

## The Chiasm of Esther

The book of Esther is written as chiasm, a literary structure where the words or themes of the first section of a passage are repeated in reverse order in the second. The plot's turning point comes in the middle of the book (Esth 6:10).

- A 1 The feast of the king (1:1-12)
  - 2 The king deposes Queen Vashti (1:13-20)
  - 3 Letters sent throughout the empire (1:21-22)
  
- B Esther granted the royal crown (2:1-18)
  
- C 1 The king's life is saved (2:19-23a)
  - 2 Those plotting to kill the king are killed (2:23b)
  
- D 1 Haman's plot (3:1-6)
  - 2 Haman to king: "**If it pleases the king, let it be decreed...**" (3:7-9)
  - 3 Edict in all languages, sealed with the king's signet, sent by couriers (3:10-13a)
  - 4 **Destroy, kill**, annihilate Jews and **plunder** their goods (3:13b-14)
  - 5 Result: Susa in confusion at edict, Morecai dresses in sackcloth; grief (3:15-4:3)
  
- E Mordecai and Esther foil Haman's plot (4:4-17)
  
- F 1 Esther invites the king and Haman to her first banquet (5:1-4)
  - 2 The king asks Esther, "**What is your petition?**" (5:5-6a)
  - 3 "**Even to half of the kingdom it shall be done.**" (5:6b-8)
  - 4 Haman builds a gallows to hang Mordecai (5:9-14)
  
- G The king said to (Haman), "What is to be **done for the man whom the king desires to honor?**" (6:1-5)
  - H Haman: "Let them bring a royal **robe** which the king has worn, **and the horse** on which the king has ridden... and let **the robe and the horse** be handed over to one of the king's most noble princes **and** let them **array** the man whom the king desires to honor **and lead him** on horseback **through the city square, and proclaim before him**, "Thus it shall be done to the person whom the king desires to honor." (6:6-9)
    - I TURNING POINT: "Then the king said to Haman, "Take quickly the robes and the horse as you have said, and do so to Mordecai the Jew...." (6:10)
      - H' So Haman took **the robe and the horse, and arrayed** Mordecai, **and lead him on horseback through the city square, and proclaimed before him**, (6:11a)
        - G' "Thus it shall be **done to the man whom the king desires to honor.**" (6:11b-14)
  
- F' 1 Esther invites the king and Haman to her second banquet (7:1)
  - 2 The king asks Esther, "**What is your petition?**" (7:2a)
  - 3 "**Even to half of the kingdom it shall be done**" (7:2b-4)
  - 4 Haman is hanged on the gallows he built for Mordecai (7:5-10)
  
- E' Mordecai and Esther are given Haman's estate (8:1-2)
  
- D' 1 Haman's plot averted (8:3-4)
  - 2 Esther to king: "**If it pleases the king... let it be written...**" (8:5-8)
  - 3 Edict in all languages, sealed with the king's signet, sent by couriers (8:9-10)
  - 4 **Destroy, kill, annihilate** enemies and **plunder** their goods (8:11-14)
  - 5 Result: Susa rejoices at edict; Mordecai dresses in royal robes; joy (8:15-17)
  
- C' 1 The Jews' lives are saved (9:1)
  - 2 Those plotting to kill the Jews are killed (9:2-10)
  
- B' Esther granted a request (9:11-16)
  
- A' 1 The Feast of Purim(9:17-19)
  - 2 The king promotes Mordecai (10:1-3)
  - 3 Letters sent throughout the empire ('9:10-32)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 163.