

THE BOOK OF ESTHER

And it happened in the days of Ahasuerus (this is the Ahasuerus who reigned from India even to Ethiopia, over a hundred and twenty-seven provinces). In those days, when king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom in Shushan the palace, in the third year of his reign, he made a feast to all his princes and his servants. The power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, were before him. And he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honor of his excellent majesty many days, a hundred and eighty days. And when these days had expired, the king made a feast to all the people who were present in Shushan the palace, both to great and small, for seven days in the court of the garden of the king's palace. White, green, and blue hangings were fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble. The beds were of gold and silver, on a pavement of red and white, and pearl, and black marble. And they gave them drink in vessels of gold, the vessels being different from one another, and royal wine in abundance, according to the hand of the king. And the drinking was according to the law, no one compelling, for so the king had commanded every chief of his house that they should do according to every man's pleasure.

Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women in the royal house which belonged to king Ahasuerus. On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded the seven eunuchs *Mehuman*, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, who served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king, to bring Vashti the queen before the king with the royal crown, in order to show the people and the princes her beauty, for she was beautiful to look on. But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command by his eunuchs. And the king was very angry, and his anger burned within him. And the king said to the wise men who knew the times, (for so was the king's manner toward all who knew law and judgment; and the next to him were Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, *Memucan*, the seven princes of Persia and Media who saw the king's face, who sat first in the kingdom), What shall we do with queen Vashti according to law, because she has not done the command of the king Ahasuerus by the eunuchs? And *Memucan* answered before the king and princes, Vashti the queen has not only done wrong to the king, but also to all the princes, and to all the people who are in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus. For the matter of the queen shall go out to all women, so that their husbands shall be despised in their eyes, and it shall be reported that king Ahasuerus commanded to bring Vashti the queen in before him, but she did not come. And this day the princesses of Persia and Media shall say the same to all the king's princes who have heard of the deed of the queen. And there will be contempt and strife.

If it please the king, let there be a royal command from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, so that it may not be changed, that Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus. And let the king give her

royal state to another who is better than she is. And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire (for it is great), all the wives shall give their husbands honor, both the great and small. And the saying pleased the king and the princes. And the king did according to the word of Memucan. For he sent letters into all the king's provinces, into every province according to the writing of it, and to every people in their language, so that every man should bear rule in his own house, and published according to the language of every people.

After these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus had calmed down, he remembered Vashti and what she had done, and what was decreed against her. And the king's servants who served him said, Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king. And let the king choose officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, so that they may gather together all the beautiful young virgins to Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, to the hand of Hegai the king's eunuch, keeper of the women. And let their ointments be given. And let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king, and he did so. In Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away. And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter. For she had neither father nor mother, and the young woman was fair and beautiful, whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter.

And it happened when the king's command and his order was heard, and when many young women had been gathered to Shushan the palace, into the hand of Hegai, Esther was also brought to the king's house, into the hand of Hegai, keeper of the women. And the young woman pleased him, and she received kindness from him. And he quickly gave to her purifiers and her portion. And seven young women who were fit to be given her, out of the king's house. And he moved her and her servant women to the best place in the house of the women. Esther had not revealed her people nor her kindred, for Mordecai had commanded her that she should not show it. And Mordecai walked every day in front of the court of the women's house in order to know how Esther did and what was to become of her. And when the turn of each young woman had come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after she had been purified twelve months, according to the law of the women (for so the days of their anointing were done, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odors, and with the perfumes of the women). And in this way the young woman came to the king. Whatever she desired was given her to go with her out of the house of the women to the king's house. She went in the evening, and on the next day she returned to the second house of the women, into the hand of Shaashgaz, the king's officer who kept the concubines.

She did not come in to the king any more, unless the king delighted in her, and she was called by name. And when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai who had taken her for his daughter, had come to go in to the king, she asked nothing but what was chosen by Hegai the king's officer, the keeper of the women. And Esther had favor in the sight of all who looked on her. And Esther was taken to king Ahasuerus into his royal house in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she rose in grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins. And he set the royal crown on her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti. And the king made a great feast to all his princes and his servants, Esther's feast. And he ordered a release for the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the state of the king. And when the virgins were gathered the second time, then Mordecai sat in the king's gate. Esther had not yet revealed her kindred nor her people, as Mordecai had commanded her. For Esther obeyed the command of Mordecai as she did when she was brought up with him.

In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh, of those who kept the door, were angry and tried to lay a hand on king Ahasuerus. And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told Esther the queen. And Esther told the king in Mordecai's name. And when the matter was searched into, it was found out, and the two of them were hanged on a tree. And it was written in the Book of the Matters of the Days before the king. After these things king Ahasuerus promoted Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes who were with him. And all the king's servants in the king's gate bowed and worshiped Haman, for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai did not bow nor worship.

And the king's servants in the king's gate said to Mordecai, Why do you transgress the king's command? And it happened when they spoke daily to him, and when he did not listen to them, they told Haman, to see if Mordecai's matters would stand. For he had told them that he was a Jew. And when Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow nor worship him, then Haman was full of wrath. And he scorned to lay hands only on Mordecai, for they had revealed to him the people of Mordecai. And Haman sought to destroy all the Jews throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, the people of Mordecai. In the first month, that is, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, the month Adar. And Haman said to king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people, in all the provinces of your kingdom. And their laws are different from all people, neither do they keep the king's laws. And it is not for the king's gain to allow them to live. If it pleases the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed. And I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those who have charge of the business, to bring it into the king's treasuries. And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it to Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy.

And the king said to Haman, The silver is given to you, the people also, to do with them as seems good to you. Then the king's scribes were called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded to the king's lieutenants, and to the governors who were over every province, and to the rulers of every people of every province, according to the writing of it, and to every people according to their language. It was written in the name of king Ahasuerus and sealed with the king's ring. And the letters were sent by postal riders into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, on the thirteenth of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take what they owned for a prize. The copy of the writing, for a command to be given in every province, was published to all people, to be ready for that day. The posts went out, being hurried by the king's command, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace. And the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city Shushan was perplexed. And Mordecai understood all that was done, and Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth with ashes and went out into the middle of the city, and cried with a loud and bitter cry. And he even came before the king's gate for none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.

And in every province, wherever the king's command and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping and wailing. And many lay in sackcloth and ashes. And Esther's servant women and her eunuchs came and told her. And the queen was exceedingly grieved, and she sent clothing to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him. But he did not receive it. And Esther called for Hatach, one of the king's eunuchs whom he had appointed to attend on her, and gave him a command to Mordecai to know what it was and why it was. And Hatach went forth to Mordecai, to the street of the city in front of the king's gate. And Mordecai told him of all that had happened to him, and of the sum of the silver which Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the Jews in order to destroy them. Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree which was given at Shushan in order to destroy them, to show it to Esther and to declare it to her, and to command her that she should go in to the king to make supplication to him, and to seek help for her people.

And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai. Again Esther spoke to Hatach, and gave him command to Mordecai. And the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that whoever, whether man or woman, shall come to the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his, execution, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden scepter so that he may live. But I have not been called to come in to the king these thirty days. And they told Mordecai Esther's words. And Mordecai commanded them to answer Esther, Do not think within yourself that you shall escape in the king's house more than all the Jews. For if you are completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance shall arise to the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house shall be

destroyed. And who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for a time like this?

And Esther said to return to Mordecai this answer, Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me, and do not eat nor drink three days, night or day. My maidservants and I will also fast in the same way. And so I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law. And if I perish, I perish. And Mordecai passed over and did according to all that Esther had commanded him. And it happened on the third day, Esther put on royal clothing, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, across from the king's house. And the king sat on his royal throne in the royal house, across from the gate of the house. And it happened when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, she received favor in his sight. And the king held out to Esther the golden scepter in his hand. And Esther drew near and touched the top of the scepter. And the king said to her, What do you desire, queen Esther? And what is your wish? It shall be given to you even to half of the kingdom. And Esther answered, If it is good to the king, let the king and Haman come today to the banquet which I have prepared for him. And the king said, Cause Haman to hurry so that he may do as Esther has said. And the king and Haman came to the banquet which Esther had prepared.

And the king said to Esther at the banquet of wine, What is your petition that it shall be granted to you? And what is your request? It shall be performed even to half of the kingdom. And Esther answered and said, As to my petition and my request, if I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and to perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet which I shall prepare for them, and I will do tomorrow as the king has said. And Haman went forth that day joyful and with a glad heart. But when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he did not stand up nor move for him, he was full of fury against Mordecai. But Haman held himself in. And when he came home, he sent and called for his friends and Zeresh his wife. And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and his many sons, and all to which the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king. And Haman said, Yes, Esther the queen let no man but me come in with the king to the banquet that she had prepared. And also tomorrow I am invited to her banquet, with the king. Yet all this avails me nothing as long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.

And Zeresh his wife and all his friends said to him, Make a wooden gallows, fifty cubits high and tomorrow speak to the king that Mordecai may be hanged on it. Then go in merrily with the king to the banquet. And the thing pleased Haman, and he caused the wooden gallows to be made. On that night the king could not sleep, and he commanded to bring the Book of the Records of the Matter of the Days. And they were read before the king. And it was found written that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, the keepers of the door who tried to lay a hand on king Ahasuerus. And the king said, What honor and

dignity has been done to Mordecai for this? And the king's servants who served him said, Nothing has been done for him. And the king said, Who is in the court?

And Haman had come into the outer court of the king's house to speak to the king to hang Mordecai on the wooden gallows which he had prepared for him. And the king's servants said to him, Behold, Haman stands in the court. And the king said, Let him come in. So Haman came in. And the king said to him, What shall be done to the man whom the king delights to honor? And Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honor more than to myself? And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delights to honor, let the royal clothing be brought, which the king wears, and the horse that the king rides on, and the royal crown which is set on his head. And let this clothing and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes so that they may dress the man whom the king delights to honor, and bring him on horseback through the streets of the city, and proclaim before him, This is what shall be done to the man whom the king delights to honor.

And the king said to Haman, Make haste! Take the clothing and the horse, as you have said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate. Do not fail to do any of all the things you have spoken. And Haman took the clothing and the horse and dressed Mordecai, and brought him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, This is what shall be done to the man whom the king delights to honor! And Mordecai came again to the king's gate. But Haman hurried to his house mourning, and having his head covered. And Haman told Zeresh his wife and all his friends every thing that had happened to him. Then his wise men and Zeresh his wife said to him, If Mordecai is of the seed of the Jews, before whom you have begun to fall, you shall not prevail against him but shall surely fall before him.

And while they were still talking with him, the king's eunuchs came. And they hurried to bring Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared. And the king and Haman came to the banquet of Esther the queen. And the king said again to Esther on the second day of the banquet of wine, What is your petition, queen Esther, that it may be granted you? And what is your request? And it shall be performed, even to the half of the kingdom. And Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request. For we are sold, my people and I, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to perish. But if we had been sold for men-slaves and women-slaves, I would have held my tongue, although the enemy could not make up for the king's damage.

And king Ahasuerus answered and said to Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is the one who dares presume in his heart to do so? And Esther said, The man who is our adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman. And Haman was afraid before the king and the queen. And the king, arising from the banquet of wine in his

wrath, went into the palace garden. And Haman stood up to beg for his life from Esther the queen, for he saw that evil was determined against him by the king. And the king returned out of the palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine. And Haman had fallen on the bed on which Esther was. And the king said, Will he also force the queen before me in the house?

As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. And Harbonah, one of the eunuchs, said before the king, Also look! the wooden gallows fifty cubits high which Haman made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, stands in the house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him on it! And they hanged Haman on the wooden gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. And the king's wrath lay down. On that day king Ahasuerus gave the house of Haman, the Jews' enemy, to Esther the queen. And Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had told what he was to her. And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman. And Esther spoke yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and begged him with tears to put away the evil of Haman the Agagite, and his plot which he had plotted against the Jews.

Then the king held out the golden scepter toward Esther. And Esther arose and stood before the king, and said, If it please the king, and if I have found favor in his sight, and if the thing is right before the king, and if I am pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to bring back the documents (a sly plan by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite) which he wrote to destroy the Jews in all the king's provinces. For how can I bear to see the evil that shall come on my people? Or how can I endure to see the slaughter of my kindred? And king Ahasuerus said to Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and have hanged him on the wooden gallows, because he laid his hand on the Jews. And you write for the Jews as it pleases you, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring. For the writing which is written in the king's name and sealed with the king's ring, no man may turn back.

Then the king's scribes were called at that time in the third month, the month Sivan, on the twenty-third of it. And it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded to the Jews, and to the lieutenants and the governors and rulers of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, a hundred and twenty-seven provinces, to every province according to the writing of it, and to every people in their writing, and to the Jews according to their writing and according to their language. And he wrote in the name of king Ahasuerus and sealed it with the king's ring. And he sent letters by riders on horseback, riders on royal steeds, stallions, even sons of mares. In them the king granted the Jews in every city to gather themselves, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to kill and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province who desired to attack them, little ones and women, and to take what they owned for a prize, on one day in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar. The copy of the writing

for a command to be given in every province was announced to all people, even that the Jews should be ready against that day to avenge themselves on their enemies. The runners, riders on stallions, royal steeds, went out, being hurried and pressed on by the king's command. And the order was given at Shushan the palace.

And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal clothing of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple. And the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad. The Jews had light and gladness and joy and honor. And in every province, and in every city where the king's command and his order came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews, for the fear of the Jews fell on them. And in the twelfth month, the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's command and his order came to be done, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them; though it was turned around, so that the Jews had rule over the ones who hated them. The Jews gathered themselves in their cities throughout all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, in order to lay hand on any who sought their harm. And no man could withstand them, for the fear of them fell on all people. And all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants and the governors and officers of the king helped the Jews, because the fear of Mordecai fell on them.

For Mordecai was great in the house of the king, and his fame went throughout all the provinces. For this man Mordecai was going on and growing greater. And the Jews struck all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter, and destruction, and did what they would to those who hated them. And in Shushan the palace the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men. And Parshandatha, and Dalphon, and Aspatha, and Poratha, and Adalia, and Aridatha, and Parmashta, and Arisai, and Aridai, and Vajezatha, they killed the ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews. But they did not lay their hands on the spoil. On that day the number of those who were killed in Shushan the palace was brought before the king.

And the king said to Esther the queen, The Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the palace, and the ten sons of Haman. What have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? And what is your petition, that it may be granted you? Or what further request do you have? And it shall be done. Then Esther said, If it pleases the king, let it be granted to the Jews in Shushan to do tomorrow also according to this day's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged on the wooden gallows. And the king commanded it to be done. And the order was given at Shushan, and they hanged Haman's ten sons. For the Jews in Shushan gathered themselves on the fourteenth day also of the month Adar, and killed three hundred men at Shushan. But they did not lay their hands on the spoil. But the rest of the Jews in the king's provinces gathered themselves and stood for their lives, and had rest from their enemies, and killed seventy-five thousand of their foes. But they did not lay their hands on the spoil.

And on the thirteenth day of the month Adar, and on the fourteenth day of the same, they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness. But the Jews at Shushan gathered on the thirteenth of it and on the fourteenth of it. And on the fifteenth of the same, they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness. Therefore the Jews of the villages, who lived in the unwalled towns, made the fourteenth day of the month Adar a day of gladness and feasting, and a good day, and a day of sending portions to one another. And Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters to all the Jews in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, near and far, to establish among them that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same, yearly, as the days in which the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned to them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions to one another, and gifts to the poor. And the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written to them because Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, the lot, to finish them and to destroy them.

But when Esther came before the king, he commanded by letters that his wicked plot which he had plotted against the Jews should return on his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the wooden gallows. Therefore, they called these days Purim after the name of Pur. Therefore, for all the words of this letter, and which they had seen concerning this matter, and which had come to them, the Jews ordained, and took on them and on their seed, and on all such as joined themselves to them, so as it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to their writing, and according to their time every year and that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city and these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed.

And Esther the queen, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote with all authority to confirm this second letter of Purim. And he sent the letters to all the Jews, to the hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, with words of peace and truth, in order to confirm these days of Purim in their set times, according as Mordecai the Jew and Esther the queen had ordered them, and as they had decreed for themselves and for their seed the matters of the fastings and of their cry. And the order of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim. And it was written in the book. And king Ahasuerus laid a tax on the land and on the isles of the sea. And all the acts of his power and of might, and the declaration of the greatness of Mordecai, with which the king made him great, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia? For Mordecai the Jew was next to king Ahasuerus and great among the Jews, and pleasing to the multitude of his brothers, seeking the wealth of his people and speaking peace to all his seed.