His own testimony under the legal adjuration to the charge of blasphemy ensured Him the death penalty under God’s law (Lev. 5:1; Lev. 24:16). But it was His silent response to sedition that secured His condemnation and crucifixion in His civil trial, as He silently but willingly assumed judgment for the whole world.

Though these trials mocked justice they ultimately fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy, as He stood in silence as a “sheep before its shearsers not opening His mouth” to secure His condemnation rather than mitigate His grave circumstances (Isa. 53:7). To Pilate’s interrogation “Jesus gave him no answer” (Luke 23:9; John 18:31). Far from a victim, Christ knowingly assumed responsibility through His silence to carry out the plan of salvation, which required His death (John 3:14).

4:14—‘then will relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place’—רֶוַח (revach)—הַצָּלָה (hatstalah)—ﬠָמַד (amad)—The first word to examine in this phrase is רֶוַח (revach), which Strong’s cites as ‘respite’ or ‘relief’ for its meaning, while BDB and HALOT suggest ‘space’ or ‘interval’ as well as ‘width’ and ‘liberation’. As a masculine noun it occurs only one other time (Gen. 32:16), when Jacob returns to the land of his father to encounter Esau after his departure. With intent to avoid any possible threatening retribution from his brother’s hand, Jacob prepares an over-generous portion of his personal fortune for Esau, dividing the flocks to allow for sufficient space to allow for needful escape of any retribution for past actions.

As a feminine noun it occurs when Moses allows Pharaoh to determine when Moses should make intercession to remove the plague, in effect extending ‘honor’ to Pharaoh
over himself. However after perceiving such respite, Pharaoh again hardens his heart (Exod. 8:15).

Finally, Jeremiah utters it in Lamentations 3:56 saying, “thou hast heard my voice: hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry.” Here Jeremiah as a suffering soul laments his calamities under the weight of sin, which exemplifies national suffering. Jeremiah concludes there is hope for the ‘silent soul’ to bear the season of adversity and discipline, with anticipation that God will hearken to his ‘breathing’ from the pit, pleading for his soul.

The verb רָוַח (ravach), which these nouns derive from, is also sparsely used. First, in Samuel 16:23 after David’s anointing he is sent to Saul’s court to play music which brings refreshment to him, since Saul’s soul suffers from the malady of sin in his rebellion towards God’s governance. In Job 32, it references Elihu, who speaks for relief regarding Job’s plight while he confronts Job’s self-vindication of sin and reprimands his friends for their unjust condemnation then expounds on God’s greatness and only true justice.

Each of these passages infer a sense of space or escape allowed as a reprieve from the injurious consequence of ill deeds or sins, just as God’s plan of salvation allows for a rectification period to remedy the effects of the Fall. Each incident is also inclusive of peacemaking identities that typify Christ such as Moses, David, Elihu, Jeremiah, and Jacob in their connection between God and man as a deliverer, spokesman, or mediator.

The next word for examination is הַצָּלָה (hatstsalah), which is given the meaning of ‘deliverance’ by Strong’s and HALOT. Its scriptural usage signifies deliverance from enemies, troubles, death, or in later writings, sin and guilt.

Here Esther is assured that by remaining silent, deliverance will arise “from another place”. Deliverance has precedent in scripture of consistently conveying salvation, which innately comes from God according to covenantal faithfulness.
This understanding is actually reflected in Mordecai’s admonishment to Esther that her privileged position as queen requires rather than exempts her from such responsibility, despite the perils of her and her household perishing. It rightly reflects the Jewish perception regarding God’s abiding promise to his ‘seed’ that there would come deliverance from He whom the ‘scepter’ rightfully belongs (Gen. 49:10).

The word *hatsalah* derives from הָצַל (natsal) which means ‘to strip’, ‘plunder’, ‘deliver’, ‘to snatch’, ‘take away’, ‘to snatch out of danger’, ‘recover’, ‘preserve’, ‘deliver from danger’, and ‘out of the hands of’, or ‘escape’ which most often is illustrative of God’s responsive rescue of His people from Satan’s grasp and dominion. It is used by Moses to tell Jethro of the Lord’s deliverance of Israel from the hand of the Egyptians (Exod. 18:8-11), or in Psalm 124:7 to describe how the souls of God’s people “escape the snare of the trapper” through His providence.

Similar dangers from which deliverance is mentioned as necessary include the lion (Ps.7:2), Pharaoh (Exod. 18:4), and the king of Babylon (Jer. 42:11), all of which typological represent Satan, and from whom Christ saves His people (John 10:28).

Instead of בּוֹא (bo), which is the usual word translated as “come”, here in this verse the word יָשָׁד (amad) is used in the phrase, “and deliverance will come.” The word amad means ‘to stand’, ‘endure’, ‘remain’, ‘appoint’, or ‘confirm’, and frequently finds linkage with God’s purposes and salvation while inferring the support and establishment of His kingdom (2 Chr. 20:17; Exod. 14:13; Deut. 31:15; Rev. 3:12).

According to Abarim, a correlative verb in Greek finds part of a larger word cluster with the meaning to ‘stand’ or ‘set’, “reflecting the existence or achievement of a condition of solidity”. They suggest it is not expressive of “absolute presence, but more of a collective confirmed phenomenon” such as in Matthew 2:9. Abarim closely relates this action to another verb also meaning ‘to set’, ‘put’, ‘place’, or ‘establish’.
Overall *amad* seems to convey the idea of a sustaining authority or force, which acts to ratify redeeming deliverance. This could effectively express the extent and efficacy of Christ’s atoning power enabling Him to then stand in our place for sin, and provide man ultimately the escape or deliverance and reprieve from its consequences as these three words in unison convey.

4:14—‘*who knoweth whether thou art not come to royal estate for such a time as this*’—נָגַע (*naga*)—For this word Strong’s lists the translations ‘to touch’, ‘reach’, ‘strike’, as it is commonly used, with *HALOT* also including nuances of, ‘to touch violently’, ‘to be afflicted, be tormented’, ‘to hurl’, ‘to throw’, or ‘to attain’, or ‘arrive at’.

Its first attestation is God’s use of this verb to instruct Eve that she “must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” (Gen. 2:17 NIV), or else she would die. This implies that the word in question encompasses more than the mere usual material sense of physical contact here, since contact would ensure death. Several of its attestations convey the idea that the status of something was altered by being touched by that which is either sanctified and holy or being changed by contact with something desecrated and profane (Exod. 29:37; Ps. 144:5; Gen. 28:12; Exod. 12:22). Law prohibited the profane from touching what was holy upon penalty of death as recounted in scripture (Num. 4:13; 1Sam. 6:19; 2 Sam. 6:6-7; Exod. 19:12).

The corresponding noun provides further insight. Almost all of its occurrences are translated by the words “plague”, “sore”, “stroke”, “stripes”, “stricken”, or “wound”. Both words occur in Isaiah’s messianic prophecy (Isa. 53:4, 8).

Christ’s willing incarnation to fulfill His atoning sacrifice entailed the affliction of death from sin, as well as cessation of corporeal mortal existence, to secure the salvation of mankind—God’s royal household.
4:16—‘Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast for me’—כָּנַס (kanaç)—This word is just one of various Hebrew words which expresses the meaning of ‘to gather or collect’, as indicated by Strong’s and HALOT.

While קָבַץ (qabats) is the most prolifically used to translate ‘gather’, it is broadly utilized to mainly convey the collecting of things like; grain, metals for refining, or figuratively like for one’s heart. However, it can also suggest the gathering of people as in assembly for war or judgment, such as with God’s divine judgment. This word describes Esther in supplication for God’s favor and protection prior to her perilous task of interceding on behalf of her people to set aside their pending annihilation.

Besides appearing here, ‘kanaç’ occurs only ten other times. The contexts often involve tenuous settings signifying salvation either directly or indirectly, in the things being gathered, the places and purposes to which they are gathered, as well as the implied efforts of Deity in conjunction with those endeavors. These include: sojourners being gathered to establish the temple; firstfruits being gathered to sustain the Priesthood during the temple restorative efforts; the waters being gathered for God’s storehouse; outcasts being gathered to establish Jerusalem and Zion; man’s labors being gathered for salvation (represented by silver, gold, stones) and rewarded to Him who is good; stones being gathered for building purposes; Judah being gathered for refining purposes; and captives being gathered to be restored to their lands.

This word’s first attestation finds a parallel sense of context with its use here in Esther. In David’s preparatory efforts to secure the actualization of the temple he commanded sojourners in the land of Israel to gather together for the building efforts of hewing stone for the house of God (1 Chr. 22:2-5). Esther, likewise, in contemplating the prospects of her own likely death “commanded to gather all the Jews present in Shushan” to (gather) join her efforts to ensure hers and their salvation against what was decreed as law, in other words “written in stone.”
The way the word kanaç appears to be used in these passages the “gathering” conveys a collection or assemblage for salvation purposes like with God’s covenanted people. With the sword of justice according to decreed law hanging over her and her people, Esther seeks to gather them ultimately for purposes of salvation. Christ too gathers God’s people for His namesake and their salvation (Isa. 48:11; Matt. 19:29; 1 Sam. 12:22).

4:16—‘and fast ye for me’—צוּם, (zum)—According to Strong’s and HALOT this is the principal verb meaning ‘fasting’, or ‘abstaining from food’ either collectively or individually. Fasting was associated primarily with times of mourning the dead, prayer, worship, the exigencies of war, or expiating sin. Anguish, due to such turmoil of life’s normal activity can result in anxiety and sorrow, which could account for why its semantic field is often with concepts such as: mourning, ashes, sackcloth, weeping, affliction, or humbling.

Fasting is depicted in the Old Testament as a hopeful response in the midst of exigency and disruption for expectant aid and restoral, which in its ultimate expression finds messianic fulfillment.

The first evidence of fasting (Exod. 34:38) echoes Esther’s situation: Moses, serving as mediator, goes to intercede for his people by petitioning God to avert His pending wrath towards rebellious Israel and re-establish His promises.

Theologically, fasting is often intertwined with seeking God’s redemptive efforts for man, and as such is commonly mentioned in conjunction with prayer, especially intercessory prayers like that of Daniel or Nehemiah (Dan. 6:18; 9:15-19; Neh. 1:8-10).

Though not specified as a “fast”, The Day of Atonement was the only actual “fast” recognized by law as a required perpetual statute (Lev. 16:27-31). Beyond the temple ceremonies specific to that day (Lev.16), scripture stipulates that the people “afflict their soul,” which involved fasting (Lev. 23:27-32 and Num. 29:7-11). Fasting in its
association with the Day of Atonement is therefore closely aligned with the removal of sin, which this ritual and Christ’s atoning sacrifice typify.

4:16—‘do not drink three days, night, or day’—The number three and its multiples as previously noted is significant in the Bible, attested by its replete usage in enumerating a variety of things, people, or events. Examples include: the three sons of Noah and three decks of the ark, the three objects in the ark of the covenant, Daniel’s three friends, Abraham’s three visitors, Satan’s three-fold temptation of Christ, etc. Three also marks the significance of certain things like timings, measurements or procedures: Jonah’s three days in the whale; three specified yearly pilgrimage festivals; literary patterns such as listing the three roles of prophets, priests and kings; practices and procedures such as Hezekiah’s going to the temple on the third day for healing; or Christ praying three times in the Garden. Use of the number three seems to indicate a fulfillment with the stamp of Divine approval.

Though this number is often associated with completeness, it also seems to imply the sense of expectation, especially in eschatological scripture. Hosea (6:1-3) prophesies of the Messiah’s resurrection after three days. In Exodus 19:10-12, God appears to the Israelites on the third day, after their purification. Its variant attestations are commonly suggestive of some preparatory period with distinctive purpose for favorable realization of some culminating completion.

Christ’s own sign of His Messiahship (Matt. 12:38) is probably one of the most profound patterns of the “third day” motif, foreshadowed formerly by Abraham’s intended sacrifice of his only son, Isaac on the third day. Christ’s resurrection subsequent to His own sacrifice marked the triumph over three days in the tomb (Luke 24:5-7).

Esther’s three-day preparatory fast in conjunction with her precarious ascension to the king’s throne could possibly allude to the culmination of Christ’s own expiation and restorative efforts for sin with all its effects, climaxing with His ultimate ascension to His Father’s throne. This ascension was essential to accomplish redemption as well as mark
the transition from His earthly ministry to His heavenly one where He could then go boldly before God as men’s advocate (Heb. 4:14-16).
ESTHER 5

The Book of Esther, noted for its doubles and chiastic structure, finds focal points here and the following chapter, with the descriptive unfolding of a people’s deliverance on the account of both Esther’s and Mordecai’s key efforts. This deliverance begins first with Esther’s valorous ascent to the king’s throne to petition him for her life and the lives of her people after the three day fast. This could correlate with the culminating atoning efforts of the Savior after His three days in the tomb when He ascends to the Father’s throne as mankind’s Advocate.

5:1—‘on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel and stood in the inner court of the king’s house’—Again the number three finds prominence in this chapter as it repeatedly bears significant symbolic import throughout scripture. It finds specific importance with Christ’s atoning efforts to reconcile God and mankind with particular distinction throughout His supreme atoning sacrifice as indicated from scriptures below:

- Christ’s three disciples accompany Him to wait as he prays in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:36-37).
- Christ instructed His apostles to pray three times in the Garden, while He also prays thrice (Matt. 26:40-46; Mark 14:38).
- Christ’s endures three religious trials (Matt. 26:57-75; 27:1), and three civil trials (Matt. 27:2-26; Luke 23:7-12)—a doubling of three—to obtain the death penalty pertaining to both God’s and man's law.
- Three hours lapse between the verdicts from the Sanhedrin and that of Pilate to His crucifixion on the cross (John 18:28; 19:14).
- His crucifixion began in the third hour and lasted until the ninth hour at three in the afternoon with three hours of darkness beginning at noon (Mark 15:24-25; 33-38). His atoning sacrifice occurs over three-hour intervals starting from the supper of unleavened bread (Mark 14:12, 17) until His actual burial (Mark 25:41).
The number three similarly holds significance in the Jews’ final and ultimate deliverance from Haman’s edict of destruction, marking the day when Esther’s plan of salvation was enacted. On this third last day of the Jew’s fast Esther puts on her royal robes to enter and stand unsummoned before the king’s throne, requesting his and Haman’s presence at a specific banquet she had prepared that day (vs. 5). This then leads to the second banquet of wine, which ultimately secured her Haman’s house and his final downfall.

Three also figures heavily with the Messiah’s return and ultimate overthrow of the Antichrist (Dan. 3: 1-30; 7:25; 9:27; 12:7; Rev. 11:2-3; 12: 6; 13:5; 14). It again appears as a compound number in conjunction with ten—the number of completeness—to mark Mordecai’s rise to prominence with Haman’s defeat in the ending chapters of Esther (Esth. 8:12; 9:1,17-18).

Another significant attestation of three is with the two High Holy days of Israel. Though there are ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, these two days only comprise three days—culminating with the high priest’s entrance into the inner sanctum of the temple to atone for all Israel, which represents Christ’s culminating atoning efforts for His people.

5:1—‘her royal robes/apparel’—לָבַשׁ (labash)—מַלְכוּת (malkuth)—Historians have noted the splendor of the royal Persian robes, describing such outer garments dyed with the Phoenician purple and embroidered with patterns of gold and embellished with gems.

Two Hebrew words used here to describe Esther’s appearance before the king are the verb ‘לָבַשׁ (labash) meaning ‘to clothe’, ‘array’, ‘put on’, or ‘wear’, and the feminine noun ‘מַלְכוּת (malkuth) translated mostly as ‘kingdom’, ‘reign’, ‘royal power’, or ‘royalty’. The phrase thus could more literally translate as, “on the third day, Esther put on royalty, or royal power and stood in the inner court of the king’s house.”

Resplendent clothing recurs as a theme, worn for example by victors surrounding the throne of God (Rev. 7), or by Christ during His transfiguration (Mark 9:2-3).
The robes of royalty or the high priest, often augmented with embellishment and adorned with jewels, are equated to be a “shadow of heavenly things” symbolic of “glory and beauty” (Heb. 8:5; Exod. 28:2, 40; Ezek. 28:12-14). For the robes of the priesthood were to distinguish them as royal priests of the King on high whom He had chosen and promised kingship as indicated in 2 Samuel 7:12-17 and Isaiah 49:3-7. Esther stood in all her regal splendor, much like the high priest did, to plead for the people before God, all of which is in similitude to the greater High Priest, Jesus Christ.

5:1—‘stood in the inner court of the king’s house over against the king’s house’—נֹ֫כַח (nokach)—Strong’s lists this word’s meaning as ‘in front of’, or ‘opposite to’. The use of this word in its 23 occurrences reflects a sense of stance with relation to location, as in ‘on behalf of’, or as in ‘standing contrary to’. It refers to things that face each other, as in ‘opposite to’ or ‘in front of’, and its usage seems to be somewhat suggestive of God’s stance in the critical dilemmas of His people.

The context for several instances of the word indicates an action for safeguarding or salvation including various elements emblematic of Christ and His redemption.

- Isaac prayed in behalf (before) his wife to Lord to secure promised posterity (Gen. 25:2)
- Jacob provided for his family during his unfavorable circumstances by placing the rod “before” the sheep (Exod. 26:35)
- The lampstand (a foreshadowing of the redeeming Messiah) is placed opposite (before) of the table of bread (Exod. 26:35).
- Eleazar sprinkles the blood “before” the tabernacle tent (Num. 19:4).

The Pulpit Commentary reports that in its adverbial use (indicating “directly ahead” or “before”) in both Proverbs 4:25 and 5:21 the LXX, Syriac and Targum all utilize nokakh meaning “right things”, which is also the suggested meaning for its cognate adjective nakoakh (Pro. 8:9; 24:2; Isa. 26:10; 30:10; 59:14). They submit that it gives the sense of one’s “eye being single” to God’s intent and glory (Spence-Jones, Excell, & Deems,
In other words, it connotes more than just a physical posture, also intimating a stance of uprightness before God.

A synonymous preposition in Genesis 2:18 translates as “help meet”: referencing Eve as a helper opposite to Adam, as his counterpart, suggestive of one able to render aid. It most often implies God in His saving counterpart role to mankind (Exod. 18:4; Deut. 33:29; Ps. 68:34; 70:5; 93:1; Hos. 13:9). Paul testified how Christ entered heaven as the High Priest to stand in front of God’s throne as mediator (or helpmeet) for mankind (Heb. 7:25; 9:24-27; 1 Tim. 2:5). He sought intercession for His people in defending them against the great accuser (Rev. 12:10) just as Esther here stands before the king as an advocate in behalf of the Jews.

5:1—‘Esther…stood in the inner court…over against the entrance’—As mentioned earlier the word peniymiy translated “inner court” implied the “innermost part of the house”, with most of its instances referencing the Ezekiel temple.

5:1—‘opening, entrance, doorway’—פֶּתַח (pethach)—Though this word is used to depict the opening of doors, houses, and tents, it is also used in descriptions involving the mouth, ear, or ground (Micah 7:5; Ps. 119:130). Derived from פָּתַח (pâthach), a verb meaning ‘to open or loose’, it conveys more of an opening or entrance in the sense of space rather than an actual door.

Finding connection with concepts of a tent, house, temple, or gates, it evokes the concept of salvation, evidenced in the following instances: God’s warning to Cain that “sin lies at the door”; the appearance of the Lord to Abraham at the entrance of his tent; and the “doorway” of Noah’s ark which is the projected vehicle of salvation to all those creatures who enter. Christ identifies Himself as a doorway of salvation for the sheep (John 10:7,9). In Exodus this word indicates where the blood for the Passover is to be marked as well as designating the tabernacle entrance or heaven’s doors (Ps. 24), thus perceptively tying this word to the idea of salvation.
5:2—‘held out the golden scepter in his hand, and she touched the top’—None besides the high ranking Seven Princes who counseled with the king could approach him without an usher, seeing as it was a capital offense to enter his presence without a summons. The offender would be put to death, unless the king extended the golden scepter as a sign of clemency (Clare, 1898).

Note that Esther is described as “standing”, not prostrating. Christ likewise stood with the Father as noted by Stephen (Acts 7: 55), just as He will cause others to also so “stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy” (Jude 1:24; Rom. 5:1-2; Rev. 6:17).

The word “scepter”, often translated as “rod” or “staff” indicates authority. In scripture it symbolized God’s right to rule (Ps. 45:6) and often appears in the messianic prophecies describing His rule (Rev. 12:5;19:15) or His removal of such authority (Isa. 14:5-6).

5:3—‘up to half the kingdom…it shall be given to thee’—Some suggest that rather than being understood literally, this was instead a court idiom. As such it would refer to the benevolent inclinations of some grandiose ancient Near Eastern monarchs in expressing their gratitude for some service rendered, such as Herod’s promise of half his kingdom to Salome for fulfilling his request (Mark 6:23).

Esther received favor in the king’s eyes, wherein he so graciously offered her half the kingdom (vs. 2-3). Christ as the Firstborn finds favor in God’s eyes for His diligence in delivering God’s faithful lieges from their imminent destruction. Accordingly He was extended God’s entire kingdom (John 3:35; Heb. 1:2; Rev. 11:15) in turn offering it as an inheritance to those who would also “overcome” with Him (Rev. 21:1; Rom. 8:17; Ezek. 46:16). The fixed ransom price for redemption and placement in God’s kingdom by “overcoming” was representatively the “half shekel” (Exod. 30:11-16).

Together in their “overcoming”, Esther and Mordecai achieved culminating status shared with the king. For God, there was one price prescribed—and one price paid—whoever met this standard likewise merited co-inheritance with Him in His kingdom.
5:4—‘If it seem good unto the king’—Nehemiah, the king’s cup-bearer, uttered this exact phrase seeking his own commission from the king to oversee the efforts for redeeming the holy sanctuary. Like Esther, Nehemiah also grieved over devastation and destruction of his people, and sought to assume responsibility to oversee their restoration. Nehemiah, however, merely typifies the greater Cup-Bearer, Christ, and His restorative efforts.

5:5—‘cause Haman to make haste’—מָהַר (mihar)—Strong’s concordance reports the meaning for this word as ‘to haste, or hasten’, or according to HALOT ‘to fetch quickly’.

The verb mihar most often translates as “haste” with synonyms conveying ‘swift’, ‘quickly’, ‘hastily’, ‘hasty’, and ‘straightway’ or ‘speedily’. The consistent overall context for its verses expresses an urgency specific to the hastening of God’s plans of salvation, or conversely the haste of shrewd schemes counteracting His divine designs resulting with their imminent consequential demise (Gen. 18:6; 19:22; 24:46; 45:13; Isa 5:19; Ps. 16:4; Job 5:13; Mal. 3:5). Esther’s effective readiness in countering the edict by securing the Jews’ deliverance, as well as the rapidity of Haman’s own downfall, shadows what will similarly happen with Satan’s downfall when the Messiah arises to redeem His people. Haman gloats over his riches and horde (vs. 11) even though the obliteration of the Beast and Babylon with its accumulated wealth will swiftly be made desolate (Rev. 18:17; 22: 12).

5:4—‘come this day unto the banquet, which I have prepared’—מִשְׁתֶּה (mishteh)—Both Strong’s and BDB concur for this word’s main meaning being a ‘feast’ or ‘drink’ but with frequent translation also as ‘banquet’. From Isaiah’s eschatological prophecy of Isaiah 25:6-9 (NIV), the Jews anticipated a “banquet of aged wine” in a “Great Feast” of the Last Day on the mountain of the LORD. This would find fulfillment as the coronation festival or marriage of the Bridegroom Feast of the Lamb (Rev. 19:6-9).
Echoes of this Feast reverberate throughout both the Old and New Testament (Luke 14:15; Luke 22:29-30). The Midrash of Esther discusses the Feast of God that He will prepare for the righteous. The book of Revelation clearly notes its fulfillment with the marriage supper, the Bride of the Lamb, and the new heavens and new earth (Rev. 19, 21), while Christ Himself often alluded to this Great Feast in the kingdom of God, both in parables (Luke 14:18-24; Matt. 22:2-14) and through His direct comments (Luke 13:29-30). However, the fulfillment of this Great Banquet at His return is the culmination of what began with the Lord’s Supper in initiating His Messiahship.

Passover, commanded by God to be celebrated yearly in commemoration of God’s redemption, is the one that heads the list of such feasts. The saving blood over the Israelites’ doorposts at Passover before leaving Egypt prefigured Christ’s atoning blood sacrifice first initiated in Gethsemane and climaxing on Calvary. The “cup” motif, which began with the Passover story, is intertwined throughout the scriptures and comes to ultimately exemplify both God’s redemption and His wrath (Ps. 116:13; Luke 22:17-20) in the entire covenantal banquet setting.

5:8—‘I will do tomorrow as the king hath said’—מָחָר (machar)—For this word both Strong’s and HALOT report meanings of ‘tomorrow’, ‘next day’, ‘in the future’, or ‘in future time’. Its root is presumably derived from אָחַר (achar), and usually means ‘tarry’ or ‘defer’. Of its 52 attestations, several are particularly relevant such as the selected examples below:

- Fulfillment of promised deliverance from Babylonian captivity, or entreaty to not defer such desired redemption (Isa. 46).
- The season and time for God’s vengeance (Hab. 2).
- The typological picture of the bride price and the marriage of the Bridegroom (Gen. 24).
- God as Israel’s help is solicited to not delay His remembrance and deliverance (Ps. 70,40; Dan. 9).
• Drinking strong wine, to the dregs—symbolic of God's judgment and wrath, with the winepress also being emblematic of a tool of judgment in last days (Rev. 16:19; 17:2-6; 18:3; Prov. 23; Isa. 5).

• The commanded destruction of Amalekites for their perfidious rear attack upon Israel. Isaiah 52:12 identified God as Israel’s rearward or rearguard who would gather and defend the scattered end of an army (Deut. 7).

• The promises fulfilled by Solomon culminating with the Messiah (Ps. 127).

• Broken vows incurring judgment (Deut. 23; Eccl. 5).

• The yearly feasts as occasions for payment of specified vows at the temple (Lev. 27:17-23) during the pilgrimage Festivals (1 Sam. 1:21) and during Rosh Hashanah at the opening of the High Holy days for Yom Kippur.

Rosh Hashanah, with its two days of celebration as the head of the Jewish year, traditionally is emphasized as the time of God’s righteous judgment and reinvestment in His creation with re-enthronement over His kingdom (Rom. 2:5; 1 Thess. 4:16). As the biblical New Year, it also marked the anniversary of the completion of creation and as such is known as the day of God’s remembrance.

The beginning of the new month, signified by the moon (Rosh Chodesh) as announced by ram’s horn (Ps. 81:3; Lev. 23:24), is pivotal in the Jewish calendar for marking these festivals. If the new month began on a Sabbath it was called Shabbat Rosh Chodesh and involved a special reading from Isaiah 66 prophesying a special pilgrimage of a future Rosh Chodesh when with the coming of the Messiah all the nations will come to Jerusalem to worship.

If the Sabbath occurred the day before Rosh Chodesh then that Sabbath was referred to as Machar Chodesh, meaning “tomorrow is the new month”. This terminology comes from 1 Samuel 20:18-42 which foreshadows the precarious transition of power from Saul, the fallen king, to David, Israel’s newly anointed king, and the safeguarding of His and Jonathan’s descendants before David’s eventual imminent coronation and public presentation.
These timings and their relevant readings find equal applicability with the sense of presage projected in the events unfolding on Esther’s “morrow” focused again in a later chapter concerning Haman’s demise and Mordecai’s ascendency. Ultimately it forecasts a new beginning with Satan’s downfall and Christ’s messianic coronation.

5:9—‘day joyful and glad of heart’—This phrase shows up in Kings during Sukkot in the Feast of Dedication—a time for dedicatory prayer, fasting, feasting, and solemn assembly—followed by joyful gratitude for God’s goodness shown to David, a type for Christ, and His people Israel (1 Kings 8:66). The temple, the center for such celebration, was a symbol of messianic hope for the Jews in ancient times. (Zech. 14; 1 Kgs 8; Ezek.1: 38). Any joyful gladness of that day, upon witnessing Mordecai at the gate, turned quickly to wrath for Haman.

5:10—‘Haman went home…and fetched his friends and Zeresh his wife’—‘Zeresh’, being a Persian name, has no direct meaning in Hebrew but may be related to the Persian word zaris, meaning ‘gold’, or ‘golden’. Abarim suggests that it means ‘Star of Adoration’, while noting other scholars who speculate how it could also be tied to Kirisha, the goddess of Liyan, holding the meaning of ‘Great Goddess’ of Elam.

As such, these could find tie with Lucifer in his description as the “star that fell from heaven”, the “great mourning star” whose covering was of precious stone and gold ( Isa.14:12; Rev. 9:1; Ezek. 28:13), or as his consort, the great whore, or harlot of Babylon.

In Midrash⁷, Zeresh’s wickedness is no less than that of Haman’s. As one of his confidants, she counseled him that if Mordecai was from the tribe of Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim or Manasseh, he will not triumph over Haman, because these tribes are prophetically projected to gain victory over their adversaries (Gen. 49:8; Ps. 80:3).

⁷ Midrash le-Esther, Ozar ha-Midrashim [ed. Eisenstein], p. 51, Esther Rabbah 9:2; Midrash Abba Gurion [d. Buber], chapter 5
However, Haman inevitably trusts his wife’s advice to execute Mordecai on the gallows, since she noted no Jew had ever been saved from the condemnation of hanging.

Zeresh’s avarice and malevolence mirrors that of another cunning consort—Jezebel—whose sole focus on her husband’s coveted advancements compelled her own evil counsel, likewise ending in the calamitous demise for both her and her husband. Both of these women were a nemesis to Jehovah and His people, with their depravity, intrigue, and murder. Both women connect to another woman, the Great Harlot of the Tribulation in Revelation 17, who likewise is denounced being responsible for inducing many to commit such immorality and becoming drunk with the blood of God’s people.

The parallels between the stories of Zeresh and Jezebel are interesting. First, Naboth frustrates Ahab’s ambitious desires by refusing to surrender his vineyard, incensing the queen. Jezebel thus arranges a legal murder on fabricated charges with the support of the sons of Belial who covertly write letters sealed on the king’s behalf to eliminate Naboth. Mordecai’s refusal to surrender his ground and succumb to Haman’s demands of obeisance, likewise evokes Haman’s anger and desire to eliminate Mordecai’s presence at the king’s gate. Just as Jezebel uses Ahab’s signet to orchestrate the intended murder of Naboth, so Haman discreetly convinces the king to allow him to issue a decree sealed under the king’s royal signet to eliminate Mordecai’s presence at the gate and secure the Jews’ extermination. Next, Haman with the encouraging support of his nefarious wife and wicked progeny devises the evil scheme to secretly contrive a gallows for Mordecai’s demise.

Though several aspects of the stories are similarly striking, the underlying linkage with Christ is significant since the story of Naboth has long been considered a foreshadowing of Christ in His mortal role.

5:11—‘Haman recounts to them the glory of his riches, and multitude of his children’—Similar to Haman, Satan too is the archetype of such self-adulation as projected in Isaiah 14:13, where he also presupposes to usurp God’s honor, power, and
hosts (Isa. 14:13; 2 Thess. 2:3-4; Rev. 12:9; D&C 29:36). He again uses such tactic in his presumptuous presentation and temptation of Christ in offering him all the glory and kingdoms of the world (Matt. 4:8).

5:14—‘let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high’—\( \text{ץ} \) (ets)—According to both Strong’s and BDB this word denotes ‘tree’, ‘trees’, or ‘wood’, as in “timber”. The word carries several wood-related meanings like those above, as well as ‘cross’. Along with its Greek equivalent it is utilized in describing Christ’s death on the cross, as well as in direct inference of Him as the “tree of life” in Revelation 2:7 (also see Acts 5:30; 13:29-30; Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 2:24). From the beginning, Satan sought to destroy Christ by diverting His determined course in order to prevent his redemption of man from captivity and death. However, when Christ successfully stayed the course, Satan employed his intense hatred and full demonic power to then inflict the greatest collateral damage—Christ’s ultimate death on the “tree”, which on the contrary served to secure Satan’s own immutable ignominious demise.

5:14—‘let the gallows be made of fifty cubits high…that Mordecai be hanged’—
The number 50 bears a sense of fullness or completeness, or end of a cycle or measure in scripture (Gen. 6:15; Deut. 22:29; Num. 4:23-47; 8:25; 2 Sam. 15:1; 24:24; 1 Kgs. 1:5; 7:6; 2 Kgs. 2; 17; Ezek. 40:21; 45:2; Acts 2:1). It was an essential measurement number for the tabernacle, the House of the Forest of Lebanon, as well as the temples of Solomon and Ezekiel (Gen. 6:13-15; Num. 4:1-3; Exod. 26:1-11; 38:9-13; 1 Kgs. 7:2; Ezek. 41:13).

It also marked the priest’s age for discharge of duties (Num. 4:23), and the customary bride price (Deut. 22:29; Exod. 22:16). Serving symbolically as a number for completion, 50 was the full realization of 49 (itself being the perfected product of seven times seven).

The Jubilee year was to proclaim liberty throughout all the land on the tenth day of the seventh month (Day of Atonement), after the lapse of seven Sabbaths of years (49 years). In a theocratic kingdom it signaled full restitution of all property to its original owner and
liberty for those compelled into slavery (Lev. 25). It therefore was also closely connected
to the divine plan of salvation of mankind, and the realization of restoring all of creation
which over time had been corrupted by sin (Rom. 8:19). Hence, it found easy projection
for messianic fulfillment.

In this verse, the interrelationship of 50 as a descriptor for the height of the gallows
(a symbol of annihilation) was intended for the ignominious end of Mordecai and His
people. Here though, it instead intimates the elimination of oppression and bondage,
with the establishment of true liberty as such abrogation is ultimately realized upon
the perpetrator of such acts, realized in Haman’s own counter-demise which
ultimately mirrors Satan’s dissolution.
ESTHER 6

The Jews’ deliverance commences first with Mordecai, the “seed” of the Jews, being paraded through the streets of Shushan on the king’s horse while wearing royal regalia of crown and robe. This serves to hasten Haman’s fall. Satan’s defeat likewise is precipitated when “the seed of the woman” comes crowned seated upon a white horse in judgment, with His robe dipped in blood.

6:1—‘on that night the king could not sleep’—The expression “on that night” possibly parallels the prophetic phrase “in that day,” which is understood as noting some catastrophic occasion. It clearly projects a time of crisis prior to deliverance as used in its multiple passages (Exod. 12:12; 1 Kgs. 19:35; Dan. 5:30; Song. 3:1). “The Day of the Lord” often references the messianic timing or staging of events designated at the end of man’s history (Isa. 7:18-25, 13:6, 9; Joel 1:15, 3:14; Zech. 14:1; Mal. 4:5; Rev. 6:17, 16:14). Luke, in speaking of the coming of God’s kingdom in chapter 17:34, alludes to the coming of the Day of Judgment and separation, which is ultimately realized with the event of the Messiah.

The night when Haman’s Machiavellian designs to hang Mordecai escalated was the night the king could not sleep. Psalms 121 talks about God’s constant wakefulness saying, “Behold He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep (vv. 3-5 (ESV). The LORD is your keeper.” The word translated “keep”—shamer—means ‘to guard’ or ‘watch over’ like the faithful watchmen who had a set vigil in protecting Jerusalem. While God is portrayed as Israel’s ever-vigilant watchman, false Gods were ever noted to slumber (1 Kings 18:27). Sleep conveys the idea of man’s spiritual negligence, apathy and lack of preparedness (Prov. 6:4-5; Rom. 13:11; Mark 13:35-36), as well as depict the final punishment of those whose evil designs oppose God’s like in Jehovah’s pronouncement of a “perpetual sleep, [to] not wake [from]” upon Babylon (Jer. 51:37-39). Night, also demarks God’s judgment at end times (1 Thess. 5:2).
6:1—‘could not sleep’—ןָדַד (nadad)—All thirty instances of this word in both its verbal and nominal forms reflect reversals of calamitous circumstances or a turnabout for Israel’s enemies in facing the impending doom of Jehovah’s judgment and deliverance. All of these are also thematically reflective of messianic redemptive works.

In a similar scenario, sleep fled from King Darius as he agonized over the deliverance of Daniel from the lion’s den (Dan. 6:18-19). Daniel, who reflects typological association with Christ, finds another link with Him involving the devouring lions which projects the prophecy of the atoning sacrifice of Christ—the Paschal Lamb (Ps. 22:13). This most certainly caused the Father deep anxiety over the straits of His own Son’s abandonment.

In one nominal instance of the word, sleep flees from Jacob in his confrontation and response to his adversary Laban. Israel, Jacob’s alternate name who is typologically tied to Christ, reports to Laban of his diligent vigil over the flock, “Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes” (Gen. 31:40). Jacob labored diligently to secure both flocks and family, under the treacherous jealousy of Laban, much like Christ’s efforts under Satan’s domain.

6:1—‘book of records (remembrance)’—זִכָּרוֹן (zikkaron)—This word means ‘remembrance’, ‘memorial’ or ‘records’, according to Strong’s, while HALOT adds ‘protocol’, which gives the nuance of a diplomatic document, or terms of some treaty agreement between parties. Such a ‘remembrance’ or a true ‘memorial’ is indicative of Jehovah’s testimony that He would redeem and justify. According to Psalm 112:6 it was only the righteous who had God’s everlasting ‘remembrance’, reflective of His promised eternal covenants. Several places in scripture refer to those engraved in God’s “book” (e.g., Exod. 32:32; Dan. 7:10, 12:1; Ps. 56:8; 69:28; Rev. 13:8; 20:15). Most of these metaphorically reference the last days when the Book of Life is opened for the weighing of man’s deeds in God’s balance. In this accounting, the works of men who have honored Him will be justified and engraved with His name and promise of preservation, or they will be condemned and blotted out.
6:2—‘It was found written that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh’—(nagad)

Various forms of this word bear the sense of to ‘tell’, ‘told’, ‘declare’, ‘report’, ‘confess’, or ‘to proclaim’, especially of wisdom, power or loving kindness, or ‘expound’ of something concealed or mysterious, according to Strong’s. HALOT also suggests ‘propose’, ‘announce’, ‘inform’, with the nuances of ‘to present something prominently or meaningfully before someone’, or ‘confront someone with something’ or ‘to provide an explanation’, or ‘give evidence about something’. BDB also suggests the meaning of ‘to be conspicuous’.

Wechsler points out how the preceding word asher could be acting more as the subject than as a relative pronoun. This would convey the idea that “what Mordecai had communicated was found written”, rather than the idea that “what they found written was that Mordecai had relayed the information” (Wechsler, 2015). This would focus more on the idea of when or because something took place.

6:2—‘told… two of the king’s chamberlains’—From the scriptural record, it is apparent that God does not rule over His created universe as a tyrant, but rather presides through delegatory acts of governance, from its inception to its culmination. In the opening stages of actuating His plan on earth, God gave Adam and Eve jurisdiction over managing the Garden as well as dominion over earth and its creations (Gen. 1: 26-28; 2:15). Then as earth’s population increased, He authorized the appointment of other such rulers and judges (Deut. 16:18). However—according to scripture—it appears Adam was given the foremost position in accordance to the authority he bore in his preliminary post as one of God’s archangels (Jude 1:9; Rev. 12:7-9; Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1).

Such corroboration seems to lend credence to the idea of Adam’s high place of standing. It also suggests correlative high position for Eve as his partner to afford them the proximity of walking and talking with God in the Garden (Gen. 2-3). It is apparent these two glorious forebearers were attendants to God’s presence and throne. However, their choice to transgress God’s laws, by activating their gift of agency and accountability, effectively expelled them from the Garden—essentially initiating God’s needful plan of
redemption. This again could feasibly find parallel with the banishing of Bigthana and Teresh.

6:2—‘that kept the door’—Just as the throne room was guarded, so scripture reveals that angels typically are the guardians of God and His gates (Rev. 21:12, Matt. 18:10 Gen. 28:16-17, Exod. 25:22, Ps. 18:10, Ezek. 10:1-22) as well as guards to the heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:14). Adam and Eve were to guard or “keep” the Garden, essentially being the open door to God’s presence and gateway to the tree of life (Gen. 2:15).

6:3—‘what honor and dignity hath been done to Mordecai’—The theme of honor comes to the forefront here, pertaining to who should be honored. The king had advanced, “promoted”, Haman in Esther 3:1, but he had not “honored” him.

The first word in this phrase, יְקָר (yeqar), is seldom translated as “honor”, though one of its two nominal forms is thus defined, along with the definitions of ‘preciousness’ and ‘price’. Outside of Esther it is translated overall as “preciousness” in the majority of its contexts, and once as both “costly” and again as “pomp”. Its alternate form occurs specifically in the Book of Daniel as יְקָר (yeqar) where besides one exception as “honor” it is consistently translated as “glory”.

For the verbal form of יְקָר (yaqar) Strong’s lists ‘to be precious, prized or appraised’, while mostly being translated as “precious” with just two exceptions as “rare”, and “prized”, (or “valued”). The adjectival form יָקָר (yaqar) translates as “precious”, “are”, “splendid”, “weighty”, but more routinely as “precious”, with one exception as “splendor” and as “costly” in a couple of verses.

Peter refers to the divine power given unto men as “exceeding great and precious promises” (2 Pet. 1:3-4). He also contrasts perishable earthly riches with “the precious blood of Christ” (1 Pet.1:18-20). Throughout the Old Testament the interrelationship of blood with life itself became preeminently instructive as a preparatory illustration for Christ’s atoning work and His redemptive messianic role.
The second word of the phrase, “dignity” גְּדוּלָּה (ghed-oo-law), signifies greatness. In all 12 of its occurrences it conveys the idea of God’s greatness with reference to His great deeds and covenantal promises. The scriptures clearly define the Son as He whom God is desirous for all to honor (John 5:23; 12:26; 1 Sam. 2:30).

6:4—‘who is in the courtyard’—The word chatzar translated here as “courtyard”, as discussed earlier can refer to the court of the king’s palace, or in correlation with God’s realm, either His heavenly or earthly temple courts (2 Chr. 4:9). The courtyards of the temple were accessible to the public including the poor or even ritually unclean (Ezek. 44:9-10). Within the inner courtyard—symbolically representative of the fullness of Yahweh’s glory (Ezek. 10:3-5; 43:5-7)—such were prohibited.

Scriptures like Psalm 82 and Job 1 attest to God’s heavenly court and analogous proceedings. As his name directly denotes, Satan is the great accuser, while Christ is the great advocate and defender in heaven’s courtroom for the battle of souls. Satan makes his accusations both day and night before God (Rev. 12:10), while Christ as the great High Priest ascends to God’s throne (Heb. 4:14), in order to intercede for mankind (Rom. 8:34).

Satan’s oppressive influence will ultimately be manifest in the outer court as his Gentile dark dominions collude in opposition to the Messiah’s Lordship.

6:4—‘hang Mordecai on the gallows’—תָּלָה (talah)—Strong’s suggests this means ‘to hang’, sometimes interpreted as ‘impale’. According to HALOT it means to ‘hang on wood (as in a stake)’, not as a means of capital punishment but as a means to shame one already killed.

Impalement and crucifixion probably originated with the Assyrians and Babylonians. It became one of the most reprehensible means of death, and though its use was well attested by Persian and Roman records from 6th century BC to 4th century AD, it was not
exploited as means of capital punishment in the Old Testament (Deut. 21 and 28). It instead represented an instructive procedure for God’s people after an execution as a graphic repugnant reminder acting as an effective deterrent and warning to any who would perpetrate a capital offense.

The purpose of the hanging therefore was not to induce death but rather to be a repulsive display of the repercussions of sinful rebellion concerning the violation of covenantal law and its consequential terminal separation from God, His society and Holy land. Deuteronomy 21:22-23 imposed sanction regulating such hangings with the imperative that the corpse be removed and buried within the same day lest the land be defiled with further desecration.

Paul in Galatians 3 identifies Christ’s redeeming efforts in this process, in verse 13 saying “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree”. Paul is not referring here to the means of execution but rather identifies how Christ Himself both becomes and bears the curse. By vicariously taking the place of the cursed covenant breaker He bore the full punishment, while the hanging of his body becomes the redeeming propitiation to appease God’s wrath in atonement for the violation of His law in order to fully remove the curse. Through such a vicarious act He removes not only the curse from mankind, the perpetrator, but also redeems the entire land to restore its desecration.

Though this word has been understood to mean both impale or crucify, it has the emphatic metaphorical distinction of a tearing or wrenching like the separating of one limb from another, along with the idea of a falling.

The word תָּלָה (talah) in its various contexts in the book of Esther, refers to the hanging of Teresh and Bigthan as well as Mordecai, and Haman (which will be discussed later on). Its overall usage is expressive of the infliction of vengeance to eliminate defilement from sin, oath breaking and man’s dead works (Gen. 40:19, 22; Deut. 21:22-23; Josh. 8:29; 10:26; 2 Sam. 4:12, 18:10, 21:12; Isa. 22:24).
6:6—‘says... in his heart’—For the ancient Israelite, the heart as an organ was the metaphorical center of man’s hidden intellectual, emotional and moral activity. This phrase finds reiteration in Psalms 14:2 and 53:1, regarding the “fool” who mirrors Satan. Both psalms begin with the statement, “the fool says in his heart there is no God”. The fool lacks righteousness—not intellect—inducing him to willfully reject God in his heart along with His moral requirements in order to absolve himself from such constraints.

While depicting Haman, this epitomizes Satan. Despite Haman’s calculating cleverness, his overconfidence and complete conceit of his heart provokes his hatred of Mordecai, giving rise to the perversion of his position of power. This essentially prevents him from perceiving the king’s intents, which ultimately leads to his downfall just as Satan’s own selfish and prideful ambition—the catalyst to his opposition of Christ—eventually will be his undoing.

6:8-9—‘For the man whom the king delighteth to honor...let royal apparel be brought [and]...horse...crown’—With the king’s attire and crown, Haman intended to make himself equal to the king. One of the customs at the time of Alexander was to place a crown on the head of a newly appointed vizier and then parade him on horseback among the people of the kingdom.

Though truly the “King of the Jews”, and even being led on a mule into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday only to later be deridingly led to the Praetorium where He was vested in a purple robe together with a crown of thorns and hailed, Jesus Christ was never given due accord as a true king. Instead of being according with honor of true majesty He was humiliated, mocked, rejected, scourged and crucified by His people. However, He will not be so rejected at His Second Coming as foretold, for in ‘that day’ the Millennial Christ will come with the splendor of true majesty to establish His kingdom with power and glory and receive all honor as “every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess” Him “Lord of lords, and King of kings” (Rev. 14:11).
Revelation 19:11-13 proclaims how Christ will come mounted on a splendid horse of white, wearing multiple crowns, and vested in a robe dipped in blood with the name of “King of kings and Lord of lords” written on it.

6:9—‘ride horseback through the street of the city’—רָחָב (rachab)—This word used earlier in its nominal form literally translates as “broad place” and as listed in Strong’s meaning ‘wide’, while HALOT includes for it ‘an open plaza in the city set against the inner wall of the gate in Israel’. It frequently finds association with the word יָשַׁע (yasah), which often correlates with ideas of salvation and liberation like freedom. According to Gesenius it is related to an Arabic word meaning to be ‘ spacious’, ‘broad’, ‘ample’, and figuratively to ‘be opulent’. He suggests, however, that ample space is related to the idea of liberation from the restricting conditions of danger and distress (Gesenius, 1967). Thus “broad places” conveys the implication of salvation such as indicated with its first instances signifying making of room in the Promised Land for God’s covenanted, those removed from bondage (Gen. 26:22; Exod. 34:24; Ps. 81:10). This likewise entails space for arbitrary judgment for those who reject salvation (Isa. 30:33; Hab. 2:5).

Deliverance is often depicted with such a sense in the Bible; as Psalm 18:20 and Samuel 22:20 declare: “He brought me forth also into a large place: [and] He delivered me, because He delighted in me.” Directly associated with the concept of large places typifying of salvation is the notion that such deliverance is due to God’s “delight” in those He delivers.

Mordecai’s faithful deeds—in effect delighting the king—essentially delivered him from the hands of Haman. Conversely, the treachery and devious deeds of Haman provoked the king, securing his condemnation.

6:11—‘then took Haman the apparel and the horse…and caused Mordecai to ride’—The verbal inflection makes it unclear whether Haman’s assignment to oversee the procession made him solely responsible for all the proceedings of the robing and heralding of Mordecai. However, the sense conveyed is that being so commissioned by
the king per his own suggestion made him personally liable for its procedural development.

Satan likewise will hold such accountability, though he may utilize others to help orchestrate the events leading up to the final procession of ushering in the Messiah.

6:11—‘ride…and proclaimed before him’—חָרָא (qara)—HALOT suggests this word means to ‘call’ or ‘shout’ to which Strong’s also adds ‘proclaim’ with the sense of ‘to cry out’ in a loud voice.

Throughout the Bible, God’s people have been instructed to cry out to Him: “Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me” (Ps. 50:15). Crying out is a fervent expression of faith in God and a plea for His aid or mercy. Various other Hebrew words both describe such a cry to the Lord, some denoting deep distress or pain. However, qara is the most widely used in appeal to God for help, beyond its other meanings like ‘proclaim’, ‘call’, ‘commission’, ‘appoint’, or ‘endow’.

During the great day of messianic deliverance, there will be a crying out to the Lord heralding His return, both in anticipation of deliverance, as well as in acknowledgment of imminent judgment (Luke 18:7; Joel 2:31-32). Zechariah 9:9 testifies to the events of both the Messiah’s initial and end comings being loudly proclaimed, as does Revelation 5:1 and Thessalonians 4:6. Even Satan himself, at the coming of the Messiah, will cry out with solemn cognizance and humiliating acknowledgement that Christ is king (Phil. 2:10; Rom. 14:11). Mordecai’s initial parade of honor and later distinctive royal acclamation was met enthusiastically with rejoicing in Shushan (Esth. 8:15). It also signaled a humiliating and terrifying death-blow to Haman.

6:12—‘returned to the king’s gate’—Mordecai returned to the king’s gate, and as some Rabbinic commentaries postulate, possibly to his sackcloth since one was to wear sackcloth until his petition was fulfilled. Other rabbinic commentaries suggest Mordecai ‘returned to the gate’, but in white apparel rather than sackcloth (Wechsler, 2015). This
brings to mind the psalmist’s chronicle of the ushering in of the ark to Jerusalem, a type for the sovereign Lord’s sublime ascension back to His gates of glory.

6:12—‘Haman hastened to his house’—דָּחַף (dachaph)—According to Strong’s this verb means to ‘hasten’ in the sense of to ‘drive’. HALOT adds to ‘push away’. Besides here in Haman’s hastening home with his head covered in realization of his coming demise, it occurs only three more times. Twice more in Esther it involves the hastening of the couriers by the king’s command in distributing both Haman’s and Xerxes’ death decrees. It then appears once in 2 Chronicles 26:20 referencing King Uzziah being cursed with leprosy to which the chief priest and other priests hurried him out of the sanctuary. As a terminal leper, which by God’s law was regarded as a judgment for sin, he was permanently banned from the temple and remained leprous until he died. His prideful demise makes him a close parallel to both Haman and Satan.

6:12—‘having his head covered’—חָפָה (chaphah)—This word according to Strong’s and BDB means ‘to cover’ or ‘overlay’. There is figurative significance to the covering of the face or head: in Jewish tradition it was a sign of humility before God, being a noted practice scripturally to so conceal oneself before Divine presence (Isa. 6:2). The covering of the head and face was also a common sign of mourning (2 Sam. 15:30, 19:5; Jer. 14:3-4), which was most often associated with death or leprosy (Lev. 13:9-17). This is the probable linkage to the ancient Near Eastern custom where a king’s wrath could be manifest by the veiling of a person’s face until the order of their execution, as well as typological link to the covering of Haman’s head.

6:13—‘Haman recounted to Zeresh his wife’—זֶרֶשׁ (zeresh)—This is the name of Haman’s wife and advisory enabler who both encouraged and affirmed his evil designs to annihilate the entire Jewish nation.

As councilor to Haman she appears twice in the text to advise him. The second time she warns him that if Mordecai is from the tribe of Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim or Manasseh Haman will not prevail in his odious schemes but instead ignobly fall himself, since it is
written that these tribes would triumph over their enemies (Gen. 49:8; Ps. 80:3). The foreboding fulfillment of her prognostication is decidedly recorded with Haman’s downfall and demise. The scriptural record however remains silent as to her own outcome, with only the Targum’s addendum offering that she fled with 70 of Haman’s sons, who were all reduced to begging.

As portrayed by Midrash, Zeresh excelled in wickedness even to that of her helpmeet Haman (Eisenstein, 1928). Just as Christ, the Bridegroom, was betrothed to the Bride—His faithful believers—so Satan has an evil consort, ‘Babylon the Great’ personified as the ‘mother of harlots’, or ‘great whore’ (Rev. 17).

6:13—‘Haman recounted…all that had befallen him’—קָרָה (qarah)—Strong’s gives this word the following definitions of ‘meet’, ‘encounter’, ‘appoint’, ‘befall’, ‘lay beams’, ‘come to pass unto’. HALOT adds ‘happen to’.

After the prodigiously prominent display of Mordecai throughout the streets, the foreboding premonition dawns on Haman that the ramifications of his evil intents will end with his own defeat and demise—presaged by his wife.

Much of the book of Revelation is understood in the context of Satan and his horde’s overthrow prior to the establishment of God’s earthly kingdom. Satan and his followers are fully aware of their limited time to tempt and afflict man. This is evidenced by their testimony emanating from the possessed man directed to Christ stating, “What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Are thou come hither to torment us before the time?” (Matt. 8:29). From not only such ready recognition of the Messiah, but also their acknowledgement of such a timing of torment clearly attests to their awareness for such an appointed time and the one who would effectuate that ultimate judgment.

6:13—‘surely fall before him’—נָפַל (naphal)—This word’s core meaning is ‘to fall’; according to HALOT here it carries the meanings of: ‘to fall accidentally’, ‘to fall in battle’, ‘to fall in inferiority’, ‘to collapse’, ‘to be born’, ‘to be prostrate, in a lying
position’, ‘to fall or throw oneself down’ or ‘to fall upon, raid’. It often expresses the punishing consequence for the moral evil of workers of iniquity, personified both by Haman and Satan.

It can denote a reversal of status and fortune, the ceasing of power and ability, or even death in its varying contexts. A related form expresses a condition or state of death, such as: the collapse of Babylon (Isa. 21:9), Sissera’s violent death (Judg. 5:27), or God’s judgment against Edom and Mount Seir (Ezek. 35:8). Esau, who sold his birthright, and his unyielding hostile descendants in Edom (Ezek. 25:12-14) both evoke the carnality of man, exemplifying the efforts of Satan and his hosts. Hence, Isaiah’s depiction of the avenging Messiah coming forth in his red robes of retribution—from Edom—typifies His universal judgment and redemption (Isa. 63:1).

The word in this phrase translated for “before” is the word פָּנִים (paniym) meaning ‘face’, ‘faces’, or ‘presence’ with the preposition_le_ (ל), for “to”, “for”, or “of” rendering its collocated meaning as ‘before the face’, or ‘to the face of’. It can signify being before the face of God or in His presence (Exod. 33:11). This would then imply that Satan will not only fall to his own dissolution, but will also fall in prostration before Christ in judgment.

The Bible gives some evidence to the idea that prior to Satan and his hosts’ final condemnation they will acknowledge their sins and Christ as king. All in heaven, on earth and under the earth will bow before Him and confess Him the Christ at the close of His redemptive work (Rom.14: 11-12; Phil. 2:10-11). All creation will likewise join in such acclamation (Ps. 148:7-11). However, the phrase “under the earth” connotes the realm of demonic powers, which then suggests Satan’s hosts as well.

6:14—‘while they were still talking’—This phrase communicates how the events transpired according to the king’s agenda, with the swift intervening of His messengers to preclude any recourse for Haman to recalculate his strategies. Prophecy likewise parallels the messianic events transpiring similarly with such abrupt reversals.
ESTHER 7

On the “second day” Esther finds favor at her banquet with the king in her aim to overthrow the wicked Haman—her people’s adversary—whose sole objective was to destroy. During the final banquet, after the king arises in wrath to enter the palace garden, Haman falls upon Esther’s couch, at which point the king commands that he is to be removed and hanged on the very gallows he had devised for Mordecai. When the messianic Deliverer comes with vengeance He will enter the Jezreel Valley—Israel’s garden—on the plains of Meggido in judgment. Satan’s defeat will be sealed there with His ultimate deposition to be realized with descent into She’ol—his destined demise.

7:2 —‘second day’—The word “day” in the Bible is used in a variety of ways besides delineating daylight hours or distinguishing a twenty-four hour period like sunset to sunset. Symbolically, it was also used to depict a period of time, as indicated by the common phrase “the day of the Lord”.

In the Bible this phrase refers to a span of time reflecting the Lord’s second appearance where God will fulfill the purposes of His creation including the execution of judgment against the wicked (Isa. 13:9-11). This event was also called “the day of the Lord’s sacrifice” (Zeph. 1:8), which has been associated with the Day of Atonement. The day traditionally marked for cleansing, restoration and complete atonement was Yom Kippur (Lev. 16:30; 23:26). It was a time of judgment, deliverance, and blessing to His people. As is stated, “to those who are persistently and patiently waiting for Him, he will appear the second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation, set up his kingdom and take up His earthly reign (Heb. 9:28). After concluding her prayerful fast concerning her peoples’ destruction pending from Haman’s evil plot, Esther arranges two meetings with the king. Haman’s wife and co-conspirators foretell of his imminent downfall as he departs for this second encounter (Esth. 6:12-15). Afterwards comes swift judgment, with subsequent relief and rescue in securing the Jews salvation.
Paul describes how the “Day of the Lord” will come suddenly and unexpectedly, with the metaphor of “coming as a thief in the night” upon the wicked (1 Thess. 5). The rapid reversal of Haman’s fortune exemplifies such an unexpected sudden turn of events.

7:3—‘If I have found favor in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king’—
This phrase appears earlier in 1:19 where it has already been aligned with the verse in Nehemiah 2:5. Its intermittent appearance throughout this text may sequentially earmark the great Cup-Bearer’s restorative works. The only noticeable difference between the phrase in Nehemiah and here in Esther is the alternate use of לְפָנֶיךָ (meaning ‘in front of or before you’) instead of בְּﬠֵינֶי (‘in your eyes’). Though both essentially imply acceptability before the Lord, לְפָנֶיךָ is frequently translated with the word “presence” (e.g., Gen.23:11, 18; Deut. 25:9).

The word חֵן (chen), is translated here as “favor”, being listed by Strong’s and HALOT with the meaning of ‘favor’ or ‘grace’ and a handful of other interpretations including ‘adornment’, ‘charm’, or ‘pleasing’. The first attestation for it comes in Genesis 6:8, recounting how Noah received salvation finding “favor” with God. It derives from the root verb חָנַן (chanan) meaning ‘to implore’, ‘to favor someone’, ‘to show compassion’, ‘mercy’ or ‘graciousness’. Most of its passages express some unmerited favor extended from one to another, or of God to mankind, such as with salvation. Being identified as one of God’s principal attributes (Exod. 34:6-7), David acknowledges it in His own great plea for help (Ps. 86).

In response to his request, Nehemiah was sent to Judah. Within three days upon arriving on horseback (Neh. 2:9) he inspected the wall and initiated the needed rebuilding efforts for the sake of his “father’s sepulchers,” not unlike Christ’s own efforts for salvation, whom he typified (Isa. 61: 1-2; Rom. 8:2).

Esther likewise eloquently echoes this same entreaty of the king on behalf of her people. First in 5:8 after her three-day fast, prior to her first audience of appeal with the king, and again here she fully discloses her desirous plea for her and her people’s lives to be
spared. The word נפשׁ (nephesh) used here implies both a living being as well as the soul. This petition proves to be the catalyst in like manner for the redemption of God’s people.

The explicit tie here to the commissioning of Nehemiah—the royal cup-bearer—also ties with significance to the timing of Nisan—which for Israelites was the month synonymous with redemption—marking their formation as a nation and release from bondage. Nisan also marks the death of Christ (John 19:14) and His resurrection with the Firstfruits (Lev. 23:9-14; Luke 23:1-8; 1 Cor. 15:20).

Here, Esther’s entreaty of the king perhaps relates to Christ’s atonement. While Haman casts his lots, Esther fasted three days (13th-15th Nisan) prior to her meeting with the king and Haman, with a second banquet to be held the following day. Between the two banquets on a ‘sleepless’ night, the Persian king reviews official state documents and receives proof of Mordecai’s saving acts performed on his behalf, which had not been recognized to date for recompense. This spurs the king’s open acclamation of honor and elevation in reward of Mordecai’s faithful service. Such unanticipated exoneration suddenly overturns Haman’s intended demise for Mordecai; while at the same time secures his own downfall at the gallows with ultimate salvation to the Jews.

7:3—‘let my life be given me at my petition and my people at my request’—שְׁאֵלָה (shelah: request)—בַּקָּשָׁה (baqqashah: request or petition)—Though the surface meanings of the two underlined words are equivalent, there is a distinctive meaning to the feminine noun שְׁאֵלָה (shelah) defined by Strong’s as ‘request’, ‘entreaty’, or ‘petition’ and inclusive of the nuance of ‘prayer’ from Gesenius as derived from its use in 1 Samuel 1:17.

This word is synonymous with ‘to implore’ or ‘to desire earnestly’. Both shelah and the nominal form mishalah are often translated as “petition”. In Hebrew, the notion of petitioning intimated seeking some specific change through earnest prayer to God. One example is Christ’s expression of obedient submission in ardent prayer in Gethsemane (Heb. 5:7). Again at end time, God will exigently respond to the earnest petitions of His
people, extending permission for just judgment to issue forth. Joel indicates how the people will be gathered with consecrated fasting in sacred assembly before the Bridegroom goes forth from His chambers in defense of His people (Joel:2:12-20).

In current usage for the word “petition” it implies a request to some authority to alter something, and thus bears some legal consequence. Some ancient Egyptian sources surmise that petitions were uttered at the threshold or door gates, the place of legal processes and judgment. Just as Esther’s initial petition was before the king’s throne, Christ seeks man’s saving pardon and protection on the merits of His honor with His plea at the footstool of God.

The codifying of law of the ancient Near East gave the sovereign considerable prerogatives. Being independent from common law, the king was still responsible for the function of good government to the state’s populace, including addressing their petitions to the throne, as dictated by valid protocol and legal precedence.

Petitions before God’s throne must likewise be submitted upon legal grounds in order to find favor with Him. The legal foundation for such petitions involves covenants bound through His blood, which then allows Him the legal right to go before the Father on man’s behalf (Ps. 9:12).

7:4—‘But if we had been sold for bondmen...’—מָכַר (makar)—According to Strong’s and HALOT this word means ‘to sell’ or ‘be sold’. The majority of its attestations connect to the notion of inherited property or goods, or the selling of people into slavery, both which thematically tie to salvation. Its first occurrence references Esau’s selling his birthright, metaphorically suggesting his need for redemption (Gen. 25).

Words like “servant” or “bondservant” imply slavery or servitude. Slavery of the Bible was mostly economically based and involved two types of slaves: those taken in war and those who voluntarily sold themselves as servants as a legitimate way to pay for one’s livelihood or debts (2 Kgs. 4:1).
Therefore, through the symbolism of substitute ransom, Christ demonstrates how He paid the purchase price to redeem mankind from such slavery (Mark 10:45). Paul further elaborates explaining, “you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness” (Rom. 6:18). Christ’s divine nature offered as a ransom not only freed all from physical death but also the effects of sin’s bondage (Heb. 2:14-15; 1 Cor. 7:23; Gal. 3:13).

7:4—‘though we had been sold as bondmen…I had held my peace…not worthy that the king be endamaged’—אִלּוּ (illus)—Strong’s renders this conjunction as ‘though (contrary to fact)’. According to Gesenius it is a contraction of the particle אִם (im) meaning ‘if’ and לוּא (lo) probably related to the negative particle אַל (‘al). The implied meaning is that of a counterfactual, an uncertainty, or a conditional expression.

For the Ecclesiastes preacher (Eccl. 6:6), Christ is the hope against such futility. Otherwise, all efforts or labors are “vanity of vanities, all is vanity” for such efforts without purposeful fulfillment is merely a labor to no real end (Eccl. 1:3; 2:1-1; 4:4).

Mankind’s mortal predicament consists of profitless transitory efforts unless corrected by some redeeming recourse. Being sold as bondmen and bondwomen was to be expected, and even stated in by God in law (Deut. 28:68), but He sanctioned no legality condemning them to dissolution and destruction.

7:4—‘for we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish’—שָׁמַד (shamad: to be exterminated or destroyed)—לְהַשְׁמִיד (lēhāshām) (hamā: to kill, slay)—לְאָבַד (lēabad: to perish)—The three words used here are the exact reiteration of the words expressed in Haman’s bloody edict of 3:13, —“to be destroyed, killed, and to perish”, which clearly outlines his calculated intents.
Though these three words translated as such on the surface seemingly convey a similar sense of discontinuance, there are slight nuances of difference, all of which earmark Satan’s outlined objectives to ‘destroy’ man (1 Pet. 5:8; Eph. 6:11; John 8:44).

According to Strong’s and HALOT הָרַג (harag) meaning ‘to kill’ or ‘to slay’ differs from רָצַח (ratsach) also meaning ‘to slay’ having the nuance of ‘murder’, as in the command “thou shalt not kill” (Exod. 20:13)—its first attestation. Though both indicate the cessation of life, the later reflects the causing of such without legal justification to do so.

With Adam and Eve’s temptation came the obligatory fall and mortality with the resultant aspect of death, both physically and spiritually. Satan held the power of death in the fact that he was the lord over sin, of which death is the legal ramification (Heb. 2:14; Rom. 6:23; Ezek. 18:4). Both Haman and Satan, holding high ranking status within their respective royal courts, sought the destruction of a trusted ally of the monarch. They also sought to undermine the king’s dominion and destroy his subjects. While the base of Haman’s proposal was a lie, Satan’s intent is likewise to deceive so as to ensnare God’s people in an ultimate plan of death and damnation.

Such death, both physically and spiritually, is further projected by the use of the other two terms harag is mentioned with in this verse: shamad and abad.

The word שלֹש (shamad) means ‘to destroy’ or ‘to exterminate’. It reflects physical destruction or elimination, whether of groups of people such as the Horites, Ammonites, or nations, like Moab (Deut. 2:23; Ezek. 25:7; Jer. 48:8, 42), as well as with specific individuals such as the women of Benjamin (Judg. 21:16), or in Absalom’s physical death (2 Sam. 14:11). It can also refer to demolition of actual physical entities such as the removal of Canaan’s “high places” of worship (Lev. 26:30).

Although אֲבַד (abad) commonly reflects the meanings of ‘to perish’, ‘to be destroyed’, or ‘to annihilate’, its regular usage in the Hebrew Bible communicates the sense of being ‘lost’ or ‘cut off’ for those who do not abide by divine law or abandon and reject God’s
governance. This is indicative of spiritual death. Prior to His triumphal entry before His atoning sacrifice, Christ testified that He had come to bring salvation to the ‘lost’ (Luke 19:10).

God never intended for mankind to be utterly lost or separated from Him. Satan, the father of lies and a “murderer” from the beginning, promotes death for mankind to create such separation (John 8:44; Isa. 59:1-2; Rev. 21:8). The few attestations of abad in its nominal form, likewise suggest ‘lostness’ reflective of the state of being cut off from life and God with its association to death, the grave, or Hades. Christ would ultimately annul that power through the enactment of His atoning redemption and salvation (1 John 3:8; Rev. 1:18), which He is extends so none would so perish (2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:4).

7:4—‘if we had been sold for bondsmen…I had held my peace’—םָעֲשָׂה (charash)—
Though this word translates as “held my peace” as noted by Strong’s and HALOT, including a verb, it also conveys ‘to plow’, ‘engrave’, ‘cut in’, or ‘devise’, as well as to be ‘silent’, ‘dumb’, ‘speechless’, or ‘deaf’. A masculine noun is also related, which can imply ‘engraver’, ‘artificer’, ‘craftsman’, of stone, wood or metal, (e.g. of cultic objects).

From the Ugaritic word charash and a further Akkadian word meaning ‘wise’, it evokes the notion of craftsmen utilizing a specific knowledge, skill, or magic, like a skilled fabricator or workman in wood, stone, or some other material, such as the craftsman of the tabernacle (Exod. 35:35).

Its first attestation (Exod. 28:11) specifies how Moses was to ‘engrave’ the names of Israel on the clasps of two onyx stones for the highly symbolic high priest’s ephod, or apron, which was fabricated by skilled artisans in ways to express purposefully intelligent creation.

Jeremiah identifies God as One who demonstrates such skilled thoughtful deliberation in his letter to Israel’s remaining exiled, after the smiths, artisans, and skilled workers had
departed (Jer. 29:11, OJB). Only God, as the ultimate creator, could “devise” a plan that anticipated such a future and hope for His people.

**7:4—‘But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my peace, although the enemy could not countervail the king's endamage’—**The first phrase of this sentence implies that if it had only been a matter of servitude, there may have been a response of patient submission or endurance in awaiting of deliverance.

However the fuller context involving a greater loss to the king, which loss the enemy was not sufficient to compensate, is somewhat obscure. Its literal translation being something to the effect of, “even though, or because, the adversary is not equal to, or compares with the king’s injury’.

Ellicott suggests two possible interpretations for this sentence. First, it could imply that, Haman, despite his willingness to pay the large sum, could not make up for the loss the king would incur from such an inclusive annihilation in his realm. The other possibility is that the intent was only to be sold into slavery instead of annihilation, wherein the matter was not worth the king’s trouble. Ellicott leans to the former of the two interpretations (2004).

The Hebrew of the last sentence seems to suggest a reason for Esther’s choice of silence: she does not consider the enemy “worthy” of the injury to the king. Satan’s intent to destroy men’s agency and God’s work led to him becoming the Father of all lies, wherein he could captivate mankind’s will (Moses 4:1-4; 2 Tim. 2:26). However, his rebellion was fueled by his ambitious desire to supplant God, His work, and His Son (Isa. 14:12-14; Matt. 4:8-9). Such a loss to heaven’s monarch and His dominion could not be offset, for which the adversary had no regard as insinuated in the various accounts of the war in heaven.

Again, God had not purposed to destroy or suffer the “loss” any of the souls, but rather His only object was to save mankind, affording them His blessing of salvation and
inheritance through His Son (Josh. 1:2, 3; Deut. 12:10), as alluded to by Zephaniah (Zeph. 3:17).

7:5—‘who durst presume in his heart to do so’—Wechsler mentions a reversal of the construal of לִבּוֹ with לֵב ‘lev’ as the subject, and man being the object. This would render the phrase as “whose heart has filled him i.e., whose heart, or inclination, has counseled him, induced him and emboldened him to (do) such” or “whose heart has planned,” or “whose psyche has directed him” (Wechsler, 2015).

Ezekiel (28:12-17) discloses how the “evil intents” of Satan’s heart caused him to degenerate to such malicious avarice. Lucifer, prideful over his own splendor, intellect, power, and position, led him to covet God’s honor and glory.

7:6—‘an adversary and enemy, this wicked Haman’—These three descriptive words used to so distinctly define Haman also readily distinguish the reprehensible characteristics of Satan. Not only is he described as “the adversary” (1 Pet. 5:9), suggestive of one who defies or resists, but he is also directly identified by the name “Satan”, as the accuser and great adversary who opposes God and His people. His adversative relation with mankind is clear: “the great dragon was cast out…called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world” (Rev. 12:9).

Christ, identifying him as the enemy, bestows His protective power upon men against the “enemy” (Luke 10:19). Satan’s reputation as the implacable enemy to God and Christ is further developed elsewhere (Acts 13:10, Matt. 13:28, and Rev. 12:4, 13:6).

7:6—‘then Haman was terrified before the king and queen’— Both Strong’s and BDB list the meanings for this word as to ‘fall upon’, ‘startle’, ‘terrify’, or ‘overwhelm’.

This verb’s sixteen instances reflect ordeals associated with a sense of judgment, or an element of the overwhelming consciousness, experienced by the unworthy or wicked
subjected to the trepidation and terror of divine presence. Leviticus 26:16 outlines the cursing of the disobedient, including the ‘terror’ of the wicked.

With the catastrophic and terrifying events of the last days, the apocalyptic Beast, aligned with the dragon, will also suddenly come to a swift end at the hand of divine retribution such as this initial stage of Haman’s fall as biblically alluded to (Rev.17:8; 20; Dan. 8:25).

Satan will have an end, as several biblical and Jewish apocalyptic documents suggest (1 Enoch; Matt. 12:19; 25:41; Rev. 20). However, it appears his end will come in stages, which can be likewise identified in the Esther account. Initially, after the primordial war in heaven, he was expelled to earth, paralleling with Vashti’s removal from the King’s palace. Next from Revelation 20 there appears to be an implicit two-fold falling, both to an abyss (vv. 1-3), and then with a culminating second death and judgment of those not written in the book of life (vv. 7-10; 15). These successive falls could perhaps be reflected in this verse, first with Haman’s “falling upon the couch” and then the “covering of his face”, which is ultimately followed by the hanging of him and his sons—his aligned accomplices in chapter 9.

7:7—‘and went into the palace garden’—The Jezreel Valley with its fertile fields and natural springs is Israel’s ‘garden’. As its agricultural center, or breadbasket, it is of one of its most important regions.

Yizre’el, from which Jezreel is derived, was an ancient city and fortress whose name signifies the apropos meaning of ‘God sows’. This produces its own symbolic implications for His chosen people. One of the primary cities of this valley anciently was Megiddo, which according to Abarim means, “place of troops or multitudes”.

Megiddo was strategically crucial in the controlling of communication lines and international trade routes between the major Near Eastern realms in Ancient Egypt and Assyria. Consequently, with nations seeking its control, it constantly experienced war.
Though it has mostly remained uninhabited since the time of Tiglath-Pilesaer, several esteem it for significant future eschatological fulfillment as the revealed location for the culminating end time battle (Rev. 16:16).

7:7—‘Haman took a stand’—In the realization of the King's reaction, Haman tries to secure the sake of his own salvation from Esther the queen, for he realized that there was evil determined against him by the king.

7:8—‘Haman was fallen on the couch’—This word suggests the idea of a ‘bed’ for sleeping. Yet its twenty-nine attestations in the Old Testament all reference death or dying, implying the sense of one’s soul in death, denoting its final resting place either in a projection of restoration and rescue from Sheol for the faithful (Song 3:7; Ps. 6:6; 1 Kgs. 17:19) or the irreversible fatal condition of the cursed (Prov. 26:14; 2 Chr. 24:25).

Other Hebrew words can evoke the concept of a couch as a place or act of lying down. However, mittah figuratively signifies the idea of a final resting place or death where only confidence and faith in God’s power for salvation can support one in the face of demise.

The account of a “couch” or “bed” of unusual dimensions described in Deuteronomy 3:11 has been speculated as a type of tomb for the giant warrior King Og of Bashan. Lindquist indicates that these same measurements were noted in the Esagil Tablet to correlate with those of Marduk’s bed, which had power connotations. She postulates that this was a purposeful biblical allusion for reasons of political assertion projecting the competency of YHWH over international super powers like Og, noted as the last of the Rephaim, or “terrible ones”. This likewise could entail inferences of a cosmic conflict and ultimate defeat of God’s arch-adversary (Lindquist, 2011).

7:8—‘then said the king, will he even force the queen’—Strong’s most often references this verb as to ‘subdue’, ‘bring into bondage’, or ‘subjection’, like with a
military enemy. It further notes how the Aramaic כְּבַשׁ, means to ‘tread down’, ‘beat’, ‘make a path’, or ‘subdue’. This communicates the impression of exerting force or pressure to bring under subjection, or into compliance, or overcome something against its will as with conquering, dominating, or enslaving. Strong’s suggests its later usage as used in the Esther text can convey the idea to press, oppress, or force (as with a woman).

The related verbal form kavash carries the idea of placing one’s foot on the neck of a conquered enemy to indicate their defeat and capitulation, while figuratively it can suggest the subjugation of some populace (2 Sam. 8). The word kabash is used primarily in conjunction with the rightful use of God’s delegated power or its usury for the subduing of man or the land for intents and purposes of dominion, possession, or inheritance.

Satan hoped for legal right as the ruler of the earth. He desires dominion in opposition to God’s, starting with his claim of territory and legal battles throughout the scriptures as well as rulership (Job 1:6-7). At some point “he will speak out against the Most High and oppress the saints of the Most High, intending to change the appointed times and laws; and the saints will be given into his hand for a time, and times, and half a time. But the court will convene, and his dominion will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, dominion, and greatness of the kingdoms under all of heaven will be given to the people, the saints of the Most High” (Dan. 7:25-27, BSB).

Paul speaks of the lawless one who tries to exalt himself over all within God’s temple, but who eventually will be revealed and doomed to destruction, which is certainly descriptive of Haman (2 Thess. 2).

As God’s ultimate enemy, Satan forcefully sought to destroy Christ, who alone had the power to free man as his captive, as well as limit, disqualify, or destroy man’s agency and enslave mankind in the bondage of sin and death (Heb. 2:14-15; Rom. 5:2; 6:23).
7:8—‘the word went out from the king’s mouth’—A comparable phrase in Daniel 9:23 also demonstrates a similar response with equally swift repercussions. After Daniel’s earnest prayer, the scripture reports how “a word went out,” then a heavenly messenger relayed a determined time of seventy weeks for the Jews to make reconciliation for iniquity before a new order would be established.

With comparable rapidity to Haman’s dissolution, Revelation 19:20 foretells how ‘speedily’ will be the vengeance when Christ comes again. As Zechariah 14:4 declares, when He places His feet upon the Mount of Olives, the earth will split it in two killing seven thousand in Jerusalem, the world’s governance of man will be torn down, and the Beast and his consort will be cast into a lake of brimstone.

7:8—‘as they went out, they covered Haman’s face’—חָפָה (chahphah)—Both Strong’s and HALOT offer for this word the general meaning of ‘to cover’ while HALOT also delineates to ‘cover head in sorrow’, or ‘cover the head of one to be executed’.

If Haman indeed reflects a type for Satan, he warrants God’s judgments on many levels including capital punishment as outlined in the Pentateuchal codes for blasphemy (Lev. 24:16), false prophecy (Deut. 23:6), idolatry (Lev. 20:2), insubordination to supreme authority (Deut. 17:12), rebellion to parental authority (Exod. 21:15,17; Lev. 20:9; Deut. 21:18-21), witchcraft (Exod. 22:17; Lev. 20:27), and Sabbath-breaking (Exod. 21:14; 35:2; Num. 15:32-36).

The Persians were known to cover the head prior to executing a criminal, and ancient Israelites required the covering of the head and or face as a sign of deep mourning for those suffering disgrace or low circumstances from judgment (2 Sam. 19:5; Jer. 14:3-4). According to the Talmud, lepers or those who had been pronounced with a ban were also obligated to muffle or cover their head and/or face (Lev. 13:45; Mic. 3:7; Mas. Mo’ed Katan 15). Any of these situations symbolically could reflect those designated for God’s destruction—including Satan—just as Haman’s reprehensible deeds ensured his own demise.
7:9—‘Then said Harbonah, one of the chamberlains’—This name is purported to be equivalent to a Persian word meaning ‘donkey driver’ (International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, 1915).

The donkey, a lowly beast, has symbolic significance in the Bible. It has been linked with the symbol of peace, while others have linked it with a source of ‘light’ to transform or lead those it transports through spiritual degrees. Zechariah portrayed Israel’s king humbly being ushered in on it rather than on the horse, the beast of war (Zech. 9:90).

Through the lens of lexical semantics, Way (2011, p. 174) discusses the donkey in examining the semantic domain of each term for “donkey” to better determine its symbolic significance. One of the interesting findings Way makes is the connection of “donkey” with covenant treaty activity tracing its ties to the redemption of the firstborn (Exod. 13:13; 34:20; Num. 22:22–35) (Way, 2011). The triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem upon the ass indicated the anticipated covenental peace for man with the imminent defeat of the power of sin, death, and reign of Satan. It also signaled the opening of God’s gate to His kingdom for the eventual messianic reign, of that triumphant conqueror on the white horse. Likewise, Mordecai being extoled through the city’s chief street while riding the king’s horse in regal attire, signaled to Haman his own rapid decline of what he had imaged to be the pinnacle of his success. Thus his imminent downfall is concretely expressed by his subsequent ‘falling’ upon Esther’s couch (Esth. 7:8), followed by his ignoble demise, which in effect secured the Jews salvation.

7:9—‘gallows fifty cubits high...made for Mordecai...so they hanged Haman on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai (7:8)’—Fifty is a number biblically associated with liberation and the coming of God’s Holy Spirit. According to Bullinger, it is associated with jubilee or deliverance, and pointed to the anticipated rest following the perfect consummation of time as the complete product of seven times seven (2005).
Scripturally, the fiftieth year, or Jubilee Year, marked a significant time conceptually for God’s dealings with His people in connection with release and deliverance. The Jubilee year signified the timing for all the land to be restored to its original owner, for all debts to be forgiven, and for all slaves to be released (Lev. 25:10). It also finds association with the “Feast of Pentecost,” originating from the Greek word meaning “fiftieth.” Both the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai and the coming of the Holy Spirit occurred on the day of the Feast of Pentecost. It seems Haman’s evil design to hang Mordecai on the 50-foot scaffold was in effect to portend him as the ‘Firstfruits’ of what he intended for all the Jews in the inevitable realization of his proclaimed edict.

However, the unrealistic possibility of erecting a fifty-foot gallows (roughly 75 feet in cubit measurement) within a day, seems to suggest an exaggeration with more symbolic than literal understanding. With ‘fifty’ finding association to jubilee, the year of emancipation, as well as its integral connection with firstfruits, it would fittingly signify termination of sin and its perpetrator, while also exemplifying a breaking of its bondage, and thus also a suitable time as well for Haman’s demise.
Despite Haman’s physical execution, without legal mandate from the king, the effects of his edict were not eradicated. Lamenting such, Esther seeks again to implore the king for redress to abrogate such impending calamity.

In response, the king promotes Mordecai enabling him to co-author a royal countermand with Esther. As the decree goes out, Mordecai comes forth in his royal apparel as he and Esther unitedly orchestrate the overturn of Haman’s evil edict.

Likewise, only the Messiah’s emergence at the Second Coming will completely eradicate and nullify the effects of Satan’s evil ambitions. This chapter’s events correlates well with that of the messianic Rider on the white horse, issuing forth with His host of angelic ministrants, and red robes in final judgment.

8:1—‘Mordecai came before the king; for Esther had told what he was unto her’—הִגִּ יָדָה (higgidah: told)—לִפְנֵי (liphnay: before)—On the day the king awarded Esther his entire estate, Mordecai’s relationship to Esther is revealed. He receives both a formal face-to-face presentation to the king, and also joint authority with Esther over Haman’s domain and previous sphere of jurisdiction. After being afforded the privilege of exercising the sovereign’s executive authority and force of law, Mordecai leaves the king’s presence in splendor, to the joyful acclamation of Susa.

The word higgidah translated in the phrase as “Esther had told” or “disclosed” is derived from the root word nagad, for which Strong’s and BDB list the prepositional or adverbial sense of ‘face-to-face’, ‘in front of’, ‘in sight of’, or ‘opposite to’ and suggest in meaning ‘to be conspicuous’; denoting being visible or apparent. This verb, often used in its causative form, literally means to ‘cause to be face-to-face’ though typically is translated as “to tell”. The word paneh or panim, translated here as “before”, literally means ‘face’ or ‘faces’ respectively. It is a commonly used biblical term to denote ‘presence’, often
implying some kind of personal encounter with God, such as Christ’s ascension to the Father.

It involves the word *neged* for which BDB gives the prepositional or adverbial meaning of ‘in front of’, ‘in sight of’, or ‘opposite to’, which is its function in this verse.

A related form denotes face-to-face positioning, and often is translated as “help meet”, like Eve, a descriptor for the consummate aide to Adam. Several of its attestations reference God as the ‘helper’—the one who helps His people. Other occurrences involve threatening situations where some individual helps others—which is the situation here with Esther. The remaining three in this same category include the helping of: kindred (Isa. 41:6), of a coalition (Ezra 10:15), as military reinforcements (Josh. 10:4; 2 Sam. 8:5) which are also figuratively suggestive of Esther’s appeal here.

The ancient Coptic text of 1 Jeu chapters 33-40 relates how Christ instructed the disciples regarding the possession and use of various names, seals, and hand signs in order to enter God’s presence through angelic guardians (watchers) who open veils to allow entrance. Christ identifies Himself as the keeper of the door through whom all gain access to God’s presence (John 10:7-9).

Esther’s own gesture of introduction in apprising the king regarding Mordecai, which in turn secured his reception with the king, could symbolize her as a mediator who serves to “reveal” or facilitate such entrance and audience. Paul explains how Christ when completing His earthly ministry entered “heaven itself…to appear for us in God's presence” (Heb. 9:24).

8:2—‘and Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman’—שׂים or שׂוּם—(sim or sum)—This word Strong’s suggests is used in a “wide variety of applications including literal, figurative, inferentially and elliptically, along with idiomatic applications within the KJV including ‘to appoint’, ‘bring’, ‘call (a name)’, ‘charge’, or ‘ordain’”. Bromiley adds that
these words “mean ‘put’ or ‘place’ (a time, place, event); but with its connotation extended to mean ‘establish, set up’” (1979).

The first incidence for this very productive word relates the situating of man in the Garden abode, which God specially had prepared for him. Though its usage is extensive throughout Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, it is most frequently used in referencing the tabernacle and its entailments, including the high priest, as well as the ark, whereas in Kings and Chronicles, it is used in noting the establishing of God’s name (1 Kgs. 9:3; 11:36; 14:21; 1 Chr. 17:21). Each of these thematically link with God’s promises of mankind being “established” as an everlasting covenant to Abraham and his seed, (Gen. 6:18; 15:18; 17:7-9), which are to be fulfilled specifically and legally by his descendant, Christ (Gal.3:16), so that all creation and mankind will eventually be set up forever to share in His realm and glory (Isa. 66:22; Eph. 2:6).

8:2—‘And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai’…Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman’—Originally God permitted Satan’s fall not because He lacked foresight, but because it fulfilled His own intentional and glorious purposes. From the beginning God’s supreme authority was evident with His initial pronouncement of judgment on Satan. He declared how Christ would “crush his head under his feet” (Gen. 3:15) in a final defeat, removing him and his offspring from earth (Rom. 16:20; John 12:31). Regarding Satan’s ultimate dethronement, John’s use of two tenses intimates a process involving a present and future aspect in the deposition of Satan.

Similarly, the ultimate death and downfall of Haman is triggered when Mordecai, covered with sackcloth and ashes, charges Esther to request the king in behalf of her people. This subsequently leads to the king’s deposition and removal of Haman’s authority and position (i.e. the king reclaiming of his ring) with confiscation of his property, which is then entrusted to Esther. With full proprietorship, Esther advances Mordecai, as the king extends him his ring in recognition with promotion as vizier.
The decisive blow to Satan was struck when Christ, as the ‘seed of the woman’, ascended to his Father after His sacrificial atonement, just as Haman’s own descent was actuated after Esther’s three day fast when she courageously approached the king in behalf of her people. Both of these actions ultimately secured the fate of their opponents. The removal of their enemy’s dominion also served to fully establish their own position and futurity of their people. Similar to how Esther’s courageous efforts in saving her people also eventually secured Mordecai’s position as the emperor’s vizier, Christ’s atoning efforts likewise ensured His own ultimate reign as the Messiah.

8:3—‘Esther…fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears’—In the ancient world, the idea conveyed in this phrase of falling before (or kissing) a ruler’s feet was a recognized form of worship which has been recognized in conjunction with theophany in ancient temple contexts.

Here, Esther finds herself beseeching the king a second time for her people. Beyond the collective repercussions of man’s fall in death, Christ’s redemptive role also deals with a second aspect of the Fall: that of man’s individual sin resulting from Adam’s transgression (Rom. 3:23; 5:19).

The inclusive scope of Christ’s atoning efforts is further reflected with the verb חָנַן chanan (meaning ‘beseech’ or ‘plead’ in this verse), used also in Mordecai’s request that Esther beseech the king to make supplication for her people (Esth. 4:8). Strong’s suggests that the primitive root for this verb implies to ‘bend’ or ‘stoop’ in kindness to an inferior, and further notes that in relation to God it infers “the bestowal of favors, usually in the bestowal of redemption from enemies, evils, and sins”.

To satisfy the demands of the atonement, the sinless Christ both submitted Himself to the painful torment on the cross as well as endured the excruciating agony of the soul in Gethsemane, which “exceeding sorrow” only He could bear (Matt. 26:37-38). This sorrow, borne for mankind and every living creature, exceeded the consequences of sin,
with the suffering of every pain or anguish of the body near to the point of death, in order that He might succor His people.

In His two-fold atonement and triumphal resurrection over death, Christ, as God ‘the man’, completely nullifies sin, disarming Satan, the accuser, in order to ensure men’s redemption and salvation.

Unlike the work of atonement performed by the Jewish high priest, Christ’s atoning efforts to abolish sin before the face of God were accomplished with His ascension to the holy place. Upon entering, He then remains until He comes again to completely disarm Satan as the victor over evil, putting away sin and death to secure everlasting salvation (Heb. 9:26-28).

Once exalted to the right hand of God as Lord of the universe, John observed that Christ had “authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all who [God] had given Him” (John 17:2). This finds a parallel in Esther 8:7-8 with the king’s bestowal of authority to Esther and then with fuller expression in extension to Mordecai.

8:3—‘besought him with tears to put away the mischief…devised against the Jews’—רַע (ra’: evil)—The Hebrew word rah translated here as “mischief”, also includes the meanings of ‘evil’, ‘adversity’, ‘bad’, or ‘malignant’ according to Strong’s. In addition the word chashab, being applied descriptively here, overall is utilized in the Bible to express the notion of cunning considerations of a more acute or specific nature like Gog’s “devis[ing] of an evil plan” at end time, or exhortations regarding Christ’s second coming (Ezek. 38:10; 2 Pet. 1:16). This word will be focused in more detailed discussion elsewhere.

Satan, referred to by the Savior as the “prince of the world”, was soundly defeated by Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection. However, his malicious plans to incite an evil influence upon the world’s leaders and politics continue with the objective to ultimately subjugate and destroy Israel. These evil designs, motivated by some political or economic
incentive, will come to fruition at a time of peace, denoted by the “un-walled village dwellers at rest” (Ezek. 38:11).

Ezekiel likewise lists a combination of nations who were anciently associated by such merchandizing and also recounts how they joined in malevolent designs with other “young lions,” (a term inferring to ruthless and rapacious rulers). Ultimately, God will draw in all such threatening entities coalesced against Israel to orchestrate their evil designs in order to facilitate His own visitation and their final ruin. Similarly, here Esther remains unwaveringly resolved to bring full conclusion to Haman’s initial machinations of her people’s annihilation. Despite the eradication of the Jews archenemy, with him being sent to the gallows, there was no cessation to his evil plot. The Jews being slated for extermination under the first edict could only be completely reversed by the action of the king’s countermand. This equivalently pairs with Messianic end time deliverance.

8:4—‘the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre’—HALOT notes this word as an Aramaism meaning ‘staff’ or ‘scepter’ corresponding to the Hebrew word שַׁרְבִּיט (sharbit)—HALOT notes this word as an Aramaism meaning ‘staff’ or ‘scepter’ corresponding to the Hebrew word שֵׁבֶט (shebet), meaning ‘stick’, ‘rod’, ‘staff’, ‘club’, ‘scepter’, or ‘tribe’ (1651, 1388).

The scepter symbolizes authority, inferring the right of a ruler to apply and enforce law, and adjudicate judgments accordingly. In Jacob’s blessing of Judah he was promised that kingship would not depart from his line until Shiloh comes (Gen. 49:10), and as Judah’s descendent, David was promised that his “throne shall be established forever” (2 Sam. 7:16). The messianic king would be known as the Son of David, while the early rabbis and Talmudic authorities understood the ‘scepter’ or the term ‘Shiloh’ to refer to the Messiah. The use of the “scepter” in the Bible on multiple occasions alludes to the Messiah and His kingdom (Heb.1:8-9; Ps. 45:6-7; Mic. 7:24).

As the king authorizes Esther in extending his golden scepter, Christ likewise received God’s ultimate authorization upon His ascension to His throne, as He indicated to His disciples (Matt. 28:18).
8:5—‘let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman’—שׁוּב (shub)—Among the many meanings listed by HALOT for this word are: ‘to turn back’, ‘turn around’, ‘turn away’, ‘repent’, ‘give back’, ‘bring back’, ‘pay back’, ‘convert from evil’, or ‘reverse’. Biblical attestations of this Hebrew root word are translated in a variety of ways, but mostly as either “turn” or “return”. An appreciation for this word’s meaning stems from where the turning back or reversal of Job’s diminution is attested by a restoral of his original station with family, wealth, good fortune, and standing, reflecting a reversal of God’s judgment with a full restoration (Job 42:10). In Esther 8:8 it reflects the essential need for a restorative countermand, or “retracting” as Berlin suggests, to void the irrevocability of the sovereign’s initial mandate (Berlin, 2001, p. 74).

8:6—‘how can I endure to see the evil…or see the destruction of my kindred’—אֲבַד (abad)—This word is given by Strong’s with the main meaning of ‘perish’ or ‘to die’ with BDB adding from its variant forms the meanings of ‘to vanish’, ‘be lost’, ‘blot out’, ‘cause to stray or lose’, as well as ‘destroy or put to death, in judgment’. To this list HALOT additionally suggests ‘to exterminate’.

The context of this phrase is relevant to the “destruction” of God’s offspring. However, it does not imply complete annihilation, since the soul, being immortal, cannot be obliterated. Rather, what is meant is the possibility of being cut off from God’s presence due to the effects of man’s separated fallen state, of sin and wickedness, which annuls his opportunity for continuation or exaltation.

The concept of Satan as a hostile force to God and therefore mankind’s enemy is a persistent theme throughout the biblical record. Though God’s implacable enemy, whose designs on humanity are clearly malicious, Satan is still subordinate to God. This is consistently portrayed by his acting within God’s parameters with God’s permission or as God’s unwitting instrument (Job 2:4-7; 2 Cor. 12:7; Luke 22:31; 1 Pet. 5:8; Zech. 3:1).

Ultimately he only fulfills God’s will as his purposes fall under God’s overarching sovereignty. For example, Satan’s destructive designs are clearly disclosed in the
viciousness of what he afflicts on Job, and in the limitation God imposes on Satan’s attacks, in order to ensure Job’s fundamental viability. This indicates God’s supreme authority, and that Satan’s desires ultimately lead to his own decisive demise (Job 2:3).

8:6—‘to see the evil…or see the destruction of’—ראָע (raah)—The word translated twice here as “see” is commonly used in the Bible to reference the natural sight of the corporeal eyes, as opposed to internal or prophetic visions. A related noun signifies ‘seer’ or ‘vision’; such seeing also can also imply a divine perspicacity or eyewitness aspect, not merely spiritual apprehensions. It is initially and consistently used throughout the creation narrative in conveyance of God’s observations over the state of affairs concerning His creative work.

A related verb is also used with idiomatic meaning of ‘providing’, ‘performing’, or ‘tending to something’. Before Isaac’s imminent sacrifice, Abraham assures him that God will ‘provide’ the lamb for the offering (Gen. 22:8). The verb used literally translates, as “he will see to it”. Consequently Abraham names the place “Jehovah-Jireh”, meaning ‘God will see to it’ (Gen. 22:14).

God sees to the purposes of His creations, for He is the one who “sees to the upright” (Ps. 37:37). He is also to be “seen” by the upright (Exod. 3:16); after He was seen of Moses, He instructs him to tell the elders of Israel that “I have surely…seen that which is done to you in Egypt.”

Such “seeing” by God expresses a sense of ‘overseeing’ intimating a deliberate intent to actualize His purposes. This is conveyed through Esther’s imploring of the king with such urgent and poignant anguish in anticipation of the suffering and downfall of her people. Christ likewise advocates to the Father concerning the plights of His people (1 John 2:1; Ps. 41:1).

8:7—‘Haman…they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand upon the Jews’—Satan was allowed by the Lord to put forth his hand against Job: “behold, all that
he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand” (Job 1:12). In effect this prohibited Satan from laying his hands on Job for purposes of physical destruction.

In verification of God’s sovereignty in staying Satan’s hand of destruction, Christ acknowledged, “no one takes it [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again” (John 10:18). So none, including Satan, were allowed permission to stretch forth their hand in destruction against Christ, until the appointed time He allowed (Luke 22:53).

Here Christ indicates that there was a fixed time to ‘lay hold’ upon him and deliver Him to death and crucifixion, which hour was the “power of darkness” (Luke 22:53). Christ permitted Satan through his preempted power to exercise control to a certain point, but for the purpose of allowing Christ to fully complete His atonement and fully deliver His progeny from the curse of the law and Satan’s evil designs (Rev. 12:17; 1 Pet. 5:8, John 10:10).

8:8—‘write ye concerning the Jews…and seal it with the king’s ring and…may no man reverse’—From this and verse five above, the Persian law appears to have been immutable (see also Dan. 6:15).

Katz, in accounting for the plausibility of such a legal system precluding revision of law, suggests how “Herodotus estimated that it took three months for a message to be carried throughout the entire Persian Empire”. With Haman’s decree disseminated 70 days earlier, she postulates that it was inferring to its already wide circulation, which would have incited sufficient anti-Jewish sentiment that any such retraction would in effect just be nullified. In essence, Katz suggests that “the damage from the edict” could not be sufficiently “repaired with just a revocation”. Thus Esther sought declaration of “official permission” for the Jews defense in attempt to limit the aggression if unable to avert the
conflict completely. Katz suggests that the scarcity of days reported for evident conflict verifies this\(^8\) (2003, pp. 94-96).

However, God’s laws and purposes are immutable (Mal. 3:6; 1 Sam. 15:29; Matt. 24:35). The perfection of deity precludes such change. However, man’s imperfection causes him to fall under the “curse” of the law, for which Christ in His perfection does not abolish but rather fulfills, and by so doing reverses its effects (Matt. 5:17-18; John 16:11).

Christ’s dual nature as God and man allowed him to orchestrate the atonement, with both aspects necessary to accomplish the ultimate and unmitigated defeat of Satan and death as the curse of sin. Esther’s purposes likewise were two-fold, first to eradicate Haman, and also to nullify the destructive effects of his designs on her people’s lives.

8:8—‘seal it with the king’s ring’—The signet ring, discussed earlier, functioned much like today’s signature as an emblem authenticating authority, permanence or ownership of something. Kings used the signet to designate ownership and authority since it contained indication of their names, title and region of rule. Here the king’s seal is being utilized to legally bind things from change,

God’s use of ‘sealing’ to authorize or prohibit something by indisputable authority is often alluded to throughout scripture (e.g. 2 Tim. 2:19; 2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:20). Lawful sealing as well as the “Holy Spirit of promise”—the emissary or indicator of what is bound by God’s authority on earth and in heaven (Matt. 16:19)—referenced the covenanted seal of salvation. Multiple verses in the Book of Revelation (7:3; 9:4; 14:1; 20:4; 22:4) along with Ezekiel 9:4 mention those sealed in their foreheads, or having the Father’s name written in their foreheads for salvation in anticipation of the destroying angels in the great and dreadful day. On the contrary, others receive the “mark” or seal of

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\(^8\) Katz points out that no mention of such speedy dispatch was needed for the proclamation of Haman’s edict since there was productively a year’s time for his decree to become effective, whereas Esther’s decree must be so readily dispatched to afford the Jews time sufficient to orchestrate their defense against such hostilities.
the Beast for preempting God’s power and authority and hence are destined for ruin (Rev. 13:6; 14:9).

Beyond such emblematic inferences to God’s sealing authority, Haggai the prophet declares Zerubbabel himself as God’s signet saying, “on that day, declares the LORD Almighty, I will take you, my servant Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel…and I will make you like my signet ring, for I have chosen you” (Hag. 2:23, NIV).

With Israel’s initial deportation, Jeremiah declared that King Jeconiah had been removed from God’s hand as his signet ring (Jer. 22:24). With the restoration of God’s people to their promised land and the rebuilding of His holy temple, the signet ring is restored with Zerubbabel, the direct descendant of King David and grandson of Jeconiah. As the appointed governor, Zerubbabel was designated to lead the first wave of Babylonian Jewish exiles back to their homeland, where in conjunction with the high priest, they were to lay the foundation of the Second Temple, which timing is reflected in Esther, Nehemiah, and Ezra.

This seems to reverse the earlier curse of God, when the kingdom fell under the authority of foreign power, where none of Jeconiah’s offspring would sit on the throne or rule Judah in his lifetime (Jer. 22:30). It seems Haggai here is establishing a typological messianic link with Zerubbabel, which means “pressed out of Babylon”.

Haggai’s connection of Zerubbabel as “a servant” (Hag. 2:23) ties both to David and the messianic title referenced throughout the Old Testament (2 Sam. 3:18; 1 Kgs.11:34; Ezek. 37:24-25; Isa. 49:1-3; 52:13-53:12). Zerubbabel, as God’s “signet” becomes the vivid portrayal of Christ who will again usher in His people to the Promised Land to reconstruct the glory of His temple (Zech. 6:12-13).

Both John 6:27 and 2 Corinthians 1:22 likewise indicate that Christ, through being sealed by God the Father, has the power to so seal all, which He ultimately will do (Rev. 14:1).
This biblical word, often translated as “scribes”, usually distinguished the priests and Levites who helped with the transmission of religious texts and other important official legal or historical documentation. Such annotation is reflected with Israel’s covenant renewal amidst Nehemiah’s restoral during Sukkot. During the Persian rule and Second Temple time period it also denoted a certain class of scholars who, beyond their duties as copyists and interpreters of God’s law, became high-ranking officials, which arose to institute certain social and religious regulations as well as expound or interpret the law. A parallel concept for such high-ranking officials within God’s realm would be His angelic emissaries.

The idea of divine investiture or agency where a mouthpiece such as a delegate of God relayed His messages in His behalf was not foreign to the ancient Near Eastern cultures. Two such occasions where angels relay God’s words with His authority are recorded in Exodus 23:20-22, and Judges 2:1. Jewish literature during the Second Temple era also reflected such a comprehension of various angelic roles within heavenly politics, reflecting the force of God’s direct words—spoken or enacted—as angels, especially in the apocalyptic genre with angelic mediators like those mentioned in 1 Enoch, Daniel, Jubilees, Zechariah, and Revelation.

Regarding the last days of judgment prior to the Messiah’s entrance, Ezekiel’s theophany of chapter one speaks of God sitting upon His throne surrounded by what later chapters identify as cherubim. In verse 9:1, it relates how the task of Jerusalem’s destruction is assigned to a specific set of six angels, while a seventh “clothed in linen” bears a “scribe’s inkhorn on his side” with the purpose to mark the righteous in their foreheads before the live coals set fire to the city (Ezek. 10:11).

The inkhorn is a distinct symbol of the scribe’s office, with one of his duties being to publicly register the Israelites names (Exod. 32:33; Isa. 4:3; Rev. 3:5). This metaphor connects with the inscription of names in the Book of Life, delineating those ascribed salvation in death (Rev. 13:8; 16).
8:10—‘posts on horse back, riding on swift steeds used in king’s service, bred of the stud’—רֶכֶשׁ (rekesh)—For the word rekesh, or “steeds”, Strong’s states “a relay of animals on a post-route (as stored up for that purpose); by implication, a courser: dromedary, mule, or swift beast.”

Outside this chapter, the only two other occurrences for this word in the Bible include reference to Solomon’s vast cavalry (1 Kgs. 4:28), and Micah’s reference to Lachish (Mic. 1:13), an important fortress city anciently noted as possible site for the Judean Calvary or chariot units. Typically, Micah’s prophecies reflected God’s descending judgment while also engendering hope of a restoration with a messianic king, for whom King Solomon was a type.

The horse played an important role throughout the history of mankind. Though the Israelites chiefly used donkeys, royalty anciently rode horses and utilized chariots for transportation. Chariotry grew to be a specific and select unit within the king’s military force, which could imply that these horses were an elite force for the king’s purposes. Though the horse in Biblical times did find a prominent place as the primary vehicle for war, Israel was constantly instructed to not acquire or “multiply” horses, but instead admonished to rely on the Lord (Jer. 6:23; 50:42; 51:27).

In Hosea 1:7 the Lord said that He would not save His people by horses or horsemen, but when the nations gather against Jerusalem He would use Judah stating the words, “HOLINESS TO THE LORD” which would be engraved on the bells of His warhorse (Zech. 14:20). Despite horses obviously fulfilling a literal importance in ancient warfare, they may possibly also project a more figurative symbolic significance for God’s purposes, especially for end times (Zech. 1:8-10; 6:17; 9:9-10; 19:11-15, etc.).

In the eschatological writings Christ at times is pictured on a sorrel colored horse. The color red—indicative of blood—is suggestive of both His redeeming and judgment roles. This also explains why He is often noted as donning a red robe. Zechariah’s vision of a
man riding a red horse among the myrtle trees alludes to the other sorrel and white speckled horses behind him, which are suggestive of those of the apocalypse (Rev. 6:1-8) and various angelic messengers purposefully sent throughout the earth towards some divinely appointed end (Zech. 1:8-11).

The Persian Empire was known for its posts on swift steeds to keep the monarch apprised at all times of the affairs in the empire and to maintain control over His kingdom, as attested to by the urgency with which these dispatches were sent. Likewise the Lord, fully aware of His earthly kingdom’s affairs, dispatches His own host of messengers with equal urgency for the sake of those who inherit salvation (Heb. 1:14) and who, as the psalmist declares in Psalm 103:20, go forth with mighty strength.

8:10—‘steeds--sons bred of the royal mare/stud’—אֲחַשְׁתְּרָן (‘achastaran)—This word for which Strong’s has suggested ‘mule’ or ‘dromedary’, is also conveyed by HALOT as the adjective expressing the attribute of ‘royal’ or ‘princely’. “Royal” usually implies from its etymology being fit for a king, with connotations of splendid or regal. Gesenius at times equates this loan word with “sons of mares”. Strong’s suggests it being an identifier of a brood mare of foreign origin. The sense is that these “steeds” issue forth as elite progeny whose courses are divinely directed, which could certainly be descriptive of God’s divine angelic messengers.

8:11—‘to stand for their life. . .[against] all the forces. . .that would assault them’—In Luke 21 Christ addresses His disciples regarding signs of last days where Israel will be trampled until the end time of the Gentile. Then as prophesied by prophets like Zechariah, in chapter 12:6-8 Israel will rise up “like a torch among sheaves” against the many armies who mount to assault her.

The prophecies of Zechariah 12:3, 8 declare that one day Jerusalem will be immovable though “all the nations of the earth are gathered against her”. At that time the Lord will shield them so that the most “feeble” among them will be like David, who defeated Goliath (1 Sam. 17:48-51). Under David, Israel had a powerful army, which subdued her
aggressors. This intimates that Israel again will stand with her powerful military under the Messiah to subdue those who threaten her.

8:11—‘and the king granted the Jews…to stand for their life and…their little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey’—At the time of the second coming, Jerusalem will all but be subdued. The Lord states, “I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished….Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle” (Zech. 14:2-3). From this description it is clear that the nations are engaged in active warfare in relation to Jerusalem at the time of the Second Advent, but God will look to assure their deliverance. Just as King Ahasuerus dispatches his steeds for them to avenge themselves, such a message of defense issues forth from heaven, with the rider of the white horse and His hosts coming to execute judgment.

8:9—‘unto every people after their language’—8:13—‘published unto all the peoples’—The phrases “all the peoples” and “all the nations” are often used in addressing and instructing all mankind with the objective to gather God’s diverse peoples into one for the specific purpose of relaying the knowledge and intents of His salvation (e.g. 1 Kgs. 8:60; Isa. 25:6; Dan. 7:14; Matt. 24:14, etc.).

Shortly after Christ’s resurrection at Pentecost, the devout “from every nation under heaven” gathered together to celebrate when the firstfruits were traditionally presented to God. At this point, the entire assemblage rejoiced. Filled with a full manifestation of the Spirit, the “wonderful works of God” were communicated among them in languages wherein the Spirit had given them utterance (Acts 2: 4-11).

The gift of tongues is given by God to facilitate communication with Him in prayer. It also allows them to communicate with other believers for edification and instruction of the mysteries beyond the limits of knowledge and understanding through revelatory means (1 Cor. 14:2-6).
The vastness and diversity of the Persian Empire necessitated various ways and means to communicate vital information. This was facilitated by the practice of sending mandates or directives in Aramaic, the lingua franca. Documents were then translated into the local language as necessary. Such would also be the need at the coming of the Messiah where a multinational and multilingual host would be gathered from across the globe in acknowledgment of His messianic reign desiring to have His salvation fully explained and universally spread. It would be a time when “…the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD…” (Hab. 2:14).

8:13—‘be ready…to avenge themselves on their enemies’—נָקַם—(naqam)—This word is translated here as it is in all of its occurrences in the Bible as “avenge.” It is consistently a reference to God’s right of vengeance or His directive for retribution. As Paul ratified to the people in Romans 12:19, vengeance is God’s alone, cautioning, “do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: ‘‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay’, says the Lord” (NIV).

8:13—‘the Jews should be ready against that day’—Phrases such as the “Day of the Lord” or “that day” are often treated synonymously. Opinion varies as to whether they refer exclusively to the time of tribulation or expand to include the messianic age as well. Nevertheless, these phrases “refer to God’s special interventions into the world’s course of events to judge His enemies, accomplish His purpose for history, and thereby demonstrate who He is—the sovereign God of the universe” (Showers, 2001).

8:14—‘the posts…being hastened and pressed on by the king’—דָּחַף (dachaph)—This word according to Strong’s means to ‘drive’, ‘hurry’, ‘hasten’, ‘urge’, ‘press on’, or ‘expedite a process’, to which HALOT—for the later books—also adds ‘set in motion’. It implies celerity of motion, which is not only relevant but also crucial in the context of war. This word shows up only four times, three of which are in Esther. Two of the four times it is paired with the word בָּהַל, (bahal) as it is in this verse, which can similarly connote the idea of ‘haste’, along with the sense to ‘disturb’, ‘dismay’, ‘alarm’, or ‘terrify’. In the 37 times bahal is used throughout scripture, all of them imply situations
of impending destruction or annihilation of those set in opposition to God or His purposes, such as Babylon, Edom, Tyre, Assyria, or the Leviathan. They likewise imply those who have incurred His curse of leprosy, judgments, or the pit because of sinful actions, which disqualify them from God’s merciful protection (2 Chr. 26:16.20).

Just as the king’s posts hastened throughout the kingdom in prelude of impending destruction, so it is prophesied how God’s chariots would come like a whirlwind with His judgment and glory to establish His kingdom among all people and tongues.

8:15—‘went forth from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and a robe of fine linen and purple’—Both Mark 15:17 and John 19:2 refer to Christ’s robe being purple, which during the Roman times was associated with emperors and triumph. This expensive purple dye laboriously made from extracted murex shellfish was a luxury item used almost exclusively for royal official ceremonial robes. The garments of the high priest and the temple veil specifically utilized four colors: purple, blue, scarlet and fine twined white linen (Exod. 26:31).

However, the same Greek word translated “purple” can imply any shade between blue and red or from violet to crimson. Christ is vividly referred to in red apparel in the Isaiah passage asking, “who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson? Who is this, robed in splendor…?” to which the Messiah answers, “it is I, proclaiming victory, mighty to save” (Isa. 63:1, NIV).

Isaiah symbolically used the words “Bozrah”, “Edom”, and “dyed” to convey additional meaning. Bozrah was the common location for the industry of dying cloth, while Edom, meaning ‘red’, was connected geographically with Esau, who sold his birthright for the red pottage (Gen. 25:30). Located near the Dead Sea, its residents too were a rebellious people and in perpetual conflict with the Israelites. For aiding Israel’s enemies and rejoicing over Jerusalem’s destruction, they merited God’s judgment and were condemned by Obadiah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The obliteration of the house of Esau was realized with Edom’s removal.
Isaiah’s use of such words is a literary device that makes reference to the messianic visitation of fury as the Messiah treads the wine vat of iniquity with vengeance upon Israel’s enemies to redeem His own (Isa. 63:1-6).

As mentioned two verses prior, the description the ‘Day of the Lord’, or ‘that day’, is indicative of messianic fulfillment. Whereas the phrase “Day of the Lord,” is uniformly connected with its preceding tribulation and judgment of end times, the phrases “that day” or “this day” it also intimates the joyful aspect inherent with the ushering in of the messianic kingdom (Fruchtenbaum, 2003; Craig, 1995).

Mordecai was likewise ushered through the streets in such apparel—similar to his earlier appearance in chapter six. Here he emerges from the king’s presence amidst Shushan’s exultation. Though this could be somewhat expressive of both comings of the Messiah, this verse—subsequent to his formal presentation with crown bestowal and investiture—it alludes more to the culmination of such coronation. Symbolically it projects the enthronement of the messianic monarch with incumbent exultation of His crowning with regal power, splendor, and majesty, as the rabbis so often interpreted the victorious messianic king (Ps. 21:1-7 NIV). The purple robe and crown were significantly connected with the Messiah’s attire, according to the rabbis (Santala, 1992).

Hence the royal regalia of robe and crown not only clearly depict the messianic kingly role, but its description also distinguishes His role as the great High Priest, just as royal vestments were also similarly evocative with both Mordecai and Esther in their roles.

**8:16—‘light and gladness, and joy and honour’**—אָוָֹר (owrah)—שִׂמְחָה (simchah)—שָׂשׂוֹן (sasown)—יְקָר (yekar)—The meaning for these words according to Strong’s is, respectively—owrah meaning ‘light’ or ‘prosperity; simchah meaning ‘joy’ or ‘rejoicing’; sasown meaning ‘exultation’, and yekar meaning ‘honor’. These words are repeatedly used in conjunction with God and His presence or abode, as here or in Psalms 16:11 and Isaiah 9:2.
All of these words share correlation with characteristics of deity. Light, as the initial element introduced at the culmination of God’s creative activity of life, has commonly found affiliation with Him. In theology it is an aspect of divine presence: “In Him was life; and the life was the light of men,” (John 1:4) or when Christ declared, “I am the Light of the World” (John 8:12; 9:15).

As for the voicing of such gladness and sounds of joyful rejoicing, Jeremiah 33:11 (NIV) connects with the “voices of bride and bridegroom, and those who bring thank offerings to the house of the LORD.” Verse 3 speaks of “the great and mighty things,” which, based on the description and mention of “the Branch” from David’s line in verse 15, ties to Christ’s second coming, a time when He will come to execute His judgment and establish His kingdom on the earth. All attestations of מְשָׂשֹׂן (messen) likewise reflect such a time of restoral of salvation for the travelers on the “highway to holiness” of Zion (Isa. 35:8-10; Ps. 51:12; Isa. 12:3), the redeemed that return to God’s favor for everlasting gladness and anointing (Isa. 51:11; 52:3, 11; Zech. 8:19;), with the bridegroom (Jer. 7:34; 25:10; 33:11).

God is a being of joy, and those who faithfully abide with Him will have their joy made full (John 15:11). Both John in Revelation 21 and the psalmist in Psalms 2 ratify how when God’s dwelling place and presence is amidst His people, they will be “full of gladness in [His] presence” (2:28). Paul verifies how it is the Lord God Himself who embodies such glory and joy (1 Thess. 2:19-20).

8:17—‘many from among the peoples of the land became Jews’—Hosea and Matthew both attest that Christ will not return until the Jews seek Him earnestly (Hos. 5:15; Matt. 23:39). In preaching to the Jews, Peter also intimates of coming conversion when he exhorts them to “repent…and turn to God…that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus” (Acts 3:19-20). Zechariah records how during the Great Tribulation and invasion of Israel a third will die, a third will become captive, and a third will be converted and remain (Zech. 13:8).
However, it has been prophesied not only that Jews will come to acknowledge the Messiah in the end times (Rom. 11:25), but many Gentiles will also convert. Zechariah likewise describes how multitudes will convert in the messianic Era (Zech. 8:22-23 NIV). Again he and Isaiah suggest how various “peoples and inhabitants” will seek the Lord saying, “come let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths” (Isa. 2:2-3; Zech. 8:22-23).

Other prophets, including Micah, also foretold that in the end of days, all nations should stream to the mountain of God’s house set above the hills (Isa. 2:2-4, Mic. 4:1-3). Zephaniah provides a further correlative to the Esther account of royal decrees being given in all languages to all subjects at a time of great conversion (Zeph. 3:9).

The vastness of the Persian Empire during the Achaemenid Dynasty—the largest empire in the world at the time—incorporated many peoples. Just as it would be only fitting that all the subjects of an earthly king should have unified rule to consolidate such diversity, the Persian Empire coalesced such a vast community. Likewise, there will be such a need in the messianic kingdom to unite under God’s laws and oracles.

8:17—‘The fear of the Jews was fallen upon them’—Psalm 33:8 declares “let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him”. The Lord Himself says, “fear ye not me?...Will ye not tremble at my presence?” (Jer. 5). Earth’s rebellious inhabitants will not fear the Lord until they feel the weight of His indignation in the day of their visitation, clearly made manifest in certain events such as the raising of the two witnesses (Rev. 11:11). As Paul states, it is with “fear and trembling” that men work out their salvation (Phil. 2:12-13).

Fear reflects a sense of submission to God due to belief, respect, and humility, which is reflected in the realization of the Messiah’s reign (Acts 2:12-44; Ps. 2:11). On Pentecost, all received His word and “fear came upon every soul,” then all left united in belief and
having all in common (Acts. 2:41). Likewise at this critical juncture for Esther and her people, a sense of respect and neutrality was evoked in Shushan, after Haman’s deposition and death, and the king’s decreed providence towards Mordecai.
The victory for the Jews comes in this chapter as their intended annihilation is overturned with the destruction of their enemies. This occurs in the month of Adar, the noted last month in Egypt prior to God’s powerful Exodus with new beginning and redemption for the first-born. This chapter, with its initial focus on the month of reversals, also highlights notions of “appointed-times”, “pur”, “portions”, “gifts”, “rest” and “peace”—concepts which all connect with end time, with the return of the Messiah and establishment of His Kingdom.

9:1—‘Now in the twelfth month which is the month of Adar’—אֲדָר (adar)—The number twelve in the Bible consistently finds linkage with order, divine government, and authority in the orchestration of God’s rule within His past as well as His future messianic kingdom. Examples are numerous and varied including: Jacob’s twelve sons who are the basis of Israel’s twelve tribes; the twelve apostles; the twelve stones in the high priest’s breastplate; the twelve supporting oxen of the bronze laver; twelve specified sacrifices, etc. Twelve and its multiples are also repeatedly found in the Book of Revelation regarding the dimensions and description of the New Jerusalem, such as its twelve gates guarded by twelve angels, and its measurements of 12,000 furlongs with walls of 144 cubits, as a multiple of twelve.

9:1—‘in the twelfth month…Adar’—נְשֵׁי (shenayim asar)—To commemorate Israel’s deliverance from bondage in Egypt and His divine intervention to spare the firstborn from death (the tenth plague) God introduced a new calendaring system. Adar—the sixth month of the Jewish civil year—became the twelfth month of their ecclesiastical year. Historically thereafter, Adar marked Israel’s last month in Egypt prior to God’s powerful Exodus, with new beginning and redemption for the firstborn (Exod. 12:2). Adar thus becomes a highly significant month reflective of redemption and reversal replete with an interweaving of various symbolic concepts such as the firstborn, the temple shekel, the harvest, and rejoicing.
The Old Testament concept of the firstborn projected specific redemptive and inheritance significance to the nation of Israel. It also gained a metaphorical sense, reflected by the New Testament, as a title for Christ with His status as the preeminent Son and heir, ultimately representative of those He stood for. In culmination of God’s promise to bless all nations through Abraham’s offspring, Christ fulfilled the intended role of God’s second Adam and faithful Firstborn, as the “new Israel”, wherein all through Him became redeemed from the curse of the law, namely death (Gal. 3:7).

Adar, identified either by its name or by its representative number 12, projects the ideas of complete and comprehensive reversal of curses, or turning towards redemption throughout its various attestations. Several important historical events—beyond Purim pertaining to ancient Israel—occur in the month of Adar with discernable typological connection to such reversal, as the following few exemplify:

- Moses’ birth and death noted as 7 Adar (1393 and 1273 BCE—Talmud Megillah 13b).
- Moses assembled and consecrated the Mishkan on 23 Adar (ca. 1312 BCE) (Midrash Rabbah).
- Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar on 2 Adar (598 BCE) (Glassner, 2004.p 231).
- Nebuchadnezzar died on 25 Adar (561 BCE) (Jer. 52:31).
- Rebuilding of the temple walls commenced on 17 Adar (Meg. Ta’an .12).
- The Maccabees defeated the Syrian Nicanor and liberated the Holy Land on Yom Nicanor, 13 Adar.

Adar also came to mark the time for the grain’s readiness for harvest, signaling the fullness of the season.

Along with Adar’s redemptive reversals, its connections to the firstborn finds linkage to the proclamation of the equal silver temple shekel offering, the formal enrollment of those covenanted for necessary ransom for atonement paid at one of Israel’s three main festivals (Exod. 30:11-16; Num. 18:16). This initially tied to Israel’s required ransom to avoid incurring the plague and death judgment of their firstborn, which they escaped.
through the sign of the blood (Exod. 12:13). Redemption from Egypt was just the prototype of the final redemption, with Moses as the prototype for the ultimate Messiah.

Adar is often referred to in Talmud as the month when “joy is increased”. The increase of joy in Adar contrasts with the decreased joy of Av according to Rav Yehuda, (b. Ta’anit 29a), during which the destruction of the temple is commemorated. Zechariah prophesied that the downfall of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple would be reversed for joy and gladness with the coming of the Messiah and restoration of His temple (Zech. 8:19).

Zechariah’s verse closely echoes Esther 9:22 stating how Haman’s wicked scheme of the Hebrew nation’s annihilation “was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day”.

Adar, as the last month of the year, expresses various connections to end-time, judgment, termination of bondage, ransom for the firstborn, and the Messiah, all marking this as the culminating season for reversal with redemption. Hence it signals a suitable timing for such reversals and redemption in a providential story of deliverance like Esther.

9:1—‘on the thirteenth day’—שְׁלוֹשָׁהﬠָשָׂר (shalosha asar)—The thirteenth of Adar marked Haman’s initial order for the demise of all the Jews and the day of its final execution. The Jews however end up defending themselves during this final month in order to secure their freedom and engender the demise of Haman—the Amalekite (Esth. 3:12). Thirteen in Israel’s scriptural and cultural record exhibits interesting connections with connotations of men’s ephemeral nature, rebellion, evil, ambitions, treachery, and the overturning of such things in realization of God’s eternal and salvational purposes. Some examples include:

- King Sodom rebels after thirteen years of servitude to the king of Elam and is defeated by Chedorlaomer, who comes to take spoils (Gen. 14: 4).
• Despite Ishmael’s circumcision at thirteen years (accepted age of accountability for God’s commandments), it is Isaac—circumcised at 8 days—who is Abraham’s promised posterity (Gen. 17:25).
• Joseph’s interim of slavery ends after thirteen years with him being raised to viceroy by Pharaoh (Gen. 37:2; 41:46).
• Solomon’s grand palace took thirteen years to complete in comparison with the seven required to finish the temple (1 Kgs. 7:1).
• Jeremiah’s foreboding forecasting God’s judgment of the people’s sins with Jerusalem’s imminent fall and destruction, started in the thirteenth year of King Josiah (Jer. 1:2).
• Jericho’s massive defensible walls fell after Israel’s 13 times of circumambulation (Josh.6:3-4).
• The traditional listing of 13 disciples (including Matthias as Judas’ replacement, Matt. 10:2) note Peter’s name first with Judas’ consistently given last—or thirteenth (Matt. 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:13-16; Acts 1:13-14, 21-26). Ellicott notes in his commentary regarding these lists that while it acknowledges Peter’s preeminence, it also suggests Judas, who suffered the infamous death of hanging, merited degradation as Christ’s opponent or traitor (2004).
• Mark lists thirteen things in Mark 7:20-23 which defile men to render their souls corrupt and abominable in God’s sight.
• The beginning day of Esther’s precarious fast, 13th of Adar.

Just as the number thirteen was initially connected with the Jews’ sentence of death, the number fifteen signified the reversal of that sentence, marked by divine deliverance. Being a product of the numbers five and three, it logically shares some of their significance reflecting divine influence, perfection or completion, which connects in the scriptural record with concepts of deliverance, redemption and restoration (Gen. 7:20; Lev. 23:6, 34; 1 Kgs. 20:6; Lev. 23:6).

The Jewish nation commemorated three national holidays (Chanukah, Purim, and Nicanor Day) during which fasting was prohibited. These celebrated events when the
Jews stood their ground against a superior foreign force, highlighting faith in the face of resistance against offensive oppression. Each of their situations also involved some reprehensible violation of the conventional proprieties of conduct for the restricted space of a temple or palace. Ta’anit Esther eventually supplanted Nicanor Day, despite the fact that it is not historically representative of Esther’s fast.9

9:1—‘the enemies of the Jews sought rule over them…turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them’—שָׁלַט (shalat)—Strong’s suggests that this word evokes the idea of ‘dominion’ or ‘mastery’, besides the concept to ‘dominate’. HALOT renders for it, ‘to gain power over’. In its eight occurrences in the KJV it means ‘domineer’, ‘exercise power over’, ‘dominate’, ‘have master’, ‘be master’ or ‘lord it over’, each time reflecting the sense of overpowering, or the gaining of control.

Haman’s initial edict stirred up a rise of hostility in the Jews’ enemies who hoped to gain power over them. A number of verses and passages (e.g. Ezek. 38, 39; Zech. 12, 14) clearly prophesy of such an escalation of aggression exerted against Israel as the messianic age approaches when nations unite with the objective to overcome and destroy them. Zechariah (14:1-2) and Jeremiah (6:23) forecast the resultant turmoil and strife of such evil efforts.

Psalm 83:1-5 mentions ten groups forming a coalition against Israel, and how they plot “with one mind”. The number ten likewise identifies those intricately involved with Haman as enemies to the Jews in the following verses of this chapter in Esther.

The ten adversaries in the Psalm passage comprise Israel’s ancient and perpetual enemies. We may only speculate on equivalent contemporary identities, but they may include the known Arab area often noted in continual conflict with Israel. The ancient

9 The fast of Esther occurred almost a year prior to the Jews’ redemption in Adar when Haman and the king initially issued the decree of annihilation, and Esther approached the king in an effort to intercede on her people’s behalf. In rabbinic tradition this original collective three-day fast is generally accepted as occurring on the 14th, 15th, and 16th, the days connected with Passover.
prophets indicated how this confederacy would suffer judgment after Christ’s coming, correlating with the prophesied devastation of nations in the wake of Armageddon. Though all of them would rise up and invade the land of Israel (Ezek. 38-39), they subsequently would all be overwhelmingly defeated, culminating with Israel’s full restoration. This mirrors Haman’s defeat as well as the efforts of his cohorts against the Jews.

9:1—‘On this day the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, whereas it was turned to the contrary’—שָׂבַר (sabar)—HALOT gives the meanings of this word as ‘wait’ or ‘hope’, plus occasionally ‘look to’ or ‘to view’. Its occurrences generally imply an anticipated reliance upon some object of hope for the purpose of preservation or a dependent trust for maintaining support or continuity. All of the instances convey messianic overtones.

Its attestations in Psalms convey anticipation of some providential restoration or help from a fallen or unsteady state such as all creation’s dependency on God. Hezekiah alludes to God’s mercy in the hope for salvation as a relief from the pit—a metaphor for death (Isa. 38:18). In a verse in Ruth it initially references the expected physical security provided by a husband, while the elements of the passage focus on God’s redeeming power throughout the narrative, typifying the Messiah.

The two instances of sabar that occur in Nehemiah both reference the walls of Israel in need of repair (walls symbolically noting the protective strength of God). Nehemiah’s name, meaning ‘the Lord is Comfort’, resonates with messianic redemption, as do “walls”. Nehemiah emulates and exemplifies Jesus Christ in his own redeeming efforts, hence having been suggested by some as a type for Christ whose redemptive efforts restored the walls of salvation. As noted earlier, typically a wall speaks of protection and security. Strong’s suggests this word’s usual usage relates to a city, but can also refer to a citadel, or temple enclosure. Such passages use “walls” or similar enclosures to suggest a specifically separated protection where God’s redemptive efforts safeguard the redeemed (Isa. 26:1; 60:18).
9:3—‘all the princes of the provinces, and the satraps, and the governors…they that did the king’s lifting’—נְשָׂא (nasah)—BDB suggests for this verb the meanings: ‘lift’, ‘take’ or ‘carry’, usually with reference to heavy burdens. This verb can also figuratively express sense of removal, as in carrying or bearing something, or in magnifying, raising or exalting. It often is notably linked with Christ as disclosed in the following passages. While the first three convey a sense of removal, the last two reflect a sense of raising or exalting—or the inability to do so.

- “Surely [it was] our diseases [that] he lifted up” (Isa.53:4)
- “Yet the sin of [the] many he lifted up” (Isa. 53:12)
- “He hath given it you to bear (lift) the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the LORD” (Lev. 10:17, NKJV)
- “Behold, my servant shall prosper, he shall be exalted and lifted up and shall be very high” (Isa 52:13)
- “In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old” (Isa. 63:9)

A related word also refers to the ancient Israelite marriage process and ascension of the bride. After the initial contractual part of the marriage, the second stage, or contractual completion transpired a year later. It included the ceremonial ritual and final consummation when the bridegroom returned for the bride to ratify the contract. This marriage symbolizes the Messiah’s return.

The word nasah and its variants find ready relevance with Christ’s restorative and redemptive roles, particularly with His ultimate messianic role as Bridegroom for the House of Israel, and those special officiants that assist Him in orchestrating His redemptive work (Matt. 28:19; Acts 9:15; Exod. 3:10; Dan. 7:22,29; Ezek. 2:3).

9:2—‘Fear of them was fallen upon all the people’…9:3—‘because the fear of Mordecai was fallen upon them’—פַ֫חַד (pachad)—For this word, Strong’s suggests its
most common meanings as ‘dread’, followed by ‘terror’ and then ‘fear’. It also denotes ‘awe’, which in itself suggests implications with deity. Its entire usage in the Bible reflects the “fear of the Lord” from impending destruction as a consequence of iniquity, or the plight and ruin that overtakes the wicked (Prov. 1:26-27, 33; 3:25; Ps. 119:120; Job 15:21; 4:14; Jer. 49:5). Job reminds how “dominion and fear belong to [God]” (Job 25:2), and several passages prophecy of the terror that will arise with His coming as many flee the “fearful presence of the Lord and splendor of His majesty” (Jer. 30:5; 48:43-44; Isa. 2:10, 19; 24:17-18). Job also expresses that the “fear of His splendor” is the actual realization of the dreaded destruction which accompanies His arrival (Job 31:23; 13:11), as conveyed in Song 3:8 of the groom’s fearful arrival prior to the wedding in foreshadowing Christ’s messianic role.

Jacob and Laban engaged in a covenantal oath for the purpose of establishing respective territories between the two (Gen. 31:51-55). In ceremonial custom, Laban swears in the name of various gods, including Yahweh. Jacob however, swears only by “the fear of his father Isaac” (v. 53). As such, Jacob was expressing reverent awe—the prescribed appropriate worship for God. Jacob’s use of this word is reflective of his father Isaac’s reverent relationship with God. This explains why God’s people—with whom His presence resides—would equally evoke fear among any nation in enmity to God as the scriptures attest (Ps. 105:38; Exod. 15:14-17; Deut. 2:25; 2 Chr. 14:13; 2 Chr. 17:10).

9:4—‘Mordecai was great in the king’s house’—Both Jethro and Nebuchadnezzar emphatically confessed of Jehovah’s greatness over all gods (Exod. 18:11, Dan. 2:47). Likewise Christ was repeatedly recognized in the New Testament as being “great” in His Father’s House (Matt. 23:11).

9:4—‘and his fame went forth throughout all the provinces’—‘Fame’ has a twofold meaning of both ‘report’ and ‘renown’. According to Strong’s this word derives from the word shama meaning: “something heard, i.e. a sound, rumor, announcement; abstractly, audience—bruit, fame hear(ing), loud, report, speech, tidings”. While shama appears eighteen times, shomah shows up in Bible only four times. All
passages involving this word or its close variants intimate that the report or famed hearing directly related to Jehovah and His purposeful doings, which are “well known” to the people (Ps. 44).

From the beginning, prophets like Moses, Isaiah and Jeremiah continually reminded the people of the Lord’s purposeful efforts in their behalf, for which such gracious benevolence Habakkuk pled with God to mercifully make manifest (1:5).

Each of the passages, directly or typologically, reflects these merciful visitations of God to secure His people, or His judgmental destruction of the disobedient and wicked through instrumental enemies like Egypt, Babylon, or the Chaldeans. Fundamentally the report concerns His efforts to establish His kingdom, and provide deliverance, that is ultimately realized with the coming of the Messiah, which Mordecai could represent here.

9:5—‘And the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword’—חֶרֶב (chereb)—Swords were frequently indicative of ancient life and warfare as exhibited by the Israelites who smote inhabitants of entire cities (Deut.13: 14; Josh. 8:24). Recurrent conditions of international tension and warfare makes Isaiah 2:4 conceivable when it says that during the Messiah’s reign of peace and the elimination of evil warfare, swords or weapons of war could then be turned to plowshares, or instruments of constructive social cultivation.

Swords were also symbolic for God’s truth-empowered judgment: “with his sword the LORD will execute judgment on all people, and many will be those slain by the LORD” (Isa. 66:16, NIV). The “sharp, two-edged sword” will come forth from the mouth of the Son of Man (Rev. 1:16) to “defeat the nations” (Rev. 19:15).

As a ready instrument of punishing destruction, it was a symbol for divine chastisement (Deut. 32:25; Ps. 7:12; 78:62). An emblem of authority to magistrate, it biblically speaks of God’s power to punish the nations: “He [God] will give them that are wicked to the sword” (Jer. 25:31).
Prophecy repeatedly presages how Israel’s enemies will be punished with catastrophic calamity in the wake of the rider on the white horse coming with His hosts in wrath and glory. Judging righteously He will strike down the nations by the sword of His mouth until those gathered at Armageddon will be bathed in blood as “He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty” (Rev. 19:15, NIV).

9:6—’Jews slew and destroyed five hundred men’—מֵאוֹת חֲמֵש (chamesh meayot)—The use of the number 500 in scripture exemplifies some peculiarity. One of its instances recorded by Paul involves Christ appearing to “more than five hundred” (1 Cor. 15:6). In Ezekiel chapters 40-48, it is repeatedly used to express the precise measurements for the future millennial sanctuary. His blueprint of measurements includes repetitive use of five, twenty-five, fifty and one hundred, ultimately forming a square plot of five hundred cubits for the temple. If such specifications were actually literal they would expand beyond the current circumference of Jerusalem, giving some credence to the idea that they may be used figuratively. Their use in Ezekiel seems to signify more of a referential measurement to create the idea of a totality, or fullness and completeness, demarcating something distinguishing of the sacred from the profane (Ezek. 42:15-20). This could give reason for its use in delineating those who qualified for Christ’s resurrected appearance prior to His ascension in 1 Corinthians. 15, and similarly account for the 120 who were noted in proximity of Jerusalem (Acts 1:15).

Numbers or percentages are also used to express token portions reflecting the world’s populace, which will be eliminated during end times tribulation as well as its incumbent destruction (Rev. 6; 7:13-17; 8:10-11; 9:16; 16:15-18; 18, and 38-39).

9:10—’ten sons of Haman’—ﬠֶשֶׂר (eser)—Much like the biblically symbolic number seven, ten also regularly appears with scripturally symbolic significance. Similar to seven and three, ten as mentioned can likewise represent the idea of completeness. A tenth—such as a tithe—is representative of the whole. As delineated earlier it is repeatedly used
in scripture to connote the idea of divine completeness in order, cycle, measure, law, responsibility or rule, either with the understanding of blessing or judgment.

The number ten is significantly intertwined within all three of Israel’s main festivals, which find relevant representation in the book of Esther. While being connected to the selection of the sacrificial lamb for Passover (Exod. 12:3), it is also reflected with the receiving of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai during Shavout. Finally, it is the tenth day of the seventh month which marks Yom Kippur as the day of Atonement and its scape goat ceremony eradicating sin, that figuratively signifies the Messiah’s final judgment and sentencing Satan to the abyss (Rev. 20:1-3, 7-10).

The linkage with end time prophecy and the final defeat of Satan’s power and dominion is projected with the breaking of the ten toes of Daniel’s figure, and the casting into the lake of fire of the Beast of ten horns (Dan. 2:41-43; 8:23-24; Rev. 19:20). Similarly, the Antichrist and his coalition of ten additionally personify Satan’s power, who is the motivating catalyst in the spawning and empowering of evil forces and designs of the world (Dan. 2:31-35, 40-45; 7:7-8, 19-24; Rev. 13:1-2; 17:3, 7, 12-16). Haman, who likewise fathers ten such sons, once again finds plausible connection here with Satan.

9:10, 15-16—‘on the spoil they laid not their hand’—בִּזּה (bizzah)—The feminine form of בִּזְז (bazaz) translated here as “spoil” is derived from a primitive root meaning ‘to plunder’ as HALOT lists for its meanings Strong’s suggests additional meanings of: “to catch, gather, (take) for a prey, rob, spoil, take (away, spoil), x utterly”. It often shows up with the meaning of to “pillage, spoil or take goods by force as if an enemy”. Generally, many instances reflect deceitful hostile acts of commandeering, and appear in passages replete with messianic message.

God condemns plunder among mankind (Lev. 19:13; Luke 11:39), and claims His own rightful role as avenger of plundering indicating, “captives will be taken from warriors, and plunder retrieved from the fierce; I will contend with those who contend with you,
and your children I will save” (Isa.49: 25-26, NIV). Plunder—due to deceit—deserves retribution.

However, the taking of spoils was permitted occasionally (Deut. 20:10-14; Josh. 8:27; 1 Chr. 26:27; Num. 31:45), but only according to God’s dictates.

In Deuteronomy 13:15, God clearly proscribed the procurement and disposal of any substance obtained from those who openly revolted against Him and His purposes, since they were dedicated unto destruction. Any plunder from such was considered wholly devoted to Him (Deut. 2:34-35; Josh. 6:17-21; 7:11-12). Thus, the transfer of any such prohibited possessions likewise entailed transfer of the same ignominious consequences. This was the situation for Saul’s defiant disobedience of God’s instruction regarding Amalek (1 Sam 15:1-3), and for the case of Achan and Joshua after Jericho’s fall (Josh.6:17-19), as well as the 7 Canaanite nations (Deut. 7:1-3; 9:4-6; 18:12), and for other such deceitful or unprovoked offensive aggression (e.g., Gen. 34:27-30).

Esther’s account finds connection to the restrictions regarding spoils and plunder in both Haman’s personification of Satan and Amalek.

9:12—‘the king said unto Esther...whatever be thy petition’—שְׁאֵלָה (shehaylah)—This feminine noun means ‘request’ according to HALOT and ‘petition’ or ‘loan’ according to Strong’s. It is derived from the Hebrew stem verb שָׁאַל (shaal) with the suggested meanings of ‘ask’, ‘petition’, ‘inquire’ or ‘beg’.

The majority of its occurrences involve Esther’s request for the lives of her people. The others symbolize securing the promised hope of God’s salvation. Beyond its use in Esther, it occurs in connection with Hannah’s petitions for a son, which many theologians tie to the hope of the Messiah (1 Sam. 2:1-10). One of its passages also evokes salvation—by mentioning God’s provision of quail—in conjunction with manna to sustain the Israelites on their journey to inhabit the Promised Land. Another instance entails Gideon’s petition for gold rings—the same rings with which the Lord
symbolically bedecked His betrothed Bride Israel with and which were also given Job in his restoration—both of which speak of salvation (Ezek. 16:12; Job 42:11; Judg. 8:24).

Abarim suggests the root of this word connects to another derivative, she‘ol, the receptacle for the departed souls, and where the Savior will intercede to save them from destruction.

9:13—‘let it be granted to the Jews in Shushan to do tomorrow’—מָחָר (machar)—
Strong’s indicates either ‘tomorrow’, or ‘time to come’ for this word’s meaning. While HALOT slightly differs with ‘next day’, and in some contexts suggests ‘in the future’.

The consistent context for this word’s fifty-two occurrences expresses the existent division between Israel and some adversarial enemy, or strife, with the ‘morrow’ indicating some such reconciliation, restoration or judgment induced by God’s power and providence.

As indicated earlier, the word machar is used to indicate some future time. Its first occurrence constitutes Jacob’s witness to Laban (who respectively typify Christ and Satan) of his future just claim and rightful ownership of flocks allotted him from his hire. Several of its usages find tie to the messianic age and adjudication of judgment for spiritual rebellion with entities such as Egypt, the Amalekites, apostates, etc. “Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die” (Isa. 22:13), reflects the obstinate attitude of contempt for such final judgments of God. Another example is the last verse of Isaiah 56, projecting God’s accusation against the unaware unfaithful leaders ripe for His judgment, and for which verse 9 finds relevance to Revelations’ pronounced judgments of Christ’s coming. In Joshua 22, it references post-war reconciliation efforts in building solidarity. Christ—the ultimate Joshua—will likewise initiate similar efforts once He subdues the land as the true King and Conqueror.
The word seems to carry the sense of marking both an ending as well as an onset of a new beginning, which accurately projects conditions as they climax with the coming of the Messiah.

9:14—‘and a decree was given out in Shushan’—דַּת (dath)—This word is listed with a correspondent root word, yet both carry the meanings of ‘decree’, ‘edict’, or ‘order’, whereas HALOT indicates ‘law’. As late Persian loanwords, they are only attested in the books of Esther, Daniel and Ezra, and find applicability with God or a king (for which God is the archetype).

A decree reflects an authoritative order having the force of law, whether in judgment of court or an order from an official authority. However—as Paul declared—there is “no authority except that which God has established” (Rom. 13:1). Christ Himself claimed as much, saying: “All authority is given to me in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28:10). Such a ‘kingly decree’ is reported in Joel 3:1-16 wherein the Lord calls all nations to the valley of Jehoshaphat for judgment during the campaign of Armageddon—where the ‘lots’ for mankind were first cast (Joel 3:1-3).

9:14—‘hanged Haman’s ten sons’—The four methods of execution among the ancient Israelites included: burning (Lev. 20:14), stoning (Deut. 13:10), the sword (Exod. 32:27), and strangulation (Job 7:15). Being hung as mentioned earlier was not for execution, but rather a form of post-mortem exhibition as deterrence against severe offenses such as blasphemy and idolatry (TJ, Sanh. 6:4, 45 b).

Concerning the number ten, prophetic events preceding the second coming of Christ allude to the evolving of a confederacy of nations associated with the Antichrist (Dan. 2:31-34, 40-45; 7:7-8, 19-24; Rev. 13:1-2; 17:3, 7, 12-16). A ten-nation coalition plays a strategic role against Israel in the end-time political situation. However, with Christ’s coming, these oppositional nations will then suffer His vengeance with destruction and indignity as prophesied (Isa. 34:3-4; Zech. 14:12, 21).
9:15—‘the Jews of Shushan gathered themselves together on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar’—The number seven as mentioned, is highly significant in the Bible, typically suggesting completion, divine perfection and covenantal provisions for salvation such as with end time. Multiples—such as fourteen—usually imply magnification of meaning, like with Christ’s genealogy being divided into three sets of fourteen generations each suggesting a surfeit of completeness or perfection (Matt. 1:1-17). Other examples include: the fourteenth day of Adar being the day of Passover and start of the Jewish nation (Exod.12:6); Jacob securing his two wives after fourteen years of labor (Gen. 31:41); Abraham rescue of Lot in the fourteenth year (Gen. 14:5); and Noah waiting for fourteen days for the doves return with sign that the waters had finally receded (Gen. 8:9-12).

9:15—‘And the Jews that were in Shushan…slew three hundred’—Since Hebrew letter characters can also express numbers the letter shin has been representatively connected to 300. This letter also finds connection to one of God’s name, Shaddai, explaining why the Jewish priest forms this letter with a hand gesture during his priestly blessing (Num. 6:23-27), and why the mezuzah on the Jews’ doors is often inscribed with it (Deut. 6:5-6).

The number 3, the root for 300 as previously discussed, is frequently associated in scripture with the divine, perfection or completion. Examples include how God Himself descended to give the people His Law on ‘the third day’ (Exod. 19:11), while each male adult Israelite was to appear before the Lord three times a year (Deut. 16:16). Moses’ mother concealed him from the king’s death edict for three months (Heb. 11:23). Jonah was delivered on the third day (Jon. 1:17), marking the completion of Christ’s own redemptive work with His resurrection on the third day, as discussed earlier (1 Cor. 15:4). The three tabernacle gates that gained entrance to the Holy of Holies also suggest the sanctioned requirements of God’s redeeming efforts needed for man, in his fallen nature, to access God’s presence and glory.
Multiples of such numbers within scriptural context often evoke or magnify these correlations. The biblical attestations for the number 300 also demonstrate consistent linkage with divine acts and deliverance, but in a consummate way (Gen. 5:22; 6:15; 45:22; Judg. 7:6-7; 1 Kgs. 10:17). With each of these there is a sense of a culmination, or completion, of divine salvation for God’s people in congregate, such as with the coming of the Messiah.

9:15—‘and slew three hundred men in Shushan’—According to the Esther account, 500 men were killed in the citadel of Shushan, with 75,000 more killed in the provinces on the first day of fighting, while 300 more were killed in Shushan on the second (Esth. 9:6-9:16), for a total of 75,800 between the 13th and 14th of Adar. With Esther being dated as written in the late Persian to early Greek time period of 5 BCE, there is some ability to project the population size from the Roman census reports concurrent to that time. From these the suggested population is liberally estimated to be somewhere a little more than 300,000 (Scheidel, 2008). If that were realistically representative, then the noted death toll would indeed reflect a large number of fatalities, being nearly almost a third of the population, inclusive of women and children (Esth. 8:11).

End time prophecy such as those in Revelation, Zechariah, Ezekiel, etc. disclose dramatic accounts of tremendous losses of population conveyed in percentages of thirds, fourths or a half affecting the groups of Jerusalem, Israel or the entirety of mankind.

9:15, 17—‘the fourteenth day also of the month of Adar…on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar’—The month of Adar marked the forewarning of the required temple tax and numbering of Israel (Num. 30:11-16), stipulated the mandatory half-shekel donation for funding the maintenance of the tabernacle. It started on Rosh Chodesh Nissan, representing the New Year. Beyond also being a literal reckoning account of military power, the temple tax was a figurative marker of the Jewish collective identity. It was also considered a ransom (Exod. 31:12) to guarantee protection from the plague. Unlike most “gifts” donated in the Old Testament on an individual basis, all were equally expected to contribute the flat-rate of the silver half-shekel donation not only for temple
service but also to commemorate atonement for their lives (Num. 30:16). Seeing as all were atoned for, it was considered just that they should be equally responsible for holy space. In memory of the initial half-shekel contribution the thirteenth of Adar became the customary time of contribution to the poor.

With this exhortatory admonition coinciding in Adar came the influence of Rosh Chodesh Adar for the entire year. Adar became a month for both redemption and rejoicing characterized as the month that transforms, or increased joy. According to the sages, the celebration of Purim during the second Adar was “to join redemption to redemption;” i.e., from the redemption of Purim, to the redemption of Pesach. This could possibly infer the potential timing of the redemption of Purim as the ultimate and complete redemption, brought by the Messiah.

9:16, 22—‘the days wherein the Jews had rest from their enemies’— طويلة (nuach)—This word frequently translates as “rest” or “resting place”. HALOT notes that it often carries the notion of cessation from work or movement, as well as the sense of freedom from disturbance or anxiety due to a confident security or peace. It expresses the effect or result of having or acting upon unshakeable trust and confidence in God’s salvation. Its instances express this as being either figuratively or literally brought about by God, while depicting His work with a completed status, whether in blessing or judgment. One example of this characterizes results from the final judgment of nations as in the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:31-46).

“Rest” also often shows up in the scriptures in conjunction with the Promised Land and Joshua’s endeavors to secure it, which also parallels Christ’s own efforts of salvation to bring God’s people to a fullness of rest (Joel 3:11-14).

When Isaiah notes that the “whole earth is at rest” (Isa. 14:7), it denotes a future time to be fulfilled when all oppression ceases and millennial peace will prevail in the messianic age. This verse is symbolically suggestive of that “rest” which will come to God’s people as prophesied to occur when Christ’s judgment ends the raging “restlessness” amongst all
nations, the antithesis of “rest” (Job 3:17, 26). Instead there will be harmonious working of wills, which brings unity and peace.

9:16—‘And the other Jews…stood for their lives…and slew them that hated them’—

κατέσχε (sane)—Strong’s gives as the meaning for this word ‘to hate’, as does HALOT, though HALOT points out a variety of pertinent relationships for its contextual nuance. These include divorce, enemies, or those at enmity with God, etc. Its first attestation involves another who typifies Christ—Rachel, with its occurrence in her farewell blessing given by her family for her posterity to be fruitful and victorious over their enemies. Its prolific usage is most often reflective of those exemplifying animosity towards God and His purposes, or towards those typifying His chosen. Such opposing entities include: Egyptians, Philistines, Amalekites, Saul, Samson’s wife, or metaphorically, the manslayer, the wicked and ungodly or even death. Those targeted by such hostility include entities such as Joseph, Israel, David, or the righteous, etc.

Satan—often referred to as the adversary—is the enemy to not only God but to any who aligns with God. Though he once stood in authority within God’s presence, (Isa. 14:12), he rebelled against God and has since sought to destroy God’s people and their agency. Satan directs his most ardent efforts in countering God’s plan, which is rooted in divine law. (Matt. 24:24; John 8:44; 10:10; 1 Thess. 2:17-19; Cor.4: 4; Eph. 2:2; Rev. 12:10).

End time prophecy tells how animosity will grow towards Israel—as it is perceived responsible for the current unrest in the Middle East—and actively gather together those who seek its destruction. However, it also adds that the Jews will become “a cup of trembling” to all who so assail them (Zech. 12:2-3).

9:16—‘the Jews…slew…75,000’—The number 75, and those inclusive of it, are relatively scant in the scriptural record showing up as follows:

- Abraham lived 175 years (Gen. 25:7).
The sanctuary was built from 1,775 shekels of the mandatory half-shekel tax for numbering of the people (Exod. 38: 25, 28).

Jacob’s household in Egypt number 75 souls (Acts 7:14), according to Genesis 46:27, LXX and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Just as end time prophecies—such as in Revelation and Isaiah—speak of warning to humanity’s wicked, they also portend numbers hinting at their destruction in the prelude to messianic judgment. Such figures were often used symbolically, even as percentages reflecting those who will be extinguished at end times like the aforementioned third, half, fourth, two-thirds etc. (Rev. 6:8; Zech. 13:8; 14:2-31; Matt. 25: 1-3).

Literal and/or symbolic instances of this number include: Abraham’s age at his ascension to fully inherit God’s Promised Land blessing; the accounting of Jacob’s household who come to Joseph for salvation; the number of shekels required for saving structure of the tabernacle; the amount of spoils Israel acquired from their enemy’s defeat; and the number of years to obtain final blessing. All reflect connections with the securing of Israel’s ultimate salvation and redemption, as it likewise does in this verse.

9:16—‘slew of them that hated them seventy and five thousand’—אֲלַף (aleph)—As formerly discussed with 300 and 500, numbers written in a multiple format often represent the idea of augmentation. The number 1,000 is often used symbolically, as when God stated that He has a thousand cattle on the hills (Ps. 50:10). This suggests the idea of the surety, completeness or totality inferred in God’s salvation. It is exemplified elsewhere by its various scriptural uses including: Satan being bound for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1); the cost of the fruit of Solomon’s vineyard being 1,000 silver shekels (Song 8:11); King Solomon’s 1,000 burnt offerings for requested receipt of wisdom and understanding (1 Kgs. 3:4); the surety of God’s covenant with Abraham for 1,000 generations (Ps. 105:8); God’s judgment calls for 1,000 to perish at the citadel of Shechem (Judg. 9:49); and Abimelech’s offer of 1,000 pieces of silver to compensate Abraham in his offense to Sarah (Gen. 20:16).
The use of such a number in this verse might well serve to indicate a full end to those who are antagonistic and oppositional to God and His people, with their ultimate defeat and destruction by the Messiah and His hosts.

9:18—‘the Jews that were in Shushan…on the thirteenth…fourteenth…fifteenth day’—As presented in this chapter, hostilities extend over the course of days, supporting Pentecost’s postulation that the battle of Armageddon, which this possibly mirrors, is not an isolated single battle, but rather a campaign involving various combat locations such as the valley of Jehoshaphat, Meggido, Bozra, Edom, etc., (Pentecost, 1958). He reaches this conclusion in part by referencing several other authoritative sources regarding the distinction between the Greek words “mache” signifying battle, or a single event of combat, versus “polemo”, used in Revelation 16:14, indicating a war or connected campaign of those who come to do battle against God, His people and Messiah (Ps. 2) (Pentecost, 1958).

9:19—‘Therefore do the Jews of the villages, that dwell in the unwalled towns…make…a day of gladness’—פְּרָזוֹת (perazah)—HALOT lists for this word the meaning of ‘open country’, while Strong’s gives ‘hamlet’ or ‘open region’. The only other two biblical verses where it appears, both reference God’s chosen people and their precarious situation in the last days prior to the Messiah’s ultimate victory over the nations (Ezek. 38:10-11; Zech. 2:3-5).

Walls typically serve the purposes of protection or boundaries to provide separation and protection from any outside intrusion. “Unwalled” speaks of dwellings bereft of secure protection. Some have suggested the idea of a state of peace equating with the idea of “unwalled” has been misconstrued, but rather implies Israel’s confidence in their own strength, not a state of peace, which could be descriptive of present day Israel (Fruchtenbaum, 2003). However, being without secure defense, for whatever reason, definitely depicts Israel’s desperate straits as prophesied in end times, which timing is implied in both of the other passages containing this word. The passage in Ezekiel specifies end times with the pertinent terminology of “that day”, whereas the passage in
Zechariah conveys the idea that at “that time”, God Himself will ultimately provide the necessary protecting “wall of fire…and glory” to surround His Holy city Jerusalem, as prophesied (Zech. 2:5). Both of these, verses like this one, similarly imply a calculated attack against the vulnerable people of God, but which is ultimately mitigated by Divine protection and defense.

9:20—‘Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews…near and far’—Regarding the distribution of Mordecai’s message, the phrase “near and far” indicates it targeted all Israel scattered across the provinces. These same words often find connection with Christ’s doctrine of salvation and its invitation for all, “far and near”, to receive His peace (Isa. 57:19).

The Abrahamic covenant is extended to all from the dawn of time until its end with salvation offered by the great Mediator and Messiah to be part of His kingdom. When the Messiah comes—which Mordecai could typify here—He will make known His doctrines in order to establish world government based on God’s laws (Isa. 2:2-4; 11:10; 42:1; Jer. 31:34; 33:15-18).

9:22—‘and the month which was turned from sorrow to gladness, from mourning to good’—‘day of feasting and gladness’—Strong’s lists these underlined words as meaning שִׂמְחָה (simchah: joy, gladness, mirth); יָגוֹן (yagon: sorrow, grief); מִשְׁתֶּה (mishteh: a feast, drink).

Israel's communal festivals—including feasting—“were commemorative theologically and typologically.” Sharing a feast demonstrated peaceful negotiations and relationships between God and Israel (Elwell, 1984). Together in worship the nation celebrated their origins, recalling events of their historic evolution as God’s people, primarily focused on their Exodus from Egypt and sojourn in the Wilderness. These feasts/festivals were constant reminders of God’s divine purposes and plan of salvation for His people. Like the Mosaic law, they were shadows pointing to the reality of Christ (Col. 2:17-17; Heb. 10:1-18). All seven festivals, and particularly the three main festivals specifically alluded
to in the Esther text, were in effect theological presentations on sin, sacrifice, obedience, atonement, and judgment, while exhibiting aspects of trust, gratitude and honor towards God (Elwell, 1984). They embodied typological anticipation of fulfillment of salvation in the person and mission of the Messiah.

Ratification for a messianic timing in this verse comes from the additional use of יָגוֹן (yagon) in this verse, which as specified by Strong’s means ‘grief’, ‘sorrow’ or ‘agony’ according to HALOT. This sorrow is specifically noted as ultimately turning to rejoicing. It implies either the calamity of literal death, or the sorrow of figurative death resulting from sinfulness and its oppressive bondage and judgment. Both conditions are overturned through the Messiah’s work of redemption, deliverance proffered by the Messiah.

The word “rejoice” שִׂמְחָה (simchah) appears in Leviticus 23:40, regarding instructions specific to Sukkot, the Feast of Tabernacles. Josephus mentioned this as a “most holy and important feast” (Ant. viii. 4, 1). Its weeklong celebration of ingathering commemorated the time God ‘tabernacled’ with Israel, for her protection after leaving Egypt, and thus here applicably symbolizes the future second coming time after the binding of Satan when God would preside so peace could abide.

Tishrei was the first month of the Jewish civil calendar (Lev. 25:8-10). It was a time of rejoicing and celebration as well as solemnity, feasts and fasts. Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkot all occurred in this month.

The blast of the trumpet, foreshadowing apocalyptic judgment (Matt. 24:31), was the divine summons announcing the month as Rosh Hashanah. This is when all would be called before God’s throne for final judgment on Yom Kippur after a ten-day culmination of introspection and repentance, to determine whether their names would be inscribed in the “book of life” or be blotted out. The trumpet also heralded the year of Jubilee, marking restoration and renewal with all property reverting to its original owner including release of slaves (Lev. 25:13,39), which some have connected to the return of the Messiah as the times of refreshing (Acts 3:19-21; Luke 4:18-19).
Following Yom Kippur’s sorrow and anguish for atonement came the Feast of Tabernacles, or Sukkot, on Tishrei 15, welcoming all including strangers (Deut. 31:10-13). Coming at the close of the agricultural year and commemorative of salvation (Ps. 118:25) it was a time of expectation and season of rejoicing. Its seventh and final day marked the last day of the judgment of Rosh Hashanah, mirroring the marriage of the Bridegroom and Bride with the traditional wedding feast also lasting 7 days. This is an appropriate analogy for the culminating appearance of the messianic King of Peace. Thus it marked the end of the calendar year with restoration, with God’s grand work of redemption initiated at Passover culminating with Sukkot’s commemorating salvation, and final realization of His promised provisions and messianic kingdom at this His seventh and last appointed time. Sukkot therefore was a time not only of transition but a time of joy reflecting God’s miraculous presence.

9:22—‘of sending portions…and gifts to the poor’—Beyond Purim, the only other festival that extends great concern for the poor was Sukkot, or Feast of Tabernacles, noted above as the time when sorrows were turned to rejoicing. With God’s judgment hanging in the balance during the time between Yom Kippur and Sukkot, efforts to seek forgiveness included days of rendering charitable deeds—especially to the poor (Deut. 31:10-13).

Sukkot also marks a significant end-time appointment (Zech. 14:16). As the last of the third appointed meeting times for Israel to appear before the Lord, it coincided at the ending of the agricultural year when the remaining of the fruits of the earth were gathered in—prior to the New Year. Tishrei thus represented a sense of completion in fulfillment of the turning of the year. This could also typify applicable timing for the culmination of mankind’s salvation and coming of the Messiah (Exod. 12:2), with imagery of the emerging Bridegroom when “the days of feasting had completed their circuit” (Job. 1:5; Ps. 19:6). The various aspects of this entire verse with its projected time of “rest from enemies”, “sorrow turning to gladness”, receiving of “portions” and “gifts to the poor”,
could easily suggest such with Sukkot as a culminating time for messianic fulfillment, especially with the “poor of spirit” being the inheritors of God’s Kingdom (Matt. 5:3).

9:22—‘and sending portions’—מִשְׁלוֹחַ (mishlowach)—According to Strong’s, this word means ‘sending’, ‘sending forth’, or ‘outstretching’. HALOT also suggests ‘area of jurisdiction’ (wherever one’s hand can stretch), or ‘contribution’ (of food). Its usages directly reflect either blessings or cursings connected with Israel’s covenantal obedience.

Here, the ‘sending’ or ‘outstretching’ can also be translated as “lay your hand to”, or “putting forth of your hand”, innately connected to the idea of ‘filling the hand’ and the meaning of consecration (Exod. 32:29; 1 Chr. 29:5). Such expression reflects the literal sense of sacrificial offerings in the priest’s hands (Exod. 28:41). Thus the idiom connects with priestly consecration, ordination, and use of God’s priesthood. Collocations of the Hebrew words for ‘fill’ and ‘hand’ often translate as “consecrated” and reference priestly ministration in connection with the temple (e.g., Exod. 28:41; 29:9, 29, 33, 35; 32:29, Lev. 8:33; 16:32; 21:10; Num. 3:3; Judg. 17:5,12; 1 Kgs. 13:33; 1 Chr. 29:5; 2 Chr. 13:9; 29:31; Ezek. 43:26). Conferring God’s power and authority was for purposes such as consecrated work, building the temple, performing requisite sacrifices for renewal of covenants, or installation in the priesthood—all of which are anticipated activities of the messianic kingdom of priests (e.g. in Exod. 32:39; 1 Chr. 29:5, 31; Ezek. 43:18-46:24; 40-47; Rev. 5:10).

9:22—‘and sending portions...to one another’—מָנָה (manah)—For this word, translated as “portion”, Strong’s and BDB list the meanings ‘part’, ‘portion’, or ‘food’. HALOT also adds ‘share’ and ‘fate’. Outside of Esther it collocates with priests, being intrinsically related with their priesthood installation, consecration, service, and provision. This includes ordinances, inheritances, and the various offerings, all of which mark Aaron and his sons as God’s priests in His holy nation, but also all of Israel as partakers of God’s royal priestly heritage as the Firstborn Son (Exod. 4:22-23; 19:5-6; 29:27-28; Lev. 7:14, 20, 31-34; 14:12; Num. 18:9-12).
In Psalm 16:5 the word is used when David identifies the Lord, The Bread of Life, as “the chosen portion” (manah) while enumerating the benefits of a consecrated life. Qualifying to have God as their “portion” went beyond the priest’s temporal needs of tithes and offerings: it signified sharing God’s domain, along with His work and service. It implied a literal inheritance in His Holy Household and receiving His royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5; Ps. 73:26; 142:5). Therefore, those qualified for appointment in God’s priesthood became joint heirs with the Firstborn in the blessings of His providence, person, possessions and perfection forever for their own portion or inheritance (Ps. 73:26).

Expanded clarification for such denotation of “portion” comes from the word mishchah, meaning, ‘consecrated portion’ (or anointing) used in Numbers 18 when the LORD informs Aaron, “I give you the priesthood as a service of gift…for a consecrated portion, and to thy sons, as a due for ever” (vv. 7-8, JPS Tanakh, 1917).

In Nehemiah 8:10—during the time of Sukkot—Nehemiah calls the people to not only join the feast but also share their joy by sending portions to those who were without. The use of the word “portion” here again finds parallel application with the great enterprise of the messianic age when God redeems Israel and creates a royal priesthood in the midst of the earth, which requires anointed service in the sanctuary and also involves priestly instruction to establish rule in God’s newly founded commonwealth. This is described by Isaiah in chapters 60-62 when the remnants will be re-gathered to Israel to receive their “portions” and blessings as God’s nation when the temple is once again filled with the glory of His Shekinah (60:2,7).

A related word to the noun mishchah is the verb mashach meaning ‘to anoint’. Christ was the anointed prophet, priest and king, and such spiritual anointing will likewise be conferred upon all by God (2 Cor. 1:21) who will become priests and kings unto God (Rev. 1:6; 5:10). It finds association with coronation of the king. Ceremonial coronation elements of Israeliite kings also identifiably typed in Esther comprise: selection by God, elevation status through anointing, and presentation to the people for enthronement (1
Kgs. 1:34,39; Ps. 98:6; Isa. 12:6; Rev. 5). Other monarchical parallels in Esther include the indication of a royal scepter as an emblem of office (Gen. 49:10; Ps. 45:6; Rev. 12:5; Esth. 5:2; 6:8-11; 8:4), ceremonial enthronement (1 Sam. 16:1-13; 2 Sam. 2:4; 1 Kgs. 1:38-40; Esth. 8:2, 14), and public acclamation of the king (Dan. 6:21, 2 Kgs. 11:12, Ps. 47; Esth. 6:8; 9:4). Esther 10:1-3 shows similar public acknowledgment for public acknowledgment of allegiance and recognition of a regent taking the throne as in Zechariah 14:16-17 or Matthew 2:2.

Overall this word has many implications—all of which find significant tie with messianic fulfillment.

9:22—‘they should make them days of…sending portions one to another’—רֵﬠַ (rea)—Strong’s gives this word the meaning ‘friend’, ‘brother’, ‘companion’, ‘lover’, ‘neighbor’ ‘friend’ or ‘fellow’. It is used most often in scriptures in the context of community, for which membership in God’s holy kingdom is a commonwealth enabled through Christ.

Abraham, the founding father of Israel’s covenant, was considered a “friend” to God (Jas. 2:23). Those who then were identified as God’s friends were upheld as inheritors of His kingdom (Isa. 41:8-10). During His ministry Christ distinguished His disciples as “friends” (John 15:15). He promised to ultimately uphold those of His kingdom when He said that there was no greater love than to lay down one’s life for His friends (John 15:13).

Those of the Abrahamic covenant are the “friends” Christ atoned for, and who will comprise His messianic kingdom of royal priesthood, which this verse and chapter point to.

9:22—‘they should make them days of…sending…gifts to the poor’—מַתָּנָה (mattanah)—Strong’s, HALOT and BDB all suggest ‘gift’ as the main meaning for this word. Most of its attestations express God’s gift of salvation. It particularly focuses on the priesthood, its service, and duties: the requisite sacrifices of the heave or peace

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offering; or concepts relating to inheritance, specifically to firstborn inheritance. In addition, some mention the Feast of Tabernacles as their context (Lev. 23:38; Deut. 16:1), or reference the future messianic time of return (Ezek. 20:46).

Attestations of this word’s verbal form specify: the bridegroom’s present for the bride (i.e. the purchase price); the portions of the peace offering; the breast and thigh offering allocated for the priest and worthy members of his family; the figurative mention of the gift from a prince; or that which opens the door to the gift of justice to the righteous.

Priestly duty itself was considered a ‘service gift’ of holy office in God’s priesthood (Num. 18:7) whether viewed from the spiritual or temporal perspective. By divesting Himself of His ineffable glory with His incarnation, Christ shared mankind’s state of spiritual poverty. Yet ascending to obtain all that the Father has, enabled Him to ‘gift’ such a glorified heavenly inheritance with salvation to all mankind (Phil. 2:6-7).

The poor were often designated to become the members of God’s kingdom (Matt. 5:3), and often identified by the prophets and Christ as those taking precedence in Messiah’s future work. The proclaiming of good news would be to them (Isa. 61:1; Matt. 11:5), in bringing them justice (Isa. 11:4) or bestowing them place and position in God’s kingdom. As such, this could readily find application with the Messiah’s victorious reign with the rebuilding and restoring of the temple and its priesthood (Rev. 5:10).

Beyond His assembled kingdom (Deut. 30:3; Moses 7:18) Zion also implied those who joined Him in orchestrating its office (Dan. 2:44; Zech.14:9). Included with overseeing such a nation of God’s governance necessitated a system of sacrificial offerings and tithes needed to provide the economic base (Num. 18:21-28; Deut.12:11-14; 17-18; 14:22-29; 16:16). As revealed by Moses (Lev. 27:33-34) a portion of Israel’s firstfruits were mandated to provide for priesthood officiation, the needy, specified festivals, and payment for the land in grateful recognition of God’s sovereignty (Lev. 27:30).
Nehemiah similarly reestablished the laws of the tithe. Because of his own restorative efforts for Israel in preparing them for temple worship, he is a recognized type of the Messiah’s own redemptive labors (Neh. 10:35-37).

Surrounding nations will “bring gifts to the One to be feared…by all the kings of the earth” (Isa. 18:7, Ps. 68:30; Isa. 60-66). Speaking not only of His presence (Isa. 60:19) and Israel’s deliverance, but also of a national restoral wherein the land will be reclaimed (Isa. 60:13), with nations sending gifts of aid to rebuild and restore. These include wealth (Isa. 60:4-5, 10, 15) at a time when the land will be filled with praise, joy, and peace and glory (Isa. 60:18; 61:1-2; 7-8, 10-11), and Israel becomes God’s royal diadem (62:3).

Each of these aspects interrelated with the word mattanah cumulatively attest with similar tie to priesthood blessing and inheritance for the sanctified of God’s kingdom.

9:22—‘the days wherein the Jews had rest from their enemies’— נוּח (nuwach)—

Strong’s indicates for this word: ‘to rest’, i.e. ‘settle down’, which HALOT confirms while adding ‘to repose’ and in some contexts, ‘await’. Gesenius also adds the meaning of ‘to sit down’ (Gesenius, 1967). Its first instance references the ark—which preserved Noah’s family—and came to rest or settled on Mount Ararat on the seventh day. The ark typifies Christ’s provision of salvation and the sparing of God’s ultimate wrath and judgment, Christ himself explicitly noted the flood as typifying of end time judgment (Matt. 24:37-41).

Most of this word’s instances fall in passages carrying messianic implication (1 Chr. 22; Lam. 5; Dan. 12; Hab. 3; Zech. 6). Other verses throughout Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Joshua are Strong’s indications that it shares connection with messianic deliverance and end time fulfillment. The idea of ‘rest’ from adversarial or evil impacts as suggested in its occurrence in 1 Kings is indicative of the future earthly messianic kingdom when the King of Peace will establish fulfillment of His promises to the faithful, which this verse and chapter seems to similarly and aptly project.
9:24—‘Haman...devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast pur, that is, the lot’—Haman, the enemy of the Jews from Agagite ancestry, seeks their destruction marked here by ‘casting pur’ (Esther 9:24-26), which ironically is commonly perceived as rendering a chance outcome. Yet historically, the ancient Israelite’s salvation has always been providentially orchestrated. Throughout Esther such providence is realized through fortuitous incidents like Esther being chosen queen, facilitated by Mordecai, his own refusal of obeisance to Haman giving rise to his donning of sackcloth and crucial but timely request to Esther. This all results in the queen’s vital petition on behalf of her people, and the king’s sleepless night, which then providentially prompts his remembrance and recognition of Mordecai. The combining of such incidents signals a complexity of casting of lots—beyond mere chance.

The word “pur”—exclusive to the Book of Esther—means ‘lot’ according to Strong’s and BDB. HALOT also suggests it to be equivalent with the Hebrew word “goral” of Esther 3:7, which are stones cast to obtain a decision. Such a practice of casting lots in the ancient world was a systematic means of making official decisions.

Accounts in the Old Testament also describe casting lots with the intent of determining the desired will of Deity. Though mostly used in connection with the allocation of tribal inheritance under Joshua (Num. 15:52-56; Jos. 14:2), the casting of lots frequently imputed contexts of establishing or determining governance issues for the Israelite community under God such as designation of duties (1 Sam. 10:20-24; 1 Chr. 24:5-10), assignments (Judg. 20:9; Neh. 10:34), or the accounting of responsibilities and agency (Lev. 16:8-10; Jos. 7:14-18; Prov. 18:18).

As first recorded in Exodus 28 and ratified by historical sources, gems and stones including the Urim and Thummim played a crucial part of the high priest’s ephod for discerning God’s will.

Various New Testament instances of the related Greek noun are mostly associated with the concept ‘inheritance’, since anciently the use of lots was utilized to determine land
bestowal. It also represents some other kind of heritage of God’s, whether His ministry, kingdom, or even (figuratively) Christ’s garment. John collectively refers to Christ’s garments, which included both the outer cloak or robe, and also the seamless linen tunic. The latter is what the lots were cast for, since it was not to be divided, it being representative of liturgical vestment, as well as the great high priest’s divine office and indivisible kingdom of righteousness (Exod. 28:32).

As further used in the New Testament, the lot also connects to governance responsibilities involving the work of salvation in God’s kingdom, such as with the replacement of Judas’ position (Acts. 1:21-26).

Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement, provides a compelling and dramatic illustration of the role of casting lots. During this most holy day of the year the high priest entered the Holy of Holies to passionately plead for forgiveness for his people. Similarly, Esther donned specific royal apparel to enter the king’s inner court to plea for favor for her own people. In the case of the high priest, he performed the ceremony of two goats, which involved casting of lots to determine which one (i.e. the scapegoat) would vicariously receive bestowal of the people’s collective sins and be set free into the wilderness (foreshadowing Christ’s atonement). The other was to be a sacrificial offering.

Both the Talmudic sages and the Zohar made insightful linkage between the name Purim and Yom Ha Kippurim (literally meaning ‘the day like Purim’). They also make a connection between the high priest’s garments on Yom Kippur with Queen Esther’s garments (Elbaum, 2013). They suggest that, at an anticipated future Yom Kippur, there will be a change from a day of affliction to one of delight with celebration at a time when the people will be elevated from a state of suffering to true joy.

Orlov (2011, p. 239) and other scholars likewise perceive the annual Yom Kippur ordinance with a sacerdotal perspective. Its various dualistic aspects which are also noted in ancient Jewish writings draw connections to an eschatological reenactment of the ritual in conjunction with the idea of ‘lot’ or ‘inheritance” and opposing natures of good and
evil. He submits that such texts often share common usage of ‘lot’ or ‘portion’ linking it to the notion of ‘inheritance’ and concludes, “the concept of ‘inheritance’ appears to be understood as the act of participation in the eschatological lot, rendered through the formulae ‘inheritance in the lot’” (Orlov, 2011).

Exodus 34:9 further strengthens connection between the idea of ‘inheritance’ with Yom Kippur. According to Jewish tradition, the timing of the first Yom Kippur was when Moses pled for Israel’s forgiveness saying, “If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiffnecked people…and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance.

Though the various typological representations of the goats warrant further discussion, it would be beyond the scope of this thesis. In any case, the interweaving of the concepts ‘lots’, ‘portions’, and ‘inheritance’ in connection with the scapegoat ordinance of Yom Kippur is significant. The full realization of the atonement, by its very nature reflecting God being “at one” with His people, requires the condition of deliverance from both the power and effects of sin. While Christ’s first coming, was focused on the eradication of sin with His atoning sacrifice, as exemplified by the Passover, His second coming for salvation, will also include the complete elimination of sin’s perpetuation.

Paul taught that Christ, the High Priest of perfect tabernacle, would through the sacrifice of His own blood enter God’s presence in heaven first, to obtain universal redemption from sin. Then He would return to fulfill a second affirming ceremony beyond the Passover, saying he will “appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 9:11-12; 23-28). As the great High Priest He would once again emerge from God’s throne, the Holy of Holies, separate from sin for His people’s salvation. This same scenario is reflected in the tandem roles of Esther and Mordecai before the king.

9:24-25—‘because Haman…the enemy of the Jews…devised against the Jews to destroy them’—גַּחֲשַׁב (chashab)—מחשׁבה (machashabah)—For chashab Strong’s lists the meaning of ‘to think’, ‘account’, or ‘thought’ and ‘device’. For the related noun HALOT
suggests ‘plan’, ‘thought’ or ‘intent’ respectively. BDB further relates denotations of ‘purpose’ or ‘invention’. Besides the noun’s secondary references to the artificers work in manufacturing the temple articles in Exodus, Gesenius also suggests the further nuance for this word of whatever any one ‘meditates’, ‘purposes’, or ‘plots’, i.e. ‘a counsel’ or a ‘project’, often associated with connotations of evil, as in evil counsels.

This word’s meanings mainly carry the sense of mental effort. Overall they share a common condition or idea of either a realization of some redemptive effort or purpose, or a failing and thwarting of such. This results from either being allied with, or at cross-purposes with God’s intents, the latter of which is typifying of Satan’s efforts and designs, and thus likewise also those of Haman.

In its nominal form it conveys the idea of God’s thoughts and plans for man: “For I know the plans I have for you…plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope” (Jer. 29:11, NASB). Christ’s atoning sacrifice breeched the barrier of fallen man’s state so that mankind can be reconciled with God in realization of God’s plans to share His glory (Rom. 23-24; 1 Pet. 1:2; Eph. 1:11-12). At the same time, Satan conspires to thwart these divine plans with his own evil designs to destroy mankind and God’s kingdom. This is typified in Esther by Haman’s attempted annihilation of an entire nation with his decree to destroy all Jews.

God’s plans also involve judgment of those who oppose Him and His purposes, as Isaiah clearly noted regarding Babylon and Assyria, which metaphorically foreshadow Satan and his conspirators such as the Antichrist. Isaiah quoted God’s promise to remove the burdensome yoke of Satan saying, “Surely as I have thought, so it shall come to pass, And as I have purposed, so it shall stand…And who will annul it?” (Isa.14:24-27 JPS Tanakh). Just as God’s purposes to eradicate Satan’s evil designs will succeed, likewise in the account of Esther, Haman’s evil intents fail and lead to the demise of his evil cohorts and himself.
9:24—‘Haman…the enemy of all Jews…had cast pur, the lot, to discomfit them’—הָמַם (hamam)—According to Strong’s this primitive root means to ‘make noise’, or put in ‘commotion’; by implication to ‘confuse’, ‘to disturb’, drive’, ‘destroy’, ‘break’, ‘consume’, ‘crush’, ‘trouble’, ‘discomfit’, ‘trouble’ or ‘vex’. HALOT adds to this, ‘to bring into motion and confusion: army/people’. It is mostly translated in the KJV as “discomfit”, “destroy”, “vex”, “crush”, “break”, “consume” or “trouble”. This word expresses God’s interposition of chastising, avenging or defeating His enemies or those in opposition to Him, His people or purposes. Such force is exerted to check or thwart opposition in individuals (such as Sisera), a people (like the Egyptians, the Philistines, and apostate Israel), or even mankind in general. Even His metaphoric planted seed occasionally requires threshing, or even death, as they oppose His plans. Various scriptures all speak of a time of great tribulation and time of trouble for Jacob, when Satan seeks to devour the Jewish nation, through which catastrophe God will bring them His salvation (Jer. 30, Matt. 24, and Revelation).

One context for this word directly infers another besides God as the catalyst for such discomfiture. Jeremiah 51:34 portrays Babylon’s king Nebuchadrezzar exerting this force instead of God. The passage portrays the violence perpetrated by the king towards his targeted prey (representing the House of Israel), pictured like the forcible crushing on a threshing floor or the ruthless attack of a crocodile. It goes on to express the vengeance and violence God will execute upon Babylon as punishment in kind. Similar to this passage regarding the king of Babylon, a type for Satan, it also invites application with Haman and his wicked cohorts in this passage, who likewise have their wicked intents against God and His people returned as retributive punishment by God upon their own heads with eradication.

9:27—‘the appointed time’—זְמָן (zeman)—Strong’s associates this word’s meaning with ‘to appoint a time’, ‘be fixed’, or ‘be appointed’, with HALOT echoing ‘appointed time, hour’. It takes on a divine connotation. Related forms carry the meaning of ‘purpose’, ‘devise’ or ‘consider’.
This word is attested only four times, two of which appear in Esther. One of the remaining two verses is Ecclesiastes 3:1 which projects the providential overruling order God has placed things. Its other occurrence refers to Nehemiah’s own ordering or ‘setting’ of time for the rebuilding of Jerusalem, which could find messianic relevance (Neh. 2:1, 5-6).

In chapter 10 of Nehemiah the word expresses the meanings of ‘set’ or ‘appointed’ as it relates to offerings, Sabbaths, feasts, and temple worship: “at times appointed year by year… as it is written in the law” (Neh.10:34-35).

9:28—‘purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their see’—זֵכר (zeker)—For this word both Strong’s and BDB list the meanings of ‘remembrance’, ‘memorial’, or ‘memory’ to which HALOT adds ‘mention’ (of name or something).

A theological meaning of ‘remembrance’ is apparent in the Old Testament as it relates to reciprocal and covenantal relationship with God. He said to Moses, “Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations” (Exod. 3:15).

This word’s occurrences reflect a contrast between the condition of forgetting, blotting out, cutting off, removal, perishing or destruction pertaining to the wicked, versus a remembrance or inheritance of an eternal and everlasting nature involving God and His righteousness.

9:29—‘Mordecai wrote down all the acts of power’—תֹ֫קֶף (toqeph)—Strong’s documents translation for this word as “power”, “strength”, or “authority”, to which HALOT adds ‘might’ and ‘force’. These concepts all find common tie to deity. Besides its use in this verse and again in chapter ten, the only other time it appears it references
Antiochus, who typified the Antichrist, the evil mighty leader who is projected to arise as the powerful impostor to the Messiah (Dan. 11:17).

9:30—‘And he sent letters to all the Jews…words of peace and truth’—Such were the words Mordecai wrote to all the Jews in order to establish a commemoration of their deliverance. These two words, consistent with Christ’s message (John 14:6, 27; 16:33; Mic. 5:5), also foreshadow that the Messiah will usher in a world of peace with teachings of truth when He comes to dwell with man in the midst of Jerusalem, the City of Truth (Isa. 2:2-4; Zech. 8:3).

Hezekiah utters this same phrasal combination in relation to the Lord’s promise of safety for His own kingdom (2 Kgs. 20:19). The Lord promises restoration from death and destruction to the ruined city of Jerusalem saying, “Behold, I will bring it health and healing; I will heal them and reveal to them the abundance of peace and truth” (Jer. 33:6). Zechariah reiterates the Lord’s promises of a future time where Israel’s once mournful four fast days will be turned into times of “joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts” with “love of truth and peace” (Zech. 8:19).
ESTHER 10

With Haman’s evil decree overturned, Shushan now celebrates with jubilation as their mourning is turned to gladness. Then in conjunction with the levying of tribute, the king elevates Mordecai—the “Jew”—to second in position. The chapter ends with Mordecai seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to his seed. Christ, the King of the Jews, will ultimately be exalted in elevation as the messianic King and true King of Peace at the right hand of God—whom nations will extol, rendering honor to Him and His kingdom.

10:1—‘the king…laid a tribute’—מַס (mas) or מִס (miç)—This word translated most often as “tribute” is listed by Strong’s as meaning a “burden, i.e. a tax in the form of forced labor, serfdom; discomfited, levy, task(-master), tribute(-tary).” To this HALOT also adds ‘conscription’. This word reflects the sense of a dictated distribution of responsibility or allocation of burdens.

“Tribute” in the Old Testament traditionally refers to the custom of the king’s levying of taxes from those subjugated. It also denotes the temple half-shekel tax required of every Jew, not only to support the temple cost for “collective participation and identity, but also for demonstrated focus of ‘atonement’” (Selven, 2016).

The passages in which it occurs share similar background regarding transition into establishment of new dominion (often after conquest) such as the settling of the Promised Land or the reestablishing of David’s kingdom. This could likewise correspond with the shift in Shushan with the king’s advancement of Mordecai after Haman’s deposition, which also finds correlation with the rise of a messianic kingship. The efforts for the establishing of a new dominion involve delegation of prescribed burdens and contributions required from those who are governed.

This notion of people or nations paying tribute in acknowledgment of a ruler’s supremacy affirms the eventuality of a universal messianic kingship. Tribute also typifies how
nations will offer their contributions to the messianic King and His kingdom (Ps. 68, 72, 76; Isa. 60).

The first attestation of mas appears in Jacob’s veiled blessings prophesying what will befall his sons in the last days, namely Issachar, meaning ‘man of hire’, from Leah’s hiring of Jacob with her mandrakes. Prior to being gathered to his people Jacob stated, “Issachar is a strong ass couching down between two burdens…and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute” (Gen. 49:15). Identified with the donkey, Issachar’s tribe became associated as one bearing burdens.

Further insight into why tribute and “bearing of burdens” has pertinence with Issachar is tied to its tribal location, which holds connection to the Messiah. At the time of his prophetic blessing, Issachar was near Nazareth in proximity to the Jezreel valley. Nazareth was not anticipated to be where the Messiah would emanate from. Yet, Isaiah’s clairvoyant prophesy (Isa. 11:1) led Matthew to make the connection (Matt. 2:23). Though the light of the Messiah’s ministry dawned near Nazareth, ultimately His glory would culminate within its proximity when Israel becomes such a “burden” that all nations gather against it in the valley of Megiddo in Issachar’s territory (Zech. 12:3). Isaachar encompassed several key places forecasted for this climatic conflict between good and evil at Armageddon (Josh. 19:17–23).

Isaachar was a progenitor to Tola who “rose to save Israel” (Judg. 10:1, NIV) and whose name bears figurative significance to Christ meaning ‘crimson worm’ while his tribe also finds tie with Deborah and King David (1 Sam. 8:20). Each of these are significant types of Christ. Issachar notably “bore burdens” for both Deborah and David at crucial points of their rule as in extending battle support to Deborah against the Canaanites at Mount Tabor, (Judg. 5:15) and aided David in his ultimate anointing (1 Chr. 12:32-40).

As initially stated, mas also denotes the temple tax, which was an offering governed by the laws that applied to all consecrated properties and which, from its connotations, quite
possibly reflects the various contributions for the privilege of participation and inclusion in the building of God’s millennial kingdom.

10:1—‘laid tribute upon the land, and upon the isles of the sea’—This phrase most often finds connection with the Lost Tribes of Israel. During the messianic time of redemptive gathering and judgment, it was often prophesied that God’s covenant would be extended to those scattered amongst the ‘isles of the sea’ (Isa. 11:11-12; 42:1-12; 51:4-5; Jer. 31:10; Ezek. 26:18).

Despite controversy amongst scholarship as to its precise geographical reference, the fact that the isles were distinctive is attested to by their being mentioned separately and apart from that of land masses. Nevertheless, all its passages tie with the identity of scattered Israel (Isa. 49:1-6; 24:15; 51:4-5, etc.).

Concerning the reasoning for this scattering, scripture is clear in saying it was intended to dispel uncleanness, punish unfaithfulness and disobedience, as well as to sow the earth with God’s chosen seed (Neh. 1:8; Ps. 106:27; Jer. 30:11; Ezek. 22:15).

As replete as Israel’s prophesied scattering was in scripture, its gathering was similarly foretold in prophecies (e.g., Jer. 29:14). The idea of gathering also integrally linked to this phrase has definite messianic allusion as demonstrated in all of its thirty-two attestations. Twenty-five of them occur in Isaiah’s writings, who is often characterized as the messianic prophet, with the remainder appearing in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zephaniah, Daniel, and Psalms 72 and 97, all of which also have messianic coloring.

Overall this phrase, with its applicability to the scattered House of Israel and their eventual gathering, finds connection with messianic fulfillment.

10:2—‘acts of his power and of his might’—תֹּקֶף (toqeph)—As reported by Strong’s this conveys ‘authority’, ‘power’, ‘strength’ and ‘energy’ to which HALOT adds, ‘might’ and ‘force’.
It most often finds relation to deity: extolling the power, greatness, and strength of the Lord (Job 26). Scripture repeatedly attributes power to God (Ps. 62:11). As the chronicler verifies, God is the ruler “over all the kingdoms of the nations, [with] all power and might in [His] hand, and no one can stand against [Him]” (2 Chr. 20:6 NIV). Here it is clearly conveyed that God has absolute authority and sovereignty, which affords Him the ability to confer it as He wills, which He does to His Son Jesus Christ (John 3:35). Ephesians 1:20-21(NIV) further elaborates the extent of such a conferral of authority saying, “God raised Him from the dead and seated Him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion...not only in this age but also in the one to come.” Christ too claims this authorized right to rule in Matthew 23:18-20 (NIV) saying, “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (John 17:2).

God’s power implies not only His authority but also signifies His might or strength. However, it can epitomize both the might of God’s supreme efficacy or the opposing potency of Satan. Similarly, other words descriptive of potency can likewise suggest such a polarizing use of power and authority such as in the use of mashal (meaning to rule, or have dominion) in Proverbs 29:2 versus Judges 14-15.

Beyond its two instances in Esther, toqeph occurs only once more—in Daniel 1—concerning the Antichrist’s rise and power in greater fulfillment of tribulation (Matt. 24:15-16). Antiochus typifies the principal antagonist of Christ—Satan—and his final assault at end times when he will unleash his pernicious power by investing authority in the Beast to subjugate the world’s kingdoms (2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:2).

In Revelation 13:2, the Antichrist’s potency emanates from Satan as shown in the statement “to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority.” However directly following the account of the great battle with the dragon, the voice of redemption in Revelation 12 declares, “and I heard a great voice in heaven, saying, ‘Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down’” (Rev. 12:10 ERV). Eventually God’s supreme
power and authority as the conquering Messiah will eclipse Satan’s limited efficacy, just as Mordecai’s “acts of power and might” here ultimately overturn Haman’s usurped potency (Esth. 10:2).

10:3—‘Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus’—This word as reported by Strong’s means ‘a repetition’ (i.e. a duplicate copy of a document), or ‘what is doubled’ (in amount); by implication, ‘a second’ (in order, rank, age, quality or location). HALOT adds to this, ‘second in command’ or ‘second in rank’.

Further insight comes from its initial occurrence regarding the delegation of Joseph “over all the land” by Pharaoh, who “made him to ride in the second chariot” (Gen. 41:43). Keller explains, “Joseph's elevation to viceroy of Egypt was reproduced in the Bible exactly according to protocol…invested with the insignia of his high office; he receives the ring, Pharaoh's seal, a costly linen vestment, and a golden chain. As viceroy, Joseph rode in the Pharaoh’s ‘second chariot’, Pharaoh’s being first” (1957).

Just as Joseph here foreshadows the future Messiah, scholars have also noted various thematic and linguistic parallels between his elevation (Gen. 41:41-43) and that of Mordecai’s (Esth. 6:7-11). Both express special proclaimed status, receipt of the king’s ring, specified robing, and the riding of a royal horse or chariot for presentation. Moore (1971) calls attention to Haman’s suggestion of placing a gold chain around Mordecai’s neck, which is mentioned by Josephus in the Judean Antiquities (Whiston, 1889) and also draws attention to the Septuagint’s use of a “robe of linen” for Mordecai rather than the “royal garment” (Esth. 6:8).

Joseph—a noted preeminent illustration for Christ—was also representative of Him as Israel’s birthright son with the double portion. The firstborn, much like the priest and king, fulfilled the interceding and authoritative role for his brethren (Exod.8: 2; Num. 8:16; 1 Chr. 5: 1, 2). In assuming his father’s stead, like Christ, he assumed the duty of redeeming his brethren who had sold themselves or lost their inheritance (Ruth 4:1-10; Lev. 25: 25; 47-49), along with being the avenger of blood and perpetuator of seed for
him who dies (Deut. 19:4-10; 25:5-10). Hence, beyond the right of succession, the firstborn was given a double portion in order to sustain such responsibilities indicative of the father (Deut. 21:17) and to bless all subsequent born—so that all nations could become joint heirs through Christ (Gen. 22:18).

In Genesis 43:12, 15, mishneh references the double silver payment Jacob instructed his sons to pay for securing their physical salvation from Egypt. Alter (2008) proposes that this parallels with the law of double restitution expressed in Exodus 22, which inevitably ties with Christ’s manifested efforts of reconciliation.

Peter made it clear that a “time of refreshing” will come when the Messiah is sent from the presence of the Lord for a “restitution of all things” (Acts 3:21-23), which will commence with Christ’s Second Coming. Isaiah 61:7 identifies the messianic period as the time of restitution with a double portion of blessing and possessions upon Israel.

This double portion also foreshadows judgment, as Babylon is also projected to receive her double portion, poured into a cup of judgment as restitution for her deeds (Rev. 18:6). The “day of disaster” entails this idea (Jer. 17:18; Zeph. 1:10) as related by God saying, “I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double; because they have defiled my land, they have filled mine inheritance with…abominable things” ( Isa. 61:7).

Beyond its connection to the firstborn, double portion, and inheritance, many of the contexts of mishneh reflect settings correlative with key messianic themes, such as: Passover and covenant renewal (Exod. 16:5, 22; Deut. 17:18; Josh. 8:32; 2 Kgs. 23:4; 2 Chr. 31:12; 34:22; 35:24), the day of disaster, or assembly of war against Israel (1 Sam. 17:30; 23:17; Jer. 16:18; 52:24; Zeph. 1:10), restoral with the year of Jubilee (Deut. 15:18), judgment upon Israel’s enemies, and the receiving of her king (1 Sam. 8:2; 2 Chr. 31:12; Zeph. 9:12).

As Strong’s indicates, the origin for this word derives from shanah, meaning ‘repeating or doing a second time’ which could imply inferences with the Messiah’s second coming.
With the addition of the definite article to *shanah*, it becomes integrally connected to Yom Kippur— the time for judgment, and Israel’s head of the year—Rosh Hashanah.

**10:3**—‘Mordecai the Jew was…accepted of the multitude’—רָצָה (ratsah)—This word’s primitive root conveys the meaning ‘to be pleased with’, but with specific regards to satisfying a debt according to Strong’s. Related concepts include ‘(be) accept (-able)’, ‘accomplish’, ‘set affection’, ‘approve’, ‘consent with’, ‘delight (self)’, ‘enjoy’, ‘(be, have a) favor (-able)’, ‘like’, ‘observe’, ‘pardon’, (be, have, take) ‘please (-ure)’ and ‘reconcile self’.

All of its other instances in the Old Testament directly express either what is acceptable and good, or what is not in God’s eyes, along with implications of obligatory fulfillment. For example, reflected by this word’s contexts are: sacrificial offerings in expression of payment for sin, restorative gestures with God, observance of His Sabbath, or becoming His servant and hireling. As mentioned, it can conversely be used to convey something as unacceptable to God, such as unobserved vows or a lack of restitution for sin.

Its first mention is in recounting Jacob’s desire of Esau’s acceptance of his gifts for restitution of prior offense (Gen. 32:20). This passage points to the idea of an acceptable offer, tied to the idea of restitution and redemption correlated with the loss of birthright. Jacob carefully prepared and presented Esau a multitude of gifts (*minchah*) to go before him in hopes of appeasing the past offense. The word *minchah* is most often used to indicate the ‘meat offering’, a subsidiary offering typifying Christ in life, as a perfect living sacrifice, which He offers to men “for their portion of [His] offerings” so they likewise can find delight in Him and His perfection (Lev. 6:17).

Here at the end of Esther we see Mordecai having made full restoration and restitution for damages incurred by Haman. In his so seeking of the good and peace of his seed, Mordecai is wholly accepted by the “multitudes of his brethren” with his greatness being noted next to the king, just as the Messiah likewise will be extolled with His messianic elevation.
10:3—‘Seeking the good of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed’—שָׁלוֹם (shalom)—This word is listed in Strong’s with root meanings of ‘peace’, ‘completeness’, ‘soundness’, and ‘welfare’. However, it is a weighty theological term embracing many further concepts like ‘fullness’, ‘prosperity’, ‘safety’, ‘security’, ‘rest’, ‘well-being’, ‘health’, ‘unity’, etc. Its root meaning seems to signify that of a sound state, one of wholeness within and without, or in all dimensions.

Shalom often finds correlation with God in the sense of a restored or right relationship with Him. This alludes to the fulfillment of some state of being or position that is unified or aligned with His purposes and will (e.g., Isa.32: 17; Rom. 14:7).

Though its use is scattered in the Old Testament, it is most heavily distributed in the texts referencing Joseph of Old, the Davidic and Solomonic dynasties, and throughout Jeremiah and Isaiah, all of which are often paired with messianic expectations. Isaiah’s portrayal of the millennial Messiah’s coming echoes the same sense projected in Mordecai’s own ascent to rulership, with vengeance and punishment for the wicked, rejoicing and salvation for the waiting, and power and glory in the “eyes of all nations” (Isa. 25:9; 35:4; 40:4-5; 52:10; 61:2).

Just as Mordecai (second to the King) speaks peace to all his seed round about, David (the shadow of the greater David) exhorts all to come to the City of Peace for peace in his Song of Ascent (Ps. 122: 7-8), while Christ is the one heralded as the King of Peace (Isa. 9:6).

10:3—‘speaking peace to all his seed’—זרע (zera)—Strong’s and HALOT give this word the definitions of ‘a sowing’, ‘seed’, or ‘offspring’, with further implication of ‘human seed’ which symbolically extends to ‘descendants’ or ‘posterity’.

Viewed as a singular unit, it can have both a singular and collective meaning. In Genesis 12:7 and 13:5 God makes promises to Abraham’s seed. Thus in these verses, the promise
of land extended to Abraham and his seed could reference Isaac, or it could also mean the collective of Abraham’s posterity.

In wordplay, Paul ties its singular form to Christ, as the ‘seed’ of Abraham and David (Heb. 2:16; Rom. 1:3). However, Genesis 21:12 amplifies the passage in Genesis 13 stating, “because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned” (NIV). Here the collective seed is further explicated as being generated by calling or reckoning (Rom 4:13; 9:6-7; 1 Pet. 1:23), not mere copulation. Christ was the physical singular seed (Gen. 3:15) who also generated the collective spiritual seed that then obtained the fuller promise of co-heirs (Gal. 3:29; Rom. 2:28-29).

Mordecai likewise secured salvation for his seed—God’s people. Thus the word ‘seed’ inherently has implied connection with Christ and those He provides spiritual birth for.

10:3—‘seeking the good of his people’—טֹב (tov)—Strong’s suggests for this word, used as an adjective, verb, and feminine and masculine noun, the general meanings of ‘beautiful’, ‘good things’, ‘welfare’, ‘prosperity’ and ‘happiness’, with translations of “pleasant”, “agreeable”, or as HALOT suggests “‘good’ in all kinds of meanings”.

Its prolific use prohibits a copious examination of all of its adjectival and nominal occurrences, but consideration of its twenty-five verbal attestations helps shed more insight as to its intended meaning.

With each passage, it functions as an indicator or assessment of things either being aligned or misaligned with God’s redemptive purposes reflected in His plan of salvation as orchestrated by the Messiah. All twenty-five instances allude to promoting the prosperity of God’s people, implicative of divine restoration, redemption, and salvation as disclosed through elements such as covenants, ordinances and laws, unity and peace, His everlasting name, etc. A majority of these attestations demonstrate correlation with messianic fulfillment.
This gives rise to further parallel between Mordecai and Joseph, one of the principal illustrations for Christ. Ratification for divinely designed salvation comes from Genesis 50:20. Joseph, after rising to his high station, states that despite what had been exacted against him “intended to do [him] harm, God intended it for good (tov) to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives” (NIV). Here tov verifies God’s intent (the saving of many lives), which was purposefully and fully carried out by Christ who was appointed, as Esther and Mordecai also exemplify.
CONCLUSIONS

The primary purpose of this thesis was to provide documentary evidence for substantial underlying christological content in the Book of Esther. Over 310 instances of lexical usage and associated figurative interpretation are documented to varying degrees of detail. Hundreds of accompanying references ground the symbolisms in the scriptural canon and other key religious literature.

I have conducted a lexically-based evaluation, often built upon Hebrew content, of various words and phrases within the text to ascertain their meaning. Coupling this with an investigation of word usage, symbolism, narrative sequencing, intertextual references, and allusions, I have demonstrated the existence of a rich array of types of Christ, Satan, and eternal principles throughout the book.

Examples from each of Mohr’s (1974) list of seven key criteria for assessing the validity of a primary type are thus plentiful in Esther. To summarize, I have found examples that are:

1. Progressive: Esther demonstrates progressiveness from its beginning. The initial scenes of lavish royal feasting in chapters one and two—wherein a queen is banished and another is chosen—serve as a prologue to the narrative. The selection of Esther as queen in conjunction with Mordecai’s key advancement becomes vital to the Jews’ salvation in the Persian Empire and ultimate peace for the kingdom. This introductory discourse of the narrative in its historical framework is also full of figurative language typifying the heavenly king’s throne room and His temple on high, where a plan is primordially presented, a rebel is ousted, and a Savior is chosen to redeem God’s people. This progresses through the fulfillment of the atonement until its culmination when the full eradication of evil is achieved through the majesty and power of the Messiah. All sorrow turns to joy and universal peace prevails with His reign.
2 & 3. Prefigurative and Predictive: Both of these aspects are shown throughout the narrative of Esther. One instance that exemplifies this is the exchange between Haman and his wife, Zeresh, when she forecasts Haman’s fall if Mordecai proves to be the “seed of the Jews” (6:13). This typologically infers that Christ, “The Seed of the Jews” will secure the salvation of God’s people and ensure the fall of Satan.

4. Purposeful: The purposefulness of the historical Esther text is found in the ultimate deliverance of the Jews, and rise of Esther and Mordecai’s prominence, whereas its greater purpose is typologically realized in the salvation of mankind and inauguration of the Messianic Age.

5. Proven: The typological text of Esther equally proves to harmonize with scripture through its sequencing of God’s plan of salvation with its essential roles of an adversary and Redeemer being depicted respectively through Mordecai and Esther.

6. Picturesque: Vivid descriptions and direct dramatization of objects, persons, and events in the text help to discernably portray aspects of the plan of salvation such as Satan’s contempt of Christ and His malicious designs for mankind.

7. Pure: Esther and Mordecai depict Christ in His atoning and future Messianic role. Their tandem role for the salvation for mankind is displayed when Mordecai is noted donning sackcloth and ashes, while Esther instead dons royal robes.

As evidenced throughout the examples in this thesis, ample intertextual connections also appear. Recall the reiteration of Nehemiah’s same articulations to the king regarding his commission request for restorative purposes (1:19; 5:4). Another phrase alludes to Saul’s loss of the kingdom through his disobedience to God (1:19). A psalmic iteration of God’s position of protection (46:5) parallels Mordecai’s presence in the “midst of the city” (Esth. 2:1). A striking reiterative use of the introductory formulaic archaizing phrase in chapter two not only locates the text in an unbounded timeframe but serves to logically connect its sequencing in the larger narrative of God’s redemptive purposes.
The evaluation of the words and their usage also displayed much of the figurative language inherent to typology as shown in the following:

Irony—Esther is a story replete with irony: it begins with the fact that in a kingdom where all wives should obey their husbands, Queen Vashti refuses the king’s command. One of the most obvious ironies comes later with Haman. Assuming he is whom the king wished to honor, he is told to orchestrate the pageantry honoring Mordecai, the one he hated, and is ultimately hanged by the king’s command on the very gallows he had devised to destroy Mordecai.

Eponymy—The ethnoynym “Agagite” critically ties Haman to Saul and Agag, the dynastic king of the Amalekites. The Amalekites—the Jews’ first enemies devoted for total execration—were the eponymous ancestors of Amalek, a descendant of Esau. This evokes the conflict between Israel and Edom, but also the more primary contentious rivalry between Jacob and Esau—the forsaken firstborn.

Symbolism—Some of the explicit symbols utilized throughout Esther as visible tokens to convey over-arching monarchial authority are the king’s signet ring, golden scepter, and the crowns.

Type—The gallows constructed by Haman serves as a type, or token, or prefiguration of a future event of Christ’s crucifixion.

Metonymy—Just as the “gate” where Mordecai and Haman often appear figuratively denoting the seat of government, so are items such as “castle/palace of Shushan” or the “court” metonymously used.

Metaphor—There are vivid resemblances produced by the prolific use of metaphor with terms such as ‘sleep’, ‘virgins’, ‘silver’, ‘posts’, ‘vessels’, ‘throne’ or conceptualization of the ‘heart’ as the container for the covenant, etc.
Parables—Mohr suggests that typology is inherently interlaced with parables as they present, explain or expand truth. The ten feasts of Esther’s allude to the ongoing marriage feast of the King’s Son, the great parable of the Wedding Feast, as Long so aptly delineates in his book.

Idioms—Both of the words “seed” and “know” are used idiomatically in Esther to reference something other than what they explicitly communicate. Other phrases are likewise so employed such as when the king questions Esther as to her request assuring her “it shall be given you, even up to half my kingdom” (5:3). This idiom—indicative of a benevolent monarch’s gratitude for some immense service rendered—is decidedly telling here within the typology.

Hyperbole—Beginning with six months of the revelry of banqueting to Haman’s fifty-foot high gallows, the narrative is full of exaggeration. This could be typical of the carnivalesque literary mode, which it may also reflect.

Synecdoche—The succinct yet inclusive way to delineate the extent of God’s dominion was accomplished through the use of merism in the initial verse of the first chapter of Esther.

Allusions—Multiple linguistic correspondences draw the reader’s attention to events of the Old Testament that foreshadow fulfillment in the Messiah as realized in Christ. Some of these include the rescue of Lot, the Exodus and Passover, and personages considered typifying of Christ evidenced through analogy between their lives and Christ’s earthly life. Some of these allusions drawn in inference to Mordecai and Esther include Adam (as the federation of mankind), Abraham (the father of nations), Isaac (the Firstborn), Job (the righteous sufferer), Nehemiah (the restorer), Moses (the Mediator) etc.
Colors and Numbers—According to Mohr and other scholars, both color and number find association with symbolic interpretation and can serve as types in and of themselves, and do so as well in the book of Esther.

In conclusion, these plentiful findings combine to give evidence for a valid christological typology. A major consequence is to recognize the book of Esther and its roles of Mordecai and Esther as yet another lens from which to view Christ as the Messiah in His various roles of redemption.

Further research beyond this thesis seems possible and likely to produce interesting results. For example, by design this thesis has focused almost exclusively on one Hebrew text. Evidence exacted from comparison with the Greek texts may additionally elucidate, substantiate or elaborate on the finding presented here. For example, the Septuagint mentions Mordecai’s “golden chain”, reflective of Joseph’s which is rich in imagery and symbolism.

This thesis has primarily focused on breath, documenting as many relevant instances in the entire running text as possible. More work remains to pursue in greater depth these or other words, phrases, and idioms. Elaboration of recurrent themes such as Abraham’s redemption of Lot or of the “first born” or surviving “remnant” could likely provide further evidence of a typology for redemption.

Exploration of other passages dealing with prominent biblical women to identify similar typologies remains an understudied topic.

A deeper examination of lexical semantics appears promising. Exploring the use of binyanim (i.e. Hebrew verbal inflectional and derivational word forms) might establish patterns of usage between the intertextual linking of passages. For example, does the semantic field of the piel form reflect agency more of humans or of deity? Frequency and distributional studies of words and their collocates could also uncover recurrent themes and/or patterns.
Overall this assessment of Esther as a valid christological interpretation posits promise of other fruitful reflection, but in particular for greater lexically-based evaluations.

By way of final remark, all truth can be circumscribed into one great whole, for which scripture is verifying. To quote Bullinger (2005), “Only one conclusion is possible, and that is that the Bible has but one Author—an eternal, omniscient Author, designing, superintending, working, and carrying out His own infinite plans”, which is ultimately to bring to pass the salvation of mankind.
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