

Hans Sachs

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**[This translation has been provided by Sophie Kriegel and is published with her permission]**

Very wonderful  
beautiful and sincere poems,  
religious and worldly,

all kinds of manners, serious tragedies, lovely comedies, strange plays,  
entertaining talks, longing mourning, wondrous fables, including other funny  
antics and farces etc.

there are three hundred and six and seventy;  
among them a hundred and seventy pieces, which were never published before, yet  
are useful to the world and devoutly published

by the clever and widely known

Hans Sachs,

A lover of German poetry,

Collected and completed between the years 1516 and 1558.

Printed in Nuremberg by Christoff Heußler

In the year 1558.

## **Comedy. The Entire History of Hester**

to be recited, containing xiii persons and three acts.

The persons in this comedy:

1. The Herald
2. Ahaschweros, the King
3. His Court Master
4. The first Count
5. The other Count
6. Haman, the Count
7. Hatech
8. Satech, two Chamberlains or Companions
9. Hester, the Queen
10. The first virgin
11. The other virgin
12. Mardocheus, the Jew
13. The Jester<sup>1</sup>

In the year 1536, on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of October.

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<sup>1</sup> The German word “narr” is a Jester at princely courts and the theater (especially in the Commedia dell’Arte), mostly in colorful clothes, appearing with bells and dunce cap (*Duden Online-Wörterbuch*).

## Act I

The Herald<sup>2</sup> enters, bows and says:

May God bestow peace, mercy and salvation upon  
 The royal palace Susan  
 Assembled are the noble, vesten<sup>3</sup>  
 And chosen guests!  
 God brought you together,  
 Because tonight  
 To you will come  
 The mighty King Ahaschweros, rich, magnificent,  
 Who reigns powerfully from India  
 To Ethiopia,  
 [Who] invited with his hand  
 From a hundred and twenty lands,  
 Out of his majesty's mercy,  
 The highest Counts  
 To the precious hall  
 To a royal meal.  
 There, wonderful things<sup>4</sup> will happen.  
 Now be quiet and pay attention!<sup>5</sup>  
 Now the King comes.<sup>6</sup>

The Herald leaves. Here enters the Herald with the King, his Count, the Court Master  
 Amnon, his Chamberlain<sup>7</sup> and the Jester. The King speaks:

You dear followers,<sup>8</sup> sit down at the table!  
 Be merry and jolly!  
 After this we will dance and duel,  
 Break many knightly spears,  
 Hunt all kinds of amusement.  
 Everybody can do as he pleases.  
 This shall last seven days.  
 You there, tell them to serve!

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<sup>2</sup> The German word "ernhold," a differently spelled version of the German word "herold" for a herald

<sup>3</sup> The German word "vesten" is used in the Middle Ages in connection with the title of a knight, associated with the words for strong and grave

<sup>4</sup> singular in German but in tales often used as a non-countable noun

<sup>5</sup> uses word mercket, which is related to the action of marking something so one can remember it later

<sup>6</sup> in German the line continues with the words zum wol-leben, which means literally to live well, perhaps it is meant as a wish like may he live well

<sup>7</sup> In German "Kemmerling"; the title given to the noble men that took care of the king's chambers

<sup>8</sup> The German word "getreue" evokes association with a loyal follower since it derives from the word for loyalty

[p. 112]

The Jester:<sup>9</sup>

Master, you spoke good news.  
 My stomach became empty  
 And started to growl.  
 I want the steward<sup>10</sup> to come.

The Jester runs off. The King speaks:

You mighty counts and lords,  
 You came to me from far  
 Lands as my loyal regents,  
 A royal celebration is provided here.  
 God gave me power and honor  
 And wealth as sand on the seashore,  
 In addition the most beautiful wife,  
 With an angelic body,  
 Her beauty surpassing all women.  
 I will let you look at her also.  
 Chamberlain, go! Tell her to come to me  
 In her royal adornment  
 Vasti the Queen come here!  
 Speak, it is my will!

The Court Master and his Chamberlain go after the Queen; the Herald speaks:

O mighty King and Lord,  
 I have travelled far and wide  
 From sunrise to sunset<sup>11</sup>  
 Through many kingdoms broad and wide  
 And yet nowhere did I find anything comparable.  
 God will multiply your kingdom  
 With wisdom and justice<sup>12</sup>  
 From now to eternity!

[p. 113]

The Court Master, Chamberlain and Jester come in; the Court Master speaks:  
 O mighty lord and emperor,

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<sup>9</sup> In contrast to the other characters (most particularly the King), the Jester does not use Latin terms.

<sup>10</sup> The German word “truchsess” was used in the Middle Ages for the person overseeing the preparation and execution of meals at a court

<sup>11</sup> The reference to the sun is not explicit in the German text, but the most likely interpretation of the line

<sup>12</sup> In German the line can be interpreted as if God acted directly

The ruler of worlds<sup>13</sup> and conquerer.  
Queen Vasti does not want to come.

The Jester speaks:

She secretly roars against it,  
Should all women have their will,  
Around you they would not be still,  
As is the disobedient women's custom.

The King speaks:

What? She does not want to come to me?  
Now advice me, you lords, freely,  
How shall the Queen be punished,  
And search the laws,  
Because she has disgraced me!

One of the Counts speaks:

O King, understand the act correctly!  
The woman has not only disgraced  
Your Royal Highness,  
But she also become through this act  
For all Counts in all your land  
An example of vice and disgrace.  
Wherever women will hear this,  
They will rebel just the same  
Be disobedient against their men  
From now on in all your lands.  
Every time the Queen is thought of,  
Men will be despised.  
What a brawl and bickering it will be!

The Jester speaks:

Why are you allowed to chatter about women?  
I advise you, to let it happen amicably.  
You have overlooked<sup>14</sup> the shame too long,  
Because now it has become normal,  
That everybody wants to be master of the house,  
This has lasted for a long time  
In all countries far and wide.  
What do you want to do differently now?

The Counts put their heads together. The King speaks:

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<sup>13</sup> Evokes the association to God as the ruler of all worlds

<sup>14</sup> The German word "Übersehen" works similar to overlook, it can mean to miss out on something as well as to watch something knowingly/supervise

Dear followers, take up your arms,<sup>15</sup>  
 To punish this evil deed!  
 I am overcome with rage.

The other Count speaks:

Oh Your Royal Highness,  
 Our council has found,  
 Because she violated your reputation,  
 That the Queen will be dismissed  
 Of her royal honours  
 And that from now on she shall never  
 Come to you, and her titles  
 Will be bestowed upon another woman,  
 More humble than all other women.  
 Accordingly<sup>16</sup> the act shall be proclaimed  
 In your kingdom and land,  
 To shame the proud woman,  
 So that the women throughout your lands  
 Will honor their men,  
 Be obedient and submissive,  
 As befits decent women.

The King speaks:

This advice pleases me well.  
 One shall draw up the dispatches,  
 That the man shall be master of the house.  
 Court Master, implement it properly!

The Court Master leaves. The Jester speaks:

I will let you send out the mandate all right.  
 You will not patch up the fur (coat).<sup>17</sup>  
 You will not cast out the Henpecked [man],  
 He will nevertheless stay master of the house.  
 But if you want to overcome him with force,  
 You will have to lie alone [*in your bed*].

[p. 115]

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<sup>15</sup> The German term “sachen” means objects, though the structure of the phrase allows the association to weapons. Perhaps “sachen” is chosen to rhyme with “machen” from the previous line.

<sup>16</sup> “Danach” references something already said, most likely the council according to which the king should act

<sup>17</sup> Proverb No. 1: Mentioned in this particular form in the Sprichwörter-Lexicon; meaning you will not accomplish a task on your own or you will not overcome an obstacle on your own

The Court Master comes and speaks to the Chamberlain:  
 You Chamberlain, run to the office!  
 You will find letters and money there.

The Chamberlains or Companions leave.  
 The Counts speak together; the first Count speaks:  
 The Queen has upset the King.  
 He sits there in resentment and sorrow.  
 Give me another one,<sup>18</sup> so that,  
 His Majesty will forget  
 The first and let go of his sorrow!

The other Count speaks:  
 We will do so.

They approach him. The first Count speaks:  
 Mighty King, during the night,  
 We held council and thought:  
 You shall have men look  
 For noble beautiful virgins,<sup>19</sup>  
 That will be brought here into the chambers for women<sup>20</sup>,  
 So that they will be adorned and embellished;  
 And whichever one the King will like,  
 She shall be Queen of them all!

The King speaks:  
 I like the advice.  
 So do it, that one will bring me virgins  
 Of high and noble birth,  
 Of low birth, of virtuous  
 Parents and good name!

They all leave.

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<sup>18</sup>The term “ein andre” is female in German, most likely a reference to another woman

<sup>19</sup> German uses the same word for young women and virgins

<sup>20</sup> those rooms in a castle that were specifically meant for the noble women and their staff



[p. 116]

Act II

Mardocheus enters with Hester, he secretly talks to her:

Oh Hester, modest, chaste, devout,  
 Come with me to the women's chambers  
 And do not tell anyone at this time  
 That you are a Jew's daughter!  
 Be God-fearing! Trust in God  
 And stay with other virgins  
 Humble, quiet, modest and kind,  
 Modest, withdrawn and gentle  
 Until the King will send for you!  
 Who knows, what God has planned for you?

Hester lifts her hand and speaks:

Mardoche, dear cousin mine,  
 I will be most obedient to you.  
 God and you are my refuge.  
 I ask you to hold me dear,  
 Because I do not have anyone else, who is true to me.  
 My parents left me early.  
 That is why I am a miserable orphan.

Mardocheus speaks:

I hope, you will have a good journey,  
 God will be with you always.  
 Come! Let us go into the women's chambers!

They both leave.

The King comes in with the herald and the Court Master, and speaks:

Vasti, the Queen, was cast out.  
 Did you announce, all over my kingdom,  
 To look for young women in all places?

The Court Master speaks:

Oh great King, according to your word  
 Many beautiful, delicate young women

We have safely assembled in the women's chamber  
Coming from all lands.

[p. 117]

The King speaks:

So go and make one of them come to me,  
So my pain will diminish,  
Because I am full of sorrow!

The Court Master and the Herald leave. The Jester speaks:

Master,<sup>21</sup> be a little ashamed!  
You want to take another woman?  
Did the first one not teach you well?  
Is your heart heated again  
By love? Look! There comes your light  
Shining like the morning star.

The Court Master and the Herald come.

Hester is followed by two virgins. The King speaks, while she walks:

Oh God, with such select and delicate,  
Beautiful and noble manner  
Is Hester, the virgin, adorned,  
Perfectly shaped,  
Moral, chaste, good appearance!  
Oh Hester, sit next to me here!  
Take the royal crown!  
I chose you above all  
To replace Vasti, the Queen,  
You shall be mine forever.

Hester bends down, receives the crown,  
sits down next to the King and speaks:

Oh King, mighty and glorious,  
Your nobility and crown are too honorable,  
Your mercy and grace are too great for me,  
You are too great; but still  
I will submit and become yours.  
Your good will shall happen to me!

The King speaks:

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<sup>21</sup> "Herrlein" is a diminutive of "Herr" (master)

Sit down at the table, you dear sirs,  
 From all lands far and wide!  
 We shall have a new wedding  
 And bury all the sorrows of the heart.

**[p. 118]**

They sit down at the table.

Mardocheus comes, speaks into the Queen's ear and the Queen speaks:

Oh royal Highness,  
 My cousin told me,  
 That you have two men at the court  
 With the names of Theres and Bigton,  
 They secretly made the pact,  
 Tomorrow morning, before the day will break,  
 They want to kill your majesty.

The King speaks:

Court Master, catch the villains!  
 And should they be found with any weapons,<sup>22</sup>  
 Let them hang on their neck from a tree!

They get up from the table. The Court Master leaves.

The Jester speaks:

Master,<sup>23</sup> look around! By my honor  
 You will find more villains  
 Who come after you and your kingdom.  
 Beware of those that want to compliment you!

The Queen leaves. The King speaks:

You sirs, listen! The count Haman  
 Shall be the one next to my throne.  
 Before him you shall bend your knee.  
 Herewith I order you all to do this.

The King leaves. Here Haman struts up and down, they all bend down, except  
 for Mardocheum, who sits by the door.

A Chamberlain speaks:

Haman, you Count of serene highness,

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<sup>22</sup> "schwenk" seems to be the verb "schwencken" which means to swing, was turned into a noun so it might mean weapons

<sup>23</sup> "Herrle" is another diminutive of master

Mardocheus, a daring Jew,  
Does not bend his knee before you.  
I swear by my faith.

Haman, the Count, speaks:

Ay, am I alone not good enough for him?  
I will end the pride  
Of this foreigner from Babylon,  
This proud stubborn man.  
However he shall not die alone,  
But all Jews in general,  
Who have exterminated  
My people the Amalekites.

Haman again passes Mardocheum, unhonored; he spits.

The Jester speaks:

Nice to watch such a proud guy!  
How has the fool so little remorse!  
So because the old man does not honor him,  
He seeks a fight.

The King comes in. Haman bows for the King and speaks:

Sir King, there are many people  
Dispersed all over your kingdom,  
They have a special God,  
Do not keep your laws nor orders,  
But have their own law,  
Have a different nature after all.  
It will not do to keep<sup>24</sup> them alive.  
Should it please you, so let it be written,  
That one shall strangle them on a particular day.  
Better to exterminate them,  
Before they cause a revolt.  
Should your majesty advise such things,  
Then I will give you on top a treasure  
Of ten zentners<sup>25</sup> of silver.

The King gives Haman his ring and speaks:

---

<sup>24</sup> “Beleben” can mean both to stay or to stay alive

<sup>25</sup> The German term “zentner” refers to a unit of weight, which is equal to one-hundred pounds.

Haman, so have my seal ring!  
 I make this people yours.  
 Also you should have the silver!  
 All things shall be done according to your will.

The Jester speaks:

Oh master,<sup>26</sup> what a child you are!  
 Jealousy made that one blind.<sup>27</sup>  
 That is why he wants to make some noise.  
 It would be better for you to look after your own matters  
 And stop believing every sycophant, of everything  
 He brings to you, beware  
 You do not know? One said in olden times,  
 A walking man should ride donkeys.<sup>28</sup>

[p 120]

Haman gives a letter to the Chamberlain and speaks:

Go! Send heralds to all borders  
 To announce this sentence,  
 That on the thirteenth day  
 Of the month of Adar all Jews  
 Child, woman and man shall be killed.  
 Also you shall put up a notice  
 Here in Susan in this castle.  
 Go hurry! It is a large endeavor.

One of the Chamberlains puts up a notice on the door.

Mardocheus reads it and speaks:

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<sup>26</sup> diminutive again

<sup>27</sup> Proverb No. 2: Describing someone as blinded by jealousy, is still common today. Found the following saying “Neid und Zorn sind und machen blind” (jealousy and anger are and make blind) found in: *Lexikon der Sprichwörter des Romanisch-Germanischen Mittelalters*, edited by Samuel Singer, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1996, p.29, nr 9.3.

<sup>28</sup> Proverb No. 3: This most obviously refers to Aesop’s Fable on “The Miller, His Son, and Their Ass,” whose summary moral is: “The old man, vexed and ashamed, made the best of hiw way home again, convinced that by endeavoring to please everybody had pleased nobody, and lost his Ass in the bargain” (George Tyler Townsend, trans., *Aesop’s Fables*, London: Routledge, 1867, p.p. 101-2). Hans Sachs himself rewrites this fable as “Der Waldbruder mit dem Esel,” *The Forester with the Donkey*—whose summarizing moral is: Nun merk’ bei dieser alten Fabel, / Gedichtet uns zu einer Parabel: Wer hier in dieser Welt will leben, / Der muss sich ganz darein ergeben, / Dass er der Welt nichts recht thun kann / In allen” (Hans Sachs, “Spruchgedichte 35,” in *Ausgewählte Poetische Werke*, Ed. Karl Pannier, Leipzig: Philipp Reclm, jun. Accessed 3 June 2016, <<http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/hans-sachs-ausgewahlte-poetische-werke-5219/37>>).

Oh no, no, Juda! What grievance!  
 We shall die in a single day  
 Through the guilt and right of Haman,  
 It is done to us out of jealousy and pride,  
 Because I did not bow,  
 Which is reserved to my God?

Mardocheus leaves crying. Hester comes in with her virgins<sup>29</sup>.

One of the virgins speaks:

Madame, you should know:  
 Mardocheus has torn  
 His frock and put on a bag in grief  
 Over his nakedness  
 And has put ashes on his head  
 And cries much; believe me!

Hester speaks sorrowfully to a Chamberlain:

Hatoch, go to Mardocheo!  
 Find out about his heart's sorrow and pain,  
 Why he put on the mourning dress!  
 Inform me of this!

**[p. 121]**

The Chamberlain leaves. The Jester speaks:

You make quite a fuss tonight.  
 I would like to dance with thrushes,<sup>30</sup>  
 But the cook does not want to prepare it.  
 I wish he had Saint Urban.<sup>31</sup>

Hatech, the Chamberlain, comes back and speaks:

Oh Hester, Mardocheus bemoans,  
 How Haman accused the entire Jewish people,  
 They are under the King's highest imperial ban,  
 They shall, within a few short days,  
 Be beaten to death throughout his entire kingdom.

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<sup>29</sup> maids

<sup>30</sup> Proverb No. 4: The German term “zenen” another form of “ziemer” (denoting certain kinds of thrushes), who over time came to be associated with people of questionable morals—a habitually drunk person, or people of loose morals.

<sup>31</sup> Proverb No. 5. “Das dich Sankt Urbansplag beste” (shall Saint Urban's plague befall you) found in Sprichwörter-Lexicon under Sakt Urban, nr 35; Saint Urban was associated with wine, excessive drinking and a specific fever caused by an overconsumption of alcohol

Therefore, you shall go to the King  
And plead for the Jews.

Hester throws her hands up in horror, looks up to the sky and speaks:  
Oh no what fear and great misery!  
Have mercy, dear God,  
That your beloved people shall [*not*] die,  
In a single day completely ruined  
Through a man's wrongful accusation!  
Go and tell Mardocheo,  
If I go to the King without being summoned,  
I will lose my life!  
He knows the King's law well.

The Chamberlain speaks:

Mardocheus told me in the end,  
You should not value your life.  
Perhaps you were meant to rescue  
The entire Jewish people  
Will be done justice<sup>32</sup> by God at this time;  
That is why you shall go to the King.

[p. 122]

Queen Hester speaks:

So go! Say to Mardocheo,  
That he shall convince  
The Jews to fast and pray!  
I and my virgins will do the same  
Will ask God alone  
For help for our people.  
Afterwards I will go to the King,  
So I may earn mercy for my people,  
That they will not be ruined so miserably,  
No matter whether I live or die.

They all leave.

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<sup>32</sup> might also refer to the German word for revenge, but more likely meant in the sense of God doing justice to his people

## Act III

The King comes in with all his court and sits down.

The Jester speaks:

You lords, how come you are all sobbing?  
Is there no one amongst you, who is jolly?  
If I had my pipe, I would play some  
Music for you, so you all would laugh.

Hester, the Queen, comes in with her court of virgins;  
The King addresses her seriously, she bends down to his feet;

The King hands her his scepter

And speaks:

Oh Hester, Queen, what upsets you?  
Do not worry about me  
That you came without being summoned!  
This law was given to the subjects  
Not to you, who reigns,  
With me in my kingdom you rule.  
Be merry and tell me what you seek!  
I will happily give it to you  
Up to half the kingdom.

Hester touches the scepter, stands up and speaks:

Oh King, greatly mighty,  
As I looked at you great adornment,  
My mind left me,  
Forgive my fainted soul.  
This is why I cannot tell  
You my request at this hour  
And it is alone my wish,  
That you and Haman with you  
Will come tonight to my supper.

[p. 123]

The King speaks:

Oh Hester, with pleasure.  
Come, Haman! Let us grant her wish!



The Jester speaks:

Eating, drinking and banqueting  
I praise for its races and tournaments,  
For dancing and for string music.  
Nothing makes me happier.

The King gives her his hand and leaves with her.

Haman goes to and fro, yet un-honored by Mardoche; talks to himself:

The King has elevated my honors,  
The Queen will also increase my reputation,  
That I shall eat with her alone.  
Still my heart is full of sorrow,  
Because I see the Jew in front of me,  
Who does not bend his knee.  
The King gives me what I desire,  
That I can have him hanged from a tree  
Fifty fathoms high at my house,  
Which is yet to be prepared.

Mardocheus leaves. The Jester speaks:

How can you be so sick for honor?  
You are a greater fool than me.  
You have great honors and want more.  
Look, that your luck will not turn!<sup>33</sup>

Haman leaves.

The King with his Chamberlains comes in,  
sits down in a chair, acts as if he wants to nap, and speaks:

You servants, meanwhile read me  
Out of my Chronicle  
A story or two,  
Till my eyes will close.

**[p. 124]**

The Chamberlain opens a book and reads:

In days not long gone by  
Two chamberlains Theres and Bigton

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<sup>33</sup> Proverb No. 6. "Das Glück verkehrt sich leicht, ist jetzt schön, bald böse" (The luck turns easily, now its nice, soon bad) found in Sprichwörter-Lexicon under Glück, nr 213

Wanted to kill his royal majesty.  
 This you were told  
 By Mardocheum.  
 So you had the two villains hanged.  
 And thus you prevented your death.

The King speaks:

What good was done to Mardocheo,  
 That he kept me alive?

The Chamberlain speaks:

Nothing was given to him.

The King speaks:

Look outside! Who walks around in the yard?

The other Chamberlain looks outside and speaks:

Gracious master, it is Haman.

The King speaks:

Go! Order him to come inside!

The Chamberlain calls out:

Haman, go inside to your King!

Haman comes and the King speaks:

What shall one do (tell me, Haman!)  
 For a man, whom the King wants  
 To give great honor and reverence?

Haman bows and speaks:

The King should have him quickly  
 Dressed in his royal crimson  
 And put on him his royal crown  
 And afterwards make him sit on his horse.  
 Hereafter he shall be led  
 Under loud proclamation  
 By the King's Count through all the streets.  
 So one will honor a man,  
 The King wants to give honors

The King speaks:

Haman, your advice pleases me well.  
 Therefore, it shall be.  
 Go, Haman, and take quickly  
 Dress, crown and [place on a] horse with reverence!  
 Lead the Jew Mardocheum  
 On my horse through the city  
 In all the manners described by you!

**[p. 125]**

Haman takes dress, crown, walks out; the King follows him.

The Jester speaks:

Friend, you have overlooked a thing.  
 You thought, that honor would happen to you.  
 How do you like the bad taste of this news now?  
 You have to bend down before the Jew.  
 You were not blessed by yourself today.<sup>34</sup>  
 It will quickly rain on your crossbow.<sup>35</sup>

The Jester makes a foolish gesture after him,<sup>36</sup> and all leave.

Queen Hester comes in with her virgins,  
 preparing the table, she speaks:

Look to it, that all things are in the hall  
 For this royal meal,  
 Because the King will come tonight  
 With Haman, enemy to all Jews!

The other virgin speaks:

Madam, do not worry!  
 All things are in great order  
 And prepared perfectly well.  
 If only the honored guests would come already!

**[p. 126]**

The King enters with Haman, offers the Queen his hand and speaks:

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<sup>34</sup> Proverb No. 8: Probably connected to the still popular saying to not be blessed with something, "*nicht gesegnet sein mit etwas.*"

<sup>35</sup> Proverb No. 9: Probably another reference to a dated popular saying. A crossbow cannot be shot in the rain otherwise one risks it breaking in the following process of drying.

<sup>36</sup> Perhaps something like a chicken noise or a gesture describing how foolish he is. "Gecken" derives from the same root as "Jeck," which means fool/jester in German

Greetings to you, Hester, the beautiful!  
 You are an honor for all women  
 I came here for your supper.  
 Speak! What is it that you seek and desire?  
 You shall receive it  
 Up to half my kingdom.

Queen Hester falls on her knees and speaks with her hands up high:  
 Oh King, should I have found, at this hour  
 Your mercy and favor,  
 So I ask you, King, if you would give  
 Me and my people our lives,  
 Because we were painfully sold  
 To all be strangled.  
 I wish God had instead decided for us  
 To become servants and maids!  
 In that case I would not seek the King's mercy  
 And the enemy does not want to harm the King.

The King blesses himself<sup>37</sup> and speaks:  
 Hester, what you say is unknown news to me.  
 Show me! Who and where is the one  
 Who wants to do such evil?

Hester points at Haman and speaks:  
 The foe and great enemy  
 Is this wicked Haman.  
 He wants to do us evil.

The King speaks:  
 That one?

She says:  
 Yes, him.

[p. 127]

The King lifts the Queen up, walks angrily out the door.  
 Hester sits down. Haman falls down at the Queen's feet,

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<sup>37</sup> Most likely referring to the gesture of crossing oneself

lifts his hands and speaks:

Oh Madame, have mercy on my life!  
 I fear all my pleading is in vain.  
 The King is very angry.  
 Oh by my power! Oh by my honor!  
 I will give it all up  
 If only I could keep my life.  
 Oh Hester, Queen, plead for me!

Queen Hester speaks:

Your disloyalty overcame you!  
 You shall be treated according to your evil deed!  
 You were seduced by your pride.

The King enters with all his staff and speaks:

Just look at the villain,  
 Who also wants to murder  
 The Queen right in front of my face  
 In my house! Is that not too much?

They veil Haman's face; the Chamberlain speaks:

My King, Haman had at night  
 At night<sup>38</sup> set up in his house  
 A tree fifty cubits high,  
 He meant to hang there  
 Mardocheum, the devout man,  
 Who did much good for the King.

The King speaks:

So lead the villain out  
 And hang him in his own house  
 On the gallows, which he erected late at night  
 For another man!

The Chamberlains tie up Haman; the Jester speaks:

I told you so,  
 That you would dig yourself a pit

---

<sup>38</sup> Probably inserted a second time to keep the rhyme

And fall into it.<sup>39</sup>  
 May this happen to all flatterers,<sup>40</sup>  
 Who put pious people in the kettle<sup>41</sup>  
 I would build a gallows myself  
 And buy the rope for around their hats,<sup>42</sup>  
 Even if I should walk naked for a month.

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Haman is led outside. The King speaks:

Hester, I will give you now  
 The house of Haman, the Jews' enemy,  
 With all his wealth and property,  
 Who wanted to extinguish you.

The Jester speaks:

Oh King will you consider me too  
 And give me his red boots!<sup>43</sup>  
 I would wear them only on holidays  
 To wail for the poor idiot.

Mardocheus enters. Hester speaks:

Look King! This man  
 Is my beloved cousin,  
 Who kept you alive.  
 May he find mercy in your eyes!

The King gives Mardocheo his ring,

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<sup>39</sup> Proverb No. 10: This strongly echoes Martin Luther's *Biblia* translation of *Proverbs* 28:10 (Band 1: CCCXLI[v]: "Wer die Fromen verführet auff bösem wege / Der wird in seine Gruben fallen / Aber die Fromen werden guts ererben" (*Who seduces the devout to wicked ways, will fall into his pits. The pious will inherit his goods*). Still common proverb today; "Wer andern eine Grube gräbt, fällt selbst hinein" (The one who digs a pit (trap in the ground) for another, will fall into it himself).

<sup>40</sup> The German word is "ohrenblasern," literally ear blowers means literally that someone blows into your ear; denoting someone who whispers into someone else's ear

<sup>41</sup> Proverb No. 11: Different version of still common proverb: "*Jemanden in die Pfanne hauen*" (to forcefully put someone into a frying pan) – meaning to annihilate someone, move someone out of one's way

<sup>42</sup> The German word "kappen," *hats*, is often associated with the jester's hat.

<sup>43</sup> Proverb No. 12: Directly quoted in Grimm's dictionary with the remark that red boots are seen as very noble.

crown and dress, yellow and white,<sup>44</sup> and speaks:

Mardocheus, my loyal man,  
 Take my finger-ring and crown!  
 So have the royal dress for you!  
 You shall be the one next to me.

Hester, the Queen, falls down on her knee, speaks with raised hands:

Oh King wise, just and gracious,  
 Benevolent, loyal, mild and gentle,  
 Should I have found mercy,  
 I ask you to cancel  
 The wrong actions, which the villain  
 Amon secretly prepared.  
 And send dispatches to all your lands,  
 That the innocent Jews, women and men,  
 Not be miserably slain  
 On the chosen day!  
 How could I face the misery  
 Of my people extinguished?

**[p. 129]**

The King gives her his scepter, she stands up. The King speaks:

Just write the dispatch in whatever way you want,  
 For the Jews, however it pleases you,  
 For each land in its language,  
 In my chancery! Afterwards  
 In the royal name  
 Seal it altogether with my ring,  
 To revoke the old mandate,  
 That was declared  
 Because the King, through flattery,  
 Was deceitfully talked into it  
 By Haman, who already judged!  
 Therefore, it is null and void,  
 That one should stab the Jews,  
 Instead each Jew shall take revenge  
 On his enemies, where it pleases him,  
 On the previously chosen day!  
 Such dispatches send by riders  
 To a hundred and twenty lands!

---

<sup>44</sup> The connotations of colors in the Middle Ages: yellow as gold meaning divine; and white meaning pure.

Such a wonderful great mandate  
Put up as well in Susan, the castle!

Mardocheus gives many letters to the Chamberlain and speaks:  
Search for and order many men to ride  
With the letters to all lands,  
So to obey our King,  
That the Jewish people shall not be murdered.

The two Chamberlains leave with the letters, Mardocheus  
tears down the mandate and puts up another one;  
the Court Master comes to the King, speaks with him secretly.

The King speaks:

Hester, the Court Master has announced:  
In our castle five hundred men  
Enemies to the Jews  
Were slain by the Jews; it appears:  
Also slain are the ten sons  
Of Haman, who did accuse you previously.  
What else do you desire?

Hester, the Queen:

If it pleases the King,  
I would like to honor Him  
Hang Haman's ten sons  
From the tree, which the villain  
Erected as the Jews-Gallows.

The King speaks:

Yes, this you shall also be granted  
And anything, your heart desires.  
Go! Let them hang from a tree,  
So they will not miss their shame!

The Court Master leaves. A Chamberlain brings a letter to the King,  
kisses him and speaks:



Gracious master, I was given the letter  
By a herald coming from Ethiopia.<sup>45</sup>

The King opens the letter, reads and speaks:

Here, this letter gives the sum  
Of how many the Jews killed  
Of those who are their enemy in my countries,  
Namely, of the militant men  
Five and seventy thousand  
In one day, one has announced.

The Jester speaks:

It is only right that these idiots  
Get a proper beating  
And the breach of trust comes around to hit its master.<sup>46</sup>  
The bath was prepared for the Jews.<sup>47</sup>

**[p 131]**

Queen Hester lifts her hands and speaks:

Dear Lord, thanks, praise, glory, adornment and honor  
Be yours forever,  
By your fatherly grace,  
Your merciful and gentle nature,  
You saved your dear people,  
You mercifully strengthened and comforted us  
From ruin and death!  
Praise be to you, loyal God!

Mardocheus lifts his hand and speaks:

Praise be to you, God, in this war!  
You gave your dear people victory  
Over those who died surrendering.  
You raised and freed our heads.  
This we will write to all Jews

---

<sup>45</sup> The German term is “Moren-land,” or “Mohrenland,” which literally means the “land of dark-skinned people”—the Moors.

<sup>46</sup> Proverb No. 13: “Untreue trifft zuletzt ihren eigenen Herrn” (unfaithfulness eventually hits its own master) found in *Sprichwörter-Lexicon* under *Untreue*, nr 12.

<sup>47</sup> Proverb No. 14: “Einem ein Bad bereiten“ (to prepare a bath for someone) – bath has a negative connotation and is understood as trap, since taking a bath renders one vulnerable; found in *Sprichwörter-Lexicon* under *Bad*, nr 34 which also is referring to Grimm’s I, 1069

And God's blessing  
 Also shall be remembered from today,  
 Henceforth we shall live in joy every year.  
 This henceforth shall be named  
 The Fastnacht<sup>48</sup> shared by all Jews.  
 This we want to happily enjoy.  
 Begin, Spielmann,<sup>49</sup> a really good round dance,  
 So we can all be jolly!

After dancing they all leave in order. The Herald enters and finishes:

Here you have the entire story  
 A mirror of divine glory,  
 Of which you can note firstly:  
 Vasti, the outrageous Queen,  
 Disobeying, presumptuous and stubborn,  
 Proud, pompous and truculent,  
 Who did not want to be subservient to the King,  
 But was proud, stubborn  
 Who was punished by being driven out of the kingdom.  
 As an example for the women  
 Should they disdain their man,  
 They will receive the same reward.  
 On the other hand, the kind Hester,  
 A mirror of proper female honor,  
 Obedient, virtuous and pious,  
 Devout *summa sumarum*.<sup>50</sup>  
 That is why Ahaschweros holds her dear  
 And granted her, what she desired  
 Through this all Jews were saved,  
 Who were to lose their lives.  
 As a woman virtuous and kind  
 It also makes her husband gentle  
 Towards her and all her people.  
 Thirdly, Hamon shows  
 All crafty people's behavior  
 Sneaking closely around power  
 By plotting, lying and deceiving,  
 Which the court values so much  
 And giving some men to the slaughtering block,

---

<sup>48</sup> The German "Fastnacht" (literally, *Fast Night*) is a carnival traditionally celebrated in Southern Germany, indicating the eve of the Lenten fast.

<sup>49</sup> A person who is a travelling entertainer, often part of a larger company, who would sing and play instruments.

<sup>50</sup> Sum of Sums, all in all.

Taking their honor, goods, body and life,  
But he was finished finally,  
Because nothing stays hidden long.  
Beware of that, honorable man!  
In this way he can avoid much misfortune.  
Fourthly, Mardocheum shows  
A just, true and pious man,  
God-fearing, who out out of deep distress  
Was freely lifted by God  
Into the King's regiment at the court.  
So piety and truth always  
Prevail and are honored in the end.  
A honorable man shall turn to  
Truthful respectability on earth  
Which must be raised infinitely.  
Fifthly, as the King exemplifies,  
How he was so strict and just,  
[He] did not spare a single person,  
Who acted violently unjust,  
In contrast how merciful and gracious  
He generously endowed  
The pious, so dear and gentle!  
The authorities shall have  
A mirror here on this earth,  
So they become worthy of being remembered  
After their death by everyone.  
At first you need to understand,  
How mercifully God saved his people,  
Who faced death already,  
By a woman, chosen for it,  
By God for his people,  
Because through [Him] all things are done.  
These things are placed in front of our eyes,  
To flee pride and falsehood,  
To take on humility and piety,  
Righteousness in all matters.  
Thus God will also make us great.  
That our honor [becomes] green, blossoms and grows,  
The wishes of Hans Sachs