

## Esther

In the days of Ahasu-e'rus, the Ahasu-e'rus who reigned from India to Ethiopia over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, in those days when King Ahasu-e'rus sat on his royal throne in Susa the capital, in the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for all his princes and servants, the army

5 chiefs of Persia and Media and the nobles and governors of the provinces being before him, while he showed the riches of his royal glory and the splendor and pomp of his majesty for many days, a hundred and eighty days.

And when these days were completed, the king gave for all the people present in Susa the capital, both great and small, a banquet lasting for seven

10 days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace. There were white cotton curtains and blue hangings caught up with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and marble pillars, and also couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl and precious stones. Drinks were served in golden goblets, goblets of different kinds, and

15 the royal wine was lavished according to the bounty of the king. And drinking was according to the law, no one was compelled; for the king had given orders to all the officials of his palace to do as every man desired.

Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women in the palace which belonged to King Ahasu-e'rus. On the seventh day, when the heart of the

20 king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehu'man, Biztha, Harbo'na,

Bigtha and Abag'tha, Zethar and Carkas, the seven eunuchs who served King Ahasu-e'rus as chamberlains, to bring Queen Vashti before the king with her royal crown, in order to show the peoples and the princes her beauty; for she was fair to behold. But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's

5 command conveyed by the eunuchs. At this the king was enraged, and his anger burned within him. Then the king said to the wise men who knew the times--for this was the king's procedure toward all who were versed in law and judgment, the men next to him being Carshe'na, Shethar, Adma'tha, Tarshish, Meres, Marse'na, and Memu'can, the seven princes of Persia and

10 Media, who saw the king's face, and sat first in the kingdom--: "According to the law, what is to be done to Queen Vashti, because she has not performed the command of King Ahasu-e'rus conveyed by the eunuchs?"

Then Memu'can said in presence of the king and the princes, "Not only to the king has Queen Vashti done wrong, but also to all the princes and all

15 the peoples who are in all the provinces of King Ahasu-e'rus. For this deed of the queen will be made known to all women, causing them to look with contempt upon their husbands, since they will say, 'King Ahasu-e'rus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, and she did not come.'

This very day the ladies of Persia and Media who have heard of the queen's

20 behavior will be telling it to all the king's princes, and there will be

contempt and wrath in plenty. If it please the king, let a royal order go forth from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes so that it may not be altered, that Vashti is to come no more before King Ahasu-e'rus; and let the king give her royal position to another who is

5 better than she. So when the decree made by the king is proclaimed throughout all his kingdom, vast as it is, all women will give honor to their husbands, high and low." This advice pleased the king and the princes, and the king did as Memu'can proposed; he sent letters to all the royal provinces, to every province in its own script and to every people in its own language,

10 that every man be lord in his own house and speak according to the language of his people. After these things, when the anger of King Ahasu-e'rus had abated, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her. Then the king's servants who attended him said, "Let beautiful young virgins be sought out for the king. And let the

15 king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom to gather all the beautiful young virgins to the harem in Susa the capital, under custody of Hegai the king's eunuch who is in charge of the women; let their ointments be given them. And let the maiden who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti." This pleased the king, and he did so. Now there was a Jew in Susa

20 the capital whose name was Mor'decai, the son of Ja'ir, son of Shim'e-i, son

of Kish, a Benjaminite, who had been carried away from Jerusalem among  
the captives carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom  
Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away. He had brought up  
Hadasah, that is Esther, the daughter of his uncle, for she had neither father  
5 nor mother; the maiden was beautiful and lovely, and when her father and  
her mother died, Mordecai adopted her as his own daughter. So when the  
king's order and his edict were proclaimed, and when many maidens were  
gathered in Susa the capital in custody of Hegai, Esther also was taken into  
the king's palace and put in custody of Hegai who had charge of the women.  
10 And the maiden pleased him and won his favor; and he quickly provided her  
with her ointments and her portion of food, and with seven chosen maids  
from the king's palace, and advanced her and her maids to the best place in  
the harem. Esther had not made known her people or kindred, for Mordecai  
had charged her not to make it known. And every day Mordecai walked in  
15 front of the court of the harem, to learn how Esther was and how she fared.  
Now when the turn came for each maiden to go in to King Ahasuerus,  
after being twelve months under the regulations for the women, since this  
was the regular period of their beautifying, six months with oil of myrrh and  
six months with spices and ointments for women-- when the maiden went in  
20 to the king in this way she was given whatever she desired to take with her

from the harem to the king's palace. In the evening she went, and in the morning she came back to the second harem in custody of Sha-ash'gaz the king's eunuch who was in charge of the concubines; she did not go in to the king again, unless the king delighted in her and she was summoned by

5 name. When the turn came for Esther the daughter of Ab'ihail the uncle of Mor'decai, who had adopted her as his own daughter, to go in to the king, she asked for nothing except what Hegai the king's eunuch, who had charge of the women, advised. Now Esther found favor in the eyes of all who saw her. And when Esther was taken to King Ahasu-e'rus into his royal palace in

10 the tenth month, which is the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign, the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she found grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. Then the king gave a great banquet to all his princes and servants; it was Esther's banquet.

15 He also granted a remission of taxes to the provinces, and gave gifts with royal liberality. When the virgins were gathered together the second time, Mor'decai was sitting at the king's gate. Now Esther had not made known her kindred or her people, as Mor'decai had charged her; for Esther obeyed Mor'decai just as when she was brought up by him. And in those days, as

20 Mor'decai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the

king's eunuchs, who guarded the threshold, became angry and sought to lay hands on King Ahasu-e'rus. And this came to the knowledge of Mor'decai, and he told it to Queen Esther, and Esther told the king in the name of Mor'decai. When the affair was investigated and found to be so, the men

5 were both hanged on the gallows. And it was recorded in the Book of the Chronicles in the presence of the king. After these things King Ahasu-e'rus promoted Haman the Ag'agite, the son of Hammeda'tha, and advanced him and set his seat above all the princes who were with him. And all the king's servants who were at the king's gate bowed down and did obeisance to

10 Haman; for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mor'decai did not bow down or do obeisance. Then the king's servants who were at the king's gate said to Mor'decai, "Why do you transgress the king's command?" And when they spoke to him day after day and he would not listen to them, they told Haman, in order to see whether Mor'decai's words would avail; for

15 he had told them that he was a Jew. And when Haman saw that Mor'decai did not bow down or do obeisance to him, Haman was filled with fury. But he disdained to lay hands on Mor'decai alone. So, as they had made known to him the people of Mor'decai, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mor'decai, throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasu-e'rus. In the

20 first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasu-

e'rus, they cast Pur, that is the lot, before Haman day after day; and they cast it month after month till the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar. Then Haman said to King Ahasu-e'rus, "There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your

5 kingdom; their laws are different from those of every other people, and they do not keep the king's laws, so that it is not for the king's profit to tolerate them. If it please the king, let it be decreed that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who have charge of the king's business, that they may put it into the king's treasuries."

10 So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman the Ag'agite, the son of Hammeda'tha, the enemy of the Jews. And the king said to Haman, "The money is given to you, the people also, to do with them as it seems good to you." Then the king's secretaries were summoned on the thirteenth day of the first month, and an edict, according to all that Haman

15 commanded, was written to the king's satraps and to the governors over all the provinces and to the princes of all the peoples, to every province in its own script and every people in its own language; it was written in the name of King Ahasu-e'rus and sealed with the king's ring. Letters were sent by

20 couriers to all the king's provinces, to destroy, to slay, and to annihilate all Jews, young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth day of

the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods.

A copy of the document was to be issued as a decree in every province by proclamation to all the peoples to be ready for that day. The couriers went in haste by order of the king, and the decree was issued in Susa the capital.

5 And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city of Susa was perplexed. When Mor'decai learned all that had been done, Mor'decai rent his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, wailing with a loud and bitter cry; he went up to the entrance of the king's gate, for no one might enter the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.

10 And in every province, wherever the king's command and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting and weeping and lamenting, and most of them lay in sackcloth and ashes. When Esther's maids and her eunuchs came and told her, the queen was deeply distressed; she sent garments to clothe Mor'decai, so that he might take off his sackcloth,

15 but he would not accept them. Then Esther called for Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs, who had been appointed to attend her, and ordered him to go to Mor'decai to learn what this was and why it was. Hathach went out to Mor'decai in the open square of the city in front of the king's gate, and Mor'decai told him all that had happened to him, and the exact sum of

20 money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries for the



destruction of the Jews. Mor'decai also gave him a copy of the written decree issued in Susa for their destruction, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her and charge her to go to the king to make supplication to him and entreat him for her people. And Hathach went and told Esther

5 what Mor'decai had said. Then Esther spoke to Hathach and gave him a message for Mor'decai, saying, "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law; all alike are to be put to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter that

10 he may live. And I have not been called to come in to the king these thirty days." And they told Mor'decai what Esther had said. Then Mor'decai told them to return answer to Esther, "Think not that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another

15 quarter, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Then Esther told them to reply to Mor'decai, "Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will also fast as you do. Then I will go to

20 the king, though it is against the law; and if I perish, I perish." Mor'decai

then went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him. On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, opposite the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne inside the palace opposite the entrance to the palace; and when the king saw

5 Queen Esther standing in the court, she found favor in his sight and he held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. Then Esther approached and touched the top of the scepter. And the king said to her, "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given you, even to the half of my kingdom." And Esther said, "If it please the king, let the

10 king and Haman come this day to a dinner that I have prepared for the king." Then said the king, "Bring Haman quickly, that we may do as Esther desires." So the king and Haman came to the dinner that Esther had prepared. And as they were drinking wine, the king said to Esther, "What is your petition? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to

15 the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled." But Esther said, "My petition and my request is: If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition and fulfil my request, let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the dinner which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said." And Haman went out that day

20 joyful and glad of heart. But when Haman saw Mor'decai in the king's gate,

that he neither rose nor trembled before him, he was filled with wrath  
against Mor'decai. Nevertheless Haman restrained himself, and went home;  
and he sent and fetched his friends and his wife Zeresh. And Haman  
recounted to them the splendor of his riches, the number of his sons, all the  
5 promotions with which the king had honored him, and how he had advanced  
him above the princes and the servants of the king. And Haman added,  
"Even Queen Esther let no one come with the king to the banquet she  
prepared but myself. And tomorrow also I am invited by her together with  
the king. Yet all this does me no good, so long as I see Mor'decai the Jew  
10 sitting at the king's gate." Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to  
him, "Let a gallows fifty cubits high be made, and in the morning tell the  
king to have Mor'decai hanged upon it; then go merrily with the king to the  
dinner." This counsel pleased Haman, and he had the gallows made. On that  
night the king could not sleep; and he gave orders to bring the book of  
15 memorable deeds, the chronicles, and they were read before the king. And it  
was found written how Mor'decai had told about Bigthana and Teresh, two of  
the king's eunuchs, who guarded the threshold, and who had sought to lay  
hands upon King Ahasu-e'rus. And the king said, "What honor or dignity has  
been bestowed on Mor'decai for this?" The king's servants who attended him  
20 said, "Nothing has been done for him." And the king said, "Who is in the

court?" Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king's palace to speak to the king about having Mor'decai hanged on the gallows that he had prepared for him. So the king's servants told him, "Haman is there, standing in the court." And the king said, "Let him come in." So Haman came in,

5 and the king said to him, "What shall be done to the man whom the king delights to honor?" And Haman said to himself, "Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?" and Haman said to the king, "For the man whom the king delights to honor, let royal robes be brought, which the king has worn, and the horse which the king has ridden, and on whose head a

10 royal crown is set; and let the robes and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble princes; let him array the man whom the king delights to honor, and let him conduct the man on horseback through the open square of the city, proclaiming before him: 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.'" Then the king said to Haman, "Make haste, take

15 the robes and the horse, as you have said, and do so to Mor'decai the Jew who sits at the king's gate. Leave out nothing that you have mentioned." So Haman took the robes and the horse, and he arrayed Mor'decai and made him ride through the open square of the city, proclaiming, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor." Then Mor'decai returned

20 to the king's gate. But Haman hurried to his house, mourning and with his

head covered. And Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had befallen him. Then his wise men and his wife Zeresh said to him, "If Mor'decai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of the Jewish people, you will not prevail against him but will surely fall before him." While they

5 were yet talking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and brought Haman in haste to the banquet that Esther had prepared. So the king and Haman went in to feast with Queen Esther. And on the second day, as they were drinking wine, the king again said to Esther, "What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my

10 kingdom, it shall be fulfilled." Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request. For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to be annihilated. If we had been sold merely as slaves, men and women, I would have held my peace; for

15 our affliction is not to be compared with the loss to the king." Then King Ahasu-e'rus said to Queen Esther, "Who is he, and where is he, that would presume to do this?" And Esther said, "A foe and enemy! This wicked Haman!" Then Haman was in terror before the king and the queen. And the king rose from the feast in wrath and went into the palace garden; but

20 Haman stayed to beg his life from Queen Esther, for he saw that evil was

determined against him by the king. And the king returned from the palace garden to the place where they were drinking wine, as Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was; and the king said, "Will he even assault the queen in my presence, in my own house?" As the words left the mouth of

5 the king, they covered Haman's face. Then said Harbo'na, one of the eunuchs in attendance on the king, "Moreover, the gallows which Haman has prepared for Mor'decai, whose word saved the king, is standing in Haman's house, fifty cubits high." And the king said, "Hang him on that." So they hanged Haman on the gallows which he had prepared for Mor'decai. Then the anger

10 of the king abated. On that day King Ahasu-e'rus gave to Queen Esther the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mor'decai came before the king, for Esther had told what he was to her; and the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mor'decai. And Esther set Mor'decai over the house of Haman. Then Esther spoke again to

15 the king; she fell at his feet and besought him with tears to avert the evil design of Haman the Ag'agite and the plot which he had devised against the Jews. And the king held out the golden scepter to Esther, and Esther rose and stood before the king. And she said, "If it please the king, and if I have found favor in his sight, and if the thing seem right before the king, and I

20 be pleasing in his eyes, let an order be written to revoke the letters devised

by Haman the Ag'agite, the son of Hammeda'tha, which he wrote to destroy the Jews who are in all the provinces of the king. For how can I endure to see the calamity that is coming to my people? Or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?" Then King Ahasu-e'rus said to Queen Esther

5 and to Mor'decai the Jew, "Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows, because he would lay hands on the Jews. And you may write as you please with regard to the Jews, in the name of the king, and seal it with the king's ring; for an edict written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's ring cannot be revoked." The

10 king's secretaries were summoned at that time, in the third month, which is the month of Sivan, on the twenty-third day; and an edict was written according to all that Mor'decai commanded concerning the Jews to the satraps and the governors and the princes of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, a hundred and twenty-seven provinces, to every province in its own script and

15 to every people in its own language, and also to the Jews in their script and their language. The writing was in the name of King Ahasu-e'rus and sealed with the king's ring, and letters were sent by mounted couriers riding on swift horses that were used in the king's service, bred from the royal stud.

20 By these the king allowed the Jews who were in every city to gather and defend their lives, to destroy, to slay, and to annihilate any armed force of

any people or province that might attack them, with their children and women, and to plunder their goods, upon one day throughout all the provinces of King Ahasu-e'rus, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar. A copy of what was written was to be issued

5 as a decree in every province, and by proclamation to all peoples, and the Jews were to be ready on that day to avenge themselves upon their enemies. So the couriers, mounted on their swift horses that were used in the king's service, rode out in haste, urged by the king's command; and the decree was issued in Susa the capital. Then Mor'decai went out from the presence of the

10 king in royal robes of blue and white, with a great golden crown and a mantle of fine linen and purple, while the city of Susa shouted and rejoiced. The Jews had light and gladness and joy and honor. And in every province and in every city, wherever the king's command and his edict came, there was gladness and joy among the Jews, a feast and a holiday. And many

15 from the peoples of the country declared themselves Jews, for the fear of the Jews had fallen upon them. Now in the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's command and edict were about to be executed, on the very day when the enemies of the Jews hoped to get the mastery over them, but which had been changed to a

20 day when the Jews should get the mastery over their foes, the Jews gathered



in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasu-e'rus to lay hands on such as sought their hurt. And no one could make a stand against them, for the fear of them had fallen upon all peoples. All the princes of the provinces and the satraps and the governors and the royal officials also

5 helped the Jews, for the fear of Mor'decai had fallen upon them. For Mor'decai was great in the king's house, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces; for the man Mor'decai grew more and more powerful. So the Jews smote all their enemies with the sword, slaughtering, and destroying them, and did as they pleased to those who hated them. In Susa the capital

10 itself the Jews slew and destroyed five hundred men, and also slew Par-shanda'tha and Dalphon and Aspa'tha and Pora'tha and Ada'lia and Arida'tha and Parmash'ta and Ar'isai and Ar'idai and Vaiza'tha, the ten sons of Haman the son of Hammeda'tha, the enemy of the Jews; but they laid no hand on the plunder. That very day the number of those slain in Susa the capital was

15 reported to the king. And the king said to Queen Esther, "In Susa the capital the Jews have slain five hundred men and also the ten sons of Haman. What then have they done in the rest of the king's provinces! Now what is your petition? It shall be granted you. And what further is your request? It shall be fulfilled." And Esther said, "If it please the king, let the Jews who are in

20 Susa be allowed tomorrow also to do according to this day's edict. And let

the ten sons of Haman be hanged on the gallows." So the king commanded this to be done; a decree was issued in Susa, and the ten sons of Haman were hanged. The Jews who were in Susa gathered also on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and they slew three hundred men in Susa; but

5 they laid no hands on the plunder. Now the other Jews who were in the king's provinces also gathered to defend their lives, and got relief from their enemies, and slew seventy-five thousand of those who hated them; but they laid no hands on the plunder. This was on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar, and on the fourteenth day they rested and made that a day of

10 feasting and gladness. But the Jews who were in Susa gathered on the thirteenth day and on the fourteenth, and rested on the fifteenth day, making that a day of feasting and gladness. Therefore the Jews of the villages, who live in the open towns, hold the fourteenth day of the month of Adar as a day for gladness and feasting and holiday-making, and a day on which they

15 send choice portions to one another. And Mor'decai recorded these things, and sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King Ahasu-e'rus, both near and far, enjoining them that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar and also the fifteenth day of the same, year by year, as the days on which the Jews got relief from their enemies,

20 and as the month that had been turned for them from sorrow into gladness

and from mourning into a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, days for sending choice portions to one another and gifts to the poor. So the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mor'decai had written to them. For Haman the Ag'agite, the son of

5 Hammeda'tha, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that is the lot, to crush and destroy them; but when Esther came before the king, he gave orders in writing that his wicked plot which he had devised against the Jews should come upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.

10 Therefore they called these days Purim, after the term Pur. And therefore, because of all that was written in this letter, and of what they had faced in this matter, and of what had befallen them, the Jews ordained and took it upon themselves and their descendants and all who joined them, that without fail they would keep these two days according to what was written and at

15 the time appointed every year, that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, in every family, province, and city, and that these days of Purim should never fall into disuse among the Jews, nor should the commemoration of these days cease among their descendants. Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Ab'ihail, and Mor'decai the Jew gave full

20 written authority, confirming this second letter about Purim. Letters were sent

to all the Jews, to the hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the kingdom  
of Ahasu-e'rus, in words of peace and truth, that these days of Purim should  
be observed at their appointed seasons, as Mor'decai the Jew and Queen  
Esther enjoined upon the Jews, and as they had laid down for themselves  
5 and for their descendants, with regard to their fasts and their lamenting. The  
command of Queen Esther fixed these practices of Purim, and it was  
recorded in writing. King Ahasu-e'rus laid tribute on the land and on the  
coastlands of the sea. And all the acts of his power and might, and the full  
account of the high honor of Mor'decai, to which the king advanced him, are  
10 they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the kings of Media and  
Persia? For Mor'decai the Jew was next in rank to King Ahasu-e'rus, and he  
was great among the Jews and popular with the multitude of his brethren, for  
he sought the welfare of his people and spoke peace to all his people.\*

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