Esther - Commentaries by James M. Freeman

Manners and Customs of the Bible, 399. The Face Covered

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Esther 7:8. As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face.

The precise design of thus covering the face of a condemned criminal is not known, though it has been conjectured that it was intended to signify that the person condemned was not worthy again to look on the face of the king. The custom was observed in other nations as well as among the Persians.

Manners and Customs of the Bible, 398. Sign of Royal Displeasure

Esther 7:7. The king arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath went into the palace garden: and Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen; for he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king.

The rising of the king in this way was an evidence to Haman of his condemnation to death; it was the royal method of expressing displeasure and vengeance. An instance is cited by Rosenmüller, from Olearius, which illustrates this Persian custom. Schah Sefi once considered himself insulted by an unseemly jest which one of his favorites had permitted himself to relate in his presence. The king suddenly arose and left the place, and the favorite saw that his fate was sealed. He went home in dismay, and in a few hours the king sent for his head (Morgenland, vol. 3, p. 314).

Manners and Customs of the Bible, 397. Royal Honors Given to a Subject

Esther 6:8. Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head.

1. Chardin says that when the grandees visited Solyman III., to congratulate him on his coronation, the king made every one of them a present of a Calate, or royal vest. "It is an infallible mark of the particular esteem which the sovereign has for the person to whom he sends it, and that he has free liberty to approach his person" (Travels in Persia, p. 11). See also note on 1 Samuel 18:4 (#257).

2. Herodotus states that the kings of Persia had horses of remarkable beauty and of a peculiar breed which were brought from Armenia. To ride upon the king's horse was almost as great an honor as to sit upon his throne.

3. Some commentators think that by "the crown royal" is meant merely an ornament which was a part of the bead-trappings of the horse; though why the horse's head-dress should deserve such special mention here it is not easy to tell. It is more likely that the crown of the king is meant, and if so, it is probable, as some authorities suppose, that the crown was put, not on the head of Mordecai but on the head of the horse. It is said to have been a custom among the Persians, as well as some other nations, that the crown of the king was sometimes put on some favorite royal steed when the animal was led in state.