

NARRATOR: Now it took place in the days of Ahasuerus, the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia over 127 provinces, in those days as King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne which was in Susa the capital. In the third year of his reign,

KING AHASUERUS: GIVE A BANQUET

NARRATOR: he gave a banquet for all his princes and attendants, the army officers of Persia and Media, the nobles, and the princes of his provinces being in his presence.

KING AHASUERUS: BRAG ABOUT YOUR WEALTH, YOUR RICHES, AND GLORY FOR 180 DAYS. SAY: Let there be a banquet for all the people who were present in Susa the capital, from the greatest to the least, in the court of the garden of the king's palace.

NARRATOR: There were hangings of fine white and violet linen held by cords of fine purple linen on silver rings and marble columns, and couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl, and precious stones.

KING'S SERVANTS: SERVE DRINKS

NARRATOR: Drinks were served in golden vessels of various kinds, and the royal wine was plentiful according to the king's bounty.

KING AHASUERUS: The law of the king is that no one will be compelled to drink; let it be according to the desires of each person.

QUEEN VASHTI: GIVE A BANQUET

NARRATOR: Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women in the palace which belonged to King Ahasuerus.

KING AHASUERUS: ACT DRUNK AND TELL YOUR SERVANTS: bring Queen Vashti here with her royal crown in order to display her beauty to the people and the princes, for she is a real fox!

QUEEN VASHTI: REFUSE TO GO WITH THE SERVANTS AND SAY, No! I won't go with you!

KING AHASUERUS: BECOME ANGRY AND SPEAK WITH YOUR WISE MEN: According to law, what is to be done with Queen Vashti, because she did not obey the command of King Ahasuerus delivered by the servants?

WISE MAN 1 (KING'S SERVANT): Queen Vashti has wronged not only the king but also all the princes, and all the peoples who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. For the queen's conduct will become known to all the women causing them to look with contempt on their husbands by saying, King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought in to his presence, but she

did not come. And this day the ladies of Persia and Media who have heard of the queen's conduct will speak in the same way to all the king's princes, and there will be plenty of contempt and anger.

WISE MAN 2 (KING'S SERVANT): If it pleases the king, let a royal edict be issued by him and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media so that it cannot be repealed, that Vashti should come no more into the presence of King Ahasuerus, and let the king give her royal position to another who is more worthy than she. And when the king's edict which he shall make is heard throughout all his kingdom, great as it is, then all women will give honor to their husbands, great and small.

KING AHASUERUS: BE PLEASED WITH WHAT THEY SAID AND SAY: Yes! Send letters to all my provinces, to each province according to its script and to every people according to their language, that every man should be the master in his own house.

NARRATOR: After these things when the anger of King Ahasuerus had subsided, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her.

KING'S SERVANTS: SAY TO THE KING: Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king. And let the king appoint overseers in all the provinces of his kingdom that they may gather every beautiful young virgin to Susa the capital, to the harem, into the custody of Hegai, the king's eunuch, who was in charge of the women; and let their cosmetics be given them. Then let the young lady who pleases the king be queen in place of Vashti.

KING AHASUERUS: BE PLEASED: Let it be done!

NARRATOR: Now there was a Jew in Susa the capital whose name was Mordecai, a Benjamite, who had been taken into exile from Jerusalem with the captives who had been exiled with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had exiled. And he was bringing up Hadassah, that is Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had neither father nor mother. Now the young lady was beautiful of form and face, and when her father and her mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter. So it came about when the command and decree of the king were heard and many young ladies were gathered to Susa the capital into the custody of Hegai,

EUNICH: TAKE CUSTODY OF ESTHER

MORDECAI: AS ESTHER LEAVES, SAY TO HER: Do not make your people known!

NARRATOR: Esther was taken to the king's palace into the custody of Hegai, who was in charge of the women. Now the young lady pleased him and found favor with him.

EUNICH: I am so pleased with you that I have decided to provide you with cosmetics and food, and have given you seven choice maids from the king's palace, and you and your maids will be transferred to the best place in the harem.

MORDECAI: PACE BACK AND FORTH NEAR THE HAREM

NARRATOR: And every day Mordecai walked back and forth in front of the court of the harem to learn how Esther was and how she fared.

EUNICH: Now that it is the end of the 12 month time of beautification, you can take anything you want with you to go see the king. In the evening you will go in and in the morning you will come to the second harem. You will not again go in to the king unless the king delights in you and summons you by name.

QUEEN ESTHER: ASK THE EUNICH: What should I bring when I see the king?

EUNICH: MAKE SOMETHING UP!

NARRATOR: So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus to his royal palace in the tenth month which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

QUEEN ESTHER: GO TO THE KING

KING AHASUERUS: I love you, Esther, more than all my other women! Servants, set the royal crown on her head and make her queen instead of Vashti. Let us give Esther a banquet, and let all the princes and servants of the king come! Let there also be a holiday in the kingdom!

KING AHASUERUS: GIVE A BANQUET

MORDECAI: SIT IN FRONT OF THE KING'S GATE

NARRATOR: Esther had not yet made known her kindred or her people, even as Mordecai had commanded her, for Esther did what Mordecai told her as she had done when under his care.

CONSPIRATORS: PLAN TO KILL THE KING

MORDECAI: LISTEN IN ON THE CONVERSATION, THEN GO TO ESTHER AND SAY, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's officials from those who guarded the door, became angry and plan to kill King Ahasuerus.

QUEEN ESTHER: TELL THE KING!

KING AHASUERUS: ORDER THEIR EXECUTION!

EXECUTIONERS: HANG THE CONSPIRATORS!

KING AHASUERUS: Let this good deed of Mordecai be written in the royal records!

KING'S SERVANTS: WRITE DOWN THE EVENT

KING AHASUERUS: PROMOTE HAMAN: Hey Haman, your authority is hereby established over all the princes who are with you.

KING'S SERVANTS: BOW DOWN TO HAMAN

NARRATOR: But Mordecai neither bowed down nor paid homage.

MORDECAI: REFUSE TO BOW DOWN

KING'S SERVANTS: SAY TO MORDECAI: Why are you transgressing the king's command?

MORDECAI: I am a Jew, and therefore I will not bow down to a human.

NARRATOR: Now they had spoken daily to him and he would not listen to them.

KING'S SERVANTS: SPEAK TO HAMAN ABOUT MORDECAI

HAMAN: GET ANGRY WITH MORDECAI, BUT DO NOT LET HIM SEE IT. SAY TO THE SIDE: I will destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus.

NARRATOR: In the first month, which is the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, Pur, that is the lot, was cast before Haman from day to day and from month to month, until the twelfth month, that is the month Adar.

EVIL HAMAN: SPEAK WITH THE KING: There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from those of all other people, and they do not observe the king's laws, so it is not in the king's interest to let them remain. If it is pleasing to 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 carry on the king's business, to put into the king's treasuries.

KING AHASUERUS: TAKE YOUR SIGNET RING FROM YOUR HAND AND GAVE IT TO HAMAN. SAY: The silver is yours, and the people also, to do with them as you please. Scribes, write the order as Haman tells you.

EVIL HAMAN: SAY TO THE KING'S SERVANTS: Send the message to the princes of each people, each province according to its script, each people according to its language, which I have written in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the king's signet ring. The message is: destroy, kill, and annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to seize their possessions as plunder. Make a copy of the edict to be issued as law in every province.

KING'S SERVANTS: SEND THE MESSAGE THROUGHOUT THE KINGDOM

KING AHASUERUS AND EVIL HAMAN: SIT DOWN TO DRINK

OTHERS: THE CITY IS IN CONFUSION BECAUSE OF THE ORDER

NARRATOR: When Mordecai learned all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city and wailed loudly and bitterly.

MORDECAI: WAIL BITTERLY AND LOUDLY

NARRATOR: And he went as far as the king's gate, for no one was to enter the king's gate clothed in sackcloth. And in each and every province where the command and decree of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing; and many lay on sackcloth and ashes. Then Esther's maidens and her eunuchs came and told her, and the queen writhed in great anguish.

QUEEN ESTHER: BE IN ANGUISH, THEN SAY TO SERVANTS: Bring these clothes to Mordecai so that he might remove his sackcloth from him.

KING'S SERVANTS: GO TO MORDECAI: Queen Esther says that you should put these clothes on.

MORDECAI: REFUSE THE CLOTHES: No!

QUEEN ESTHER: SAY TO THE EUNICH: Go ask Mordecai what is going on.

EUNICH: GO TO MORDECAI

MORDECAI: TELL THE EUNICH WHAT IS GOING ON: Haman has promised to pay to the king's treasuries a lot of money for the destruction of the Jews. Here is a copy of the text which was issued here in Susa for our destruction. Tell Esther, and tell her to go in to the king to ask for his favor and to plead with him for her people.

EUNICH: RETURN TO ESTHER AND TELL HER WHAT MORDECAI SAID

QUEEN ESTHER: SPEAK TO THE EUNICH: All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that for any man or woman who comes to the king to the inner court who is not summoned, he has but one law, that he be put to death, unless the king holds out to him the golden scepter so that he may live. And I have not been summoned to come to the king for these thirty days.

NARRATOR: And they related Esther's words to Mordecai.

MORDECAI: SAY TO THE EUNICH: Tell this to Esther: Do not imagine that you in the king's palace can escape any more than all the Jews. For if you remain silent at

this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?

QUEEN ESTHER: SAY TO THE EUNICH: Tell Mordecai, Go, assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa, and fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens also will fast in the same way. And thus I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish.

NARRATOR: So Mordecai went away and did just as Esther had commanded him.

NARRATOR: Now it came about on the third day that Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace in front of the king's rooms,

KING AHASUERUS: SIT ON YOUR THRONE

QUEEN ESTHER: APPROACH THE KING

KING AHASUERUS: EXTEND YOUR GOLDEN SCEPTER TO THE QUEEN AND SMILE

QUEEN ESTHER: COME NEAR AND TOUCH THE TOP OF THE KING'S SCEPTER

KING AHASUERUS: What is troubling you, Queen Esther? And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it will be given to you.

QUEEN ESTHER: If it please the king, may the king and Haman come this day to the banquet that I have prepared for him.

KING AHASUERUS: Bring Haman quickly that we may do as Esther desires.

KING AHASUERUS AND HAMAN: GO TO ESTHER'S BANQUET, DRINK WINE AT THE BANQUET

KING AHASUERUS TO ESTHER: What is your petition, for it shall be granted to you. And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be done.

QUEEN ESTHER: 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 do what I request, may the king and Haman come to the banquet which I shall prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king says.

EVIL HAMAN: LEAVE THE BANQUET HAPPILY

NARRATOR: Then Haman went out that day glad and pleased of heart; but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, and that he did not stand up or tremble before him, Haman was filled with anger against Mordecai. Haman controlled himself, however, went to his house, and sent for his friends and his wife Zeresh.

EVIL HAMAN: I am so rich, I have many sons, and the king has promoted ME above the princes and servants of the king. Even Esther the queen let no one but me come with the king to the banquet which she had prepared; and tomorrow also I am invited by her with the king. Yet all of this does not satisfy me every time I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.

HAMAN'S WIFE ZERESH: Have a gallows fifty cubits high made and in the morning ask the king to have Mordecai hanged on it, then go joyfully with the king to the banquet.

EVIL HAMAN: That's a splendid idea! Let the gallows be made!

KING AHASUERUS: TOSS AND TURN AS IF YOU ARE TRYING TO SLEEP

NARRATOR: During that night the king could not sleep

KING AHASUERUS: Let the royal records be brought to me, and read them to me.

KING'S SERVANTS: It says here that Mordecai saved your life by telling us that Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs who were doorkeepers, planned to kill you, O King Ahasuerus.

KING AHASUERUS: What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?

KING'S SERVANTS: Nothing has been done for him.

KING AHASUERUS: Who is in the court?

NARRATOR: Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king's palace in order to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows which he had prepared for him.

KING'S SERVANTS: Behold, Haman is standing in the court.

KING AHASUERUS: Let him come in. Haman, What is to be done for the man whom the king desires to honor?

EVIL HAMAN: SAY TO THE SIDE (I.E. TO THE AUDIENCE): Whom would the king desire to honor more than me?

EVIL HAMAN: SAY TO THE KING: For the man whom the king desires to honor, let them bring a royal robe which the king has worn, and the horse on which the king has ridden, and on whose head a royal crown has been placed; and let the robe and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble princes and let them array the man whom the king desires to honor and lead him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him, Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor.

KING AHASUERUS: Take quickly the robes and the horse as you have said, and do so for Mordecai the Jew, who is sitting at the king's gate; do not fall short in anything of all that you have said.

EVIL HAMAN: TAKE THE ROBE AND THE HORSE, PUT THE ROBE ON MORDECAI, AND LEAD HIM ON HORSEBACK, AND SAY, Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor. Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor.

NARRATOR: Then Mordecai returned to the king's gate. But Haman hurried home, mourning, with his head covered. And Haman recounted to Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him.

HAMAN'S WIFE ZERESH: If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish origin, you will not overcome him, but will surely fall before him.

KING'S SERVANTS: GO GET HAMAN AND BRING HIM TO ESTHER'S BANQUET

KING AHASUERUS AND EVIL HAMAN: GO TO THE BANQUET AND LIVE IT UP

KING AHASUERUS: What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to half of the kingdom it shall be done.

QUEEN ESTHER: If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me as my petition, and my people as my request; for we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed and to be annihilated. Now if we had only been sold as slaves, men and women, I would have remained silent, for it would be too small a thing to bother the king with.

KING AHASUERUS: Who is he, and where is he, who would presume to do thus?

QUEEN ESTHER: A foe and an enemy, is this wicked Haman!

EVIL HAMAN: BECOME TERRIFIED

KING AHASUERUS: BECOME ANGRY AND GO INTO THE PALACE GARDEN,
MUTTERING: Exactly what should I do to Haman for this dasterdly deed?

HAMAN: BEG ESTHER FOR YOUR LIFE, BUT A LITTLE TOO FORCEFULLY

KING AHASUERUS: RETURN AND SEE HAMAN'S ACTIONS, AND SAY, Will he even assault the queen with me in the house?

EXECUTIONERS: COVER HAMAN'S FACE AND TAKE HIM AWAY

KING'S SERVANTS: Behold indeed, the gallows standing at Haman's house fifty cubits high, which Haman made for Mordecai who spoke good on behalf of the king!

KING AHASUERUS: Hang him on it.

EXECUTIONERS: HANG HAMAN

KING AHASUERUS: CALM DOWN

NARRATOR: On that day King Ahasuerus gave the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews, to Queen Esther; and Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had disclosed what he was to her.

KING AHASUERUS: TAKE OFF YOUR SIGNET RING AND GIVE IT TO MORDECAI

QUEEN ESTHER: FALL AT THE FEET OF THE KING, WEEPING, AND SAY: Please, stop the evil scheme of Haman the Agagite and his plot which he had devised against the Jews!

KING AHASUERUS: EXTEND THE GOLDEN SCEPTER TO ESTHER

QUEEN ESTHER: ARISE AND SAY: If it pleases the king and if I have found favor before him and the matter seems proper to the king and I am pleasing in his sight, let it be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews who are in all the king's provinces. For how can I endure to see the calamity which shall befall my people, and how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?

KING AHASUERUS: I have given the house of Haman to Esther, and him they have hanged on the gallows because he had stretched out his hands against the Jews. Now you write to the Jews as you see fit, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's signet ring; for a decree which is written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's signet ring may not be revoked. Scribes! Write whatever Mordecai tells you to!

NARRATOR: Mordecai sent letters to the Jews and all the leaders of the empire by couriers on horses, riding on steeds sired by the royal stud.

MORDECAI: This is the message: The king says that Jews who were in each and every city have the right to assemble and to defend their lives, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate the entire army of any people or province which might attack them, including children and women, and to plunder their spoil, on one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month (that is, the month Adar). Jews: be ready for this day to avenge yourselves on your enemies.

KING'S SERVANTS: GO RIDING OUT ON HORSES AND DISTRIBUTE THE MESSAGE

NARRATOR: Then Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal robes of blue and white, with a large crown of gold and a garment of fine linen and purple; and the city of Susa shouted and rejoiced.

ASSORTED JEWS (3+): REJOICE BECAUSE OF THE EDICT, AND HAVE A FEAST.

NARRATOR: Many among the peoples of the land became Jews, for the dread of the Jews had fallen on them.

NARRATOR: Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces. Thus the Jews struck all their enemies with the sword, but they did not lay their hands on the plunder.

KING AHASUERUS TO ESTHER: The Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men and the ten sons of Haman in Susa the capital. What then have they done in the rest of the king's provinces! Now what is your petition? It shall even be granted you. And what is your further request? It shall also be done.

QUEEN ESTHER: If it pleases the king, let tomorrow also be granted to the Jews who are in Susa to do according to the edict of today; and let Haman's ten sons be hanged on the gallows.

KING AHASUERUS: Make it so!

EXECUTIONERS: HANG HAMAN'S 10 SONS

NARRATOR: The Jews who were in Susa assembled also on the fourteenth day of the month Adar and killed three hundred men in Susa, but they did not lay their hands on the plunder, and on the fourteenth day they rested and made it a day of feasting and rejoicing and sending portions of food to one another.

MORDECAI: Let it be written to the Jews: celebrate the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same month, annually, because on those days we rid ourselves of our enemies, and this month has turned for us from sorrow into gladness, and from mourning into a holiday. Celebrate a feast, send food to each other, and give gifts to the poor.

NARRATOR: Haman had cast "Pur", that is the lot, to decide when to destroy the Jews. But his wicked scheme which he had devised against the Jews came back on his own head and he was hanged. Therefore they called these days "Purim" after the name of Pur.

QUEEN ESTHER: Let it be written, Celebrate these days of Purim at their appointed times, just as Mordecai and I have established them.

NARRATOR: The full account of the greatness of Mordecai, to which the king advanced him, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia? For Mordecai the Jew was second only to King Ahasuerus and great among the Jews, and in favor with the multitude of his kinsmen, one who sought the good of his people and one who spoke for the welfare of his whole nation.