

## Esther

<sup>1</sup> This is an account of what happened during the time of King Xerxes, the Xerxes\* who ruled over 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia. <sup>2</sup> At the time King Xerxes was ruling from his royal throne at the fortress in Susa.† <sup>3</sup> In the third year of his reign he organized a feast for his officials and administrators. The army commanders of Persia and Media, the nobles, and the provincial officials were all there with him. <sup>4</sup> He put on display his wealth and the glory of his kingdom, showing how majestic, splendid, and glorious he was, for 180 days.

<sup>5</sup> After that the king gave a feast lasting for seven days for all the people, great and small, who were there in the fortress of Susa in the garden courtyard of the king's pavilion. <sup>6</sup> It was decorated with white and blue cotton curtains tied with cords of fine linen and purple thread on silver rings, held up by marble pillars. Gold and silver couches were placed on a pavement made of purple porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl, and expensive stones. <sup>7</sup> Drinks were served in golden goblets of different kinds, and the royal wine flowed freely because of the king's generosity. <sup>8</sup> The king had ruled that there was to

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\* **1:1** Clearly the writer was aware there was more than one "Xerxes." † **1:2** This is significant since the king had both summer and winter palaces. This was his winter residence.

be no limit on how much a guest could drink; he had told his servants to give each guest whatever they wanted. <sup>9</sup> Queen Vashti also gave a feast for the women in the palace that belonged to King Xerxes.

<sup>10</sup> On the seventh day of the feast, the king, feeling happy from drinking wine, ordered the seven eunuchs who were his attendants, Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Karkas, <sup>11</sup> to bring Queen Vashti to him wearing her royal headdress,<sup>‡</sup> so he could show her beauty to the people and officials, for she was very good-looking. <sup>12</sup> But when the eunuchs delivered the order from the king, Queen Vashti refused to come. The king became extremely angry—he was absolutely furious.

<sup>13</sup> Then the king spoke with the wise men who would know what to do, for it was the custom for him to ask the opinion of experts in procedures and legal matters. <sup>14</sup> Those closest to him were Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan. They were the seven nobles of Persia and Media who had frequent meetings with the king and had the highest positions in the kingdom.

<sup>15</sup> “What does the law say should be done with Queen Vashti?” he asked. “She refused to obey

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<sup>‡</sup> **1:11** The word here is only used in Esther and refers to the Persian royal headdress, not what is usually thought of as a crown. However, it served the same purpose as a crown in that was worn by royalty. The word is probably borrowed from the Persian language.

the direct order of King Xerxes as delivered by the eunuchs!”

<sup>16</sup> Memucan gave his answer before the king and the nobles, “Queen Vashti hasn’t just insulted the king but all the nobles and all the people of all the provinces of King Xerxes. <sup>17</sup> Once it gets out what the queen has done, all wives will despise their husbands, looking down on them and telling them, ‘King Xerxes ordered Queen Vashti brought to him but she didn’t come!’ <sup>18</sup> By the end of the day, the wives of all the nobles throughout Persia and Media who have heard what the queen did will treat their noble husbands with angry contempt!

<sup>19</sup> If it please Your Majesty, issue a royal decree, in accordance with the laws of Persia and Media which cannot be changed, that Vashti is banished from the presence of King Xerxes, and that Your Majesty will give her royal position to another, one who is better than her. <sup>20</sup> When Your Majesty’s decree is proclaimed throughout your vast empire, all wives will respect their husbands, highborn or lowborn.”

<sup>21</sup> This advice looked good to the king and the nobles, so the king did what Memucan had said. <sup>22</sup> He sent letters to all provinces in the empire, in each province’s script and language, that every man should rule his own home, and use his own mother tongue. §

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§ 1:22 The meaning of this last phrase is uncertain.

## 2

<sup>1</sup> Later on, after all this had happened, King Xerxes' anger subsided and he thought about Vashti and what she'd done, and the decree issued against her. <sup>2</sup> His advisors suggested to him,\* “Why not order a search to find beautiful young virgins for Your Majesty? <sup>3</sup> Your Majesty should put officers in charge in each province of his empire to gather all the beautiful young women and bring them to the king's harem at the fortress of Susa. They should be placed under the supervision of Hegai, the king's eunuch in charge of the women, and they should be given beauty treatments. <sup>4</sup> The young woman the king finds most attractive can become queen in place of Vashti.” The king thought this was a good idea, so he acted upon it.

<sup>5</sup> There was a Jewish man living in the fortress of Susa named Mordecai, son of Jair, son of Shimei, son of Kish, a Benjamite <sup>6</sup> who was among those taken prisoner with King Jehoiachin of Judah and carried into exile from Jerusalem by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. <sup>7</sup> He had brought up Hadassah (or Esther),† his uncle's daughter, because she had no father or mother. The young woman had a beautiful figure and was very attractive. After her father

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\* **2:2** This suggestion may have been more for themselves, since if the king did bring Vashti back, their lives could have been in danger as the architects of her downfall. † **2:7** Hadassah was her Hebrew name, Esther her Persian name.

and mother died, Mordecai had adopted her as his own daughter.

<sup>8</sup> When the king's order and decree had been announced, many young women were brought to the fortress of Susa under the supervision of Hegai. Esther was also taken to the king's palace and placed under the care of Hegai, who was in charge of the women.

<sup>9</sup> Esther caught his eye and he treated her favorably. He quickly arranged beauty treatments and special food for her. He also provided her with seven specially-chosen maids from the king's palace, and moved her and her maids to the best location in the harem.

<sup>10</sup> Esther had not let anyone know her nationality or who her family was, because Mordecai had ordered her not to. <sup>11</sup> Each day Mordecai spent time walking around in front of the courtyard of the harem so he could find out how Esther was doing and what was happening to her.

<sup>12</sup> Before it was the turn of a young woman to go to King Xerxes, she had to complete twelve months of beauty treatments for women that were required: six months with oil of myrrh, and six with perfumed oils and ointments. <sup>13</sup> When it was time for the young woman to go to the king, she was given whatever<sup>‡</sup> she asked for to take with her from the harem to the king's palace. <sup>14</sup> In the evening she would go, and in the morning she would return to a different harem under the supervision of Shaashgaz, who was

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<sup>‡</sup> **2:13** Probably referring to clothing and jewelry.

the king's eunuch in charge of the concubines. She would not go back to be with the king again unless he was particularly attracted to her and called for her by name.

<sup>15</sup> (Esther was the daughter of Abihail, Mordecai's uncle. Mordecai had adopted her as his own daughter.) When it was Esther's turn to go to the king, she didn't ask for anything to take with her except what Hegai advised. (He was the king's eunuch in charge of the women.) Esther was looked on with admiration by everybody.

<sup>16</sup> Esther was taken to King Xerxes into his royal palace, in the tenth month, the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

<sup>17</sup> The king loved Esther more than all the other women. He treated her more favorably and with greater kindness than all of the other virgins. So he placed the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

<sup>18</sup> The king gave a great feast for all his officials and administrators—Esther's feast. § He also declared it a holiday throughout the provinces and distributed generous gifts.

<sup>19</sup> Even though there had been a second gathering of virgins,\* and Mordecai had been

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§ **2:18** In the Septuagint this is identified as a wedding feast.

\* **2:19** Various interpretations have been given to this phrase. However, 2:3 records the decree to “gather virgins” and this could be a second phase of this process. Note also that there is no definite article before virgins in this verse, so likely it would not refer to the existing group.

given a position by the king,<sup>†</sup> <sup>20</sup> Esther still did not let anyone know about her family or her nationality, as Mordecai had ordered her. She followed Mordecai's instructions just as she did when he brought her up.

<sup>21</sup> At that time, as Mordecai was doing his work at the palace gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two eunuchs who guarded the entrance to the king's rooms, became furious with King Xerxes and looked for a way to assassinate him. <sup>22</sup> Mordecai found out about the plot and reported it to Queen Esther. Esther in turn told the king on Mordecai's behalf. <sup>23</sup> When the plot was investigated and found to be true, both men were impaled on poles.<sup>‡</sup> This was recorded in the official Book of Records by order of the king.

### 3

<sup>1</sup> Some time after this, King Xerxes honored Haman, son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, giving him a position higher than all his fellow officials.

<sup>2</sup> All the officials in royal employment bowed down and showed respect to Haman, for this is what the king had commanded. But Mordecai would not bow down and show respect to him.

<sup>3</sup> The king's officials asked Mordecai, "Why are you disobeying the king's command?" <sup>4</sup> They talked to him about it day after day, but he refused to listen. So they told Haman about it

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<sup>†</sup> **2:19** "Given a position by the king": literally, "sitting at the king's gate." Also in verse 21 and subsequently. <sup>‡</sup> **2:23** Execution by impaling was the usual method, not by hanging with a noose.

to see if he would put up with what Mordecai was doing,\* for Mordecai had told them he was a Jew.

<sup>5</sup> Haman was furious when he saw that Mordecai did not bow down and show respect to him.

<sup>6</sup> Having found out who Mordecai's people were, he dismissed the idea of just killing Mordecai. He decided to kill every Jew in the whole Persian Empire—all of Mordecai's people!

<sup>7</sup> In the twelfth year of King Xerxes, in the first month, the month of Nisan, “pur” (meaning a “lot”) was cast in Haman's presence to choose a day and month,† taking each day and each month one at a time. The lot fell on the twelfth month, the month of Adar.

<sup>8</sup> Haman went to King Xerxes and said, “There's a particular people living among others in many different places throughout the provinces of your empire who cut themselves off from everybody else. They have their own laws which are different to those of any other people, and what's more, they don't obey the king's laws. So it's not a good idea for Your Majesty to ignore them.

<sup>9</sup> If it please Your Majesty, issue a decree to destroy them, and I will personally contribute 10,000 silver talents to those who carry out

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\* **3:4** “If he would put up with what Mordecai was doing”: alternatively, “if Mordecai would continue what he was doing.”

† **3:7** Casting lots was an ancient way of determining the most “favorable” time for a particular action, in this case Haman's plan to destroy the Jews.



the king's business to be placed in the royal treasury.”

<sup>10</sup> The king took off his signet ring and handed it<sup>†</sup> to Haman, son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. <sup>11</sup> The king told Haman, “You can have the money, and do to the people whatever you want.”

<sup>12</sup> On the thirteenth day of the first month the king's secretaries were summoned. A decree was issued in accordance with everything Haman demanded and sent to the king's chief officers,<sup>§</sup> the governors of the different provinces and the nobles of the various peoples in the provinces. It was sent in the script of each province and in the language of every people, with the authorization of King Xerxes and sealed with his signet ring.

<sup>13</sup> Letters were sent by messenger to all the provinces in the king's empire with orders to destroy, kill, and annihilate all Jews, young and old, women and children, and confiscate their possessions, all in one day—the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar.

<sup>14</sup> A copy of the decree was to be issued as law in every province and publicized to the people so that they would be ready for the day. <sup>15</sup> By order of the king the messengers hurried on their way. The decree was also issued in the fortress of Susa. The king and Haman sat down for a drink while

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<sup>†</sup> **3:10** A sign that the king accepted the proposal.    **§ 3:12** “Chief officers”: literally, “satraps.”

the people in city of Susa were very disturbed.\*

## 4

<sup>1</sup> When Mordecai found out all that had happened, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and walked through the city, crying and wailing in grief. <sup>2</sup> He went as far as the palace gate, because no one was allowed to enter the palace gate wearing sackcloth.

<sup>3</sup> When the king's decree and orders reached all the different provinces the Jews began to mourn in terrible distress. They fasted, they wept, and they wailed; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

<sup>4</sup> Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her,\* and the queen was very upset. She sent clothes to him so he could take off his sackcloth, but he refused to accept them. <sup>5</sup> She called Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs assigned to attend her, and ordered him to go to Mordecai and find out what he was doing and why.

<sup>6</sup> Hathach went to Mordecai in the city square in front of the palace gate. <sup>7</sup> Mordecai explained to him everything that had happened to him,† including the exact amount of money that Haman had promised to pay the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews. <sup>8</sup> Mordecai also gave him

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\* **3:15** Not only the Jews living there, but other ethnic/religious minorities must have been concerned about such a precedent.

\* **4:4** Clearly they told Esther what her cousin was doing, but did not give any explanation. † **4:7** This would surely have also included Haman's issue with Mordecai that had precipitated the crisis.

a copy of the decree that had been issued in Susa for their destruction to show Esther and explain it to her, and asked him to instruct her to go to the king and appeal for mercy and plead before him for her people. <sup>9</sup> Hathach went back and told Esther what Mordecai had said.

<sup>10</sup> Then Esther spoke with Hathach and ordered him to deliver this message to Mordecai. <sup>11</sup> “All the king’s officials, and even the people in the provinces of the king’s empire, know that any man or any woman who goes to the king, entering his inner court without being summoned, is sentenced to death—that is the king’s one law—unless the king holds out his golden scepter to them so they can live. In my case, I have not been called to go to the king for thirty days.”

<sup>12</sup> When Mordecai was told what Esther said, <sup>13</sup> Mordecai sent a message back to Esther, saying, “Don’t think that just because you live in the king’s palace that your life is the only one that will be saved of all the Jews! <sup>14</sup> If you stay silent right now, help and rescue will come to the Jews from some other place, and you and your relatives will die. Who knows—it could be you came to be queen for such a time as this!”

<sup>15</sup> Esther replied to Mordecai, saying, <sup>16</sup> “Have all the Jews in Susa meet together and fast for me. Don’t eat or drink anything for three days and nights. I and my girls will also fast. After that, I will go to the king, even though it’s against the law, and if I die, I die.”

<sup>17</sup> Mordecai went and did everything Esther had told him to do.

## 5

<sup>1</sup> Three days later Esther put on her royal robes and went and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, opposite the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the king's hall, facing the entrance. <sup>2</sup> When the king saw Queen Esther standing in the inner court she won his approval so he acted favorably by holding out his scepter to her. So Esther went over and touched the end of the scepter.

<sup>3</sup> The king asked her, "What is it, Queen Esther? What do you want? I'll give it to you, as much as half my empire!"

<sup>4</sup> Esther replied, "If it please Your Majesty, may the king and Haman come today to a dinner I have prepared for him."

<sup>5</sup> "Bring Haman here at once so we can do what Esther has requested," the king ordered. The king and Haman went to the dinner that Esther had prepared.

<sup>6</sup> As they drank their wine, the king asked Esther, "What are you really asking for? It will be given to you. What do you want? You shall have it, as much as half my empire!"

<sup>7</sup> Esther answered, "This is what I'm asking for, and this is what I want. <sup>8</sup> If the king looks on me favorably, and if it please Your Majesty to grant my request and do as I ask, may the king and Haman come to a dinner I will prepare for

them. Tomorrow I will answer Your Majesty's question.”

<sup>9</sup> When Haman left that day he was very happy and pleased with himself. But when he saw Mordecai at the palace gate and that he didn't stand up or tremble with fear before him, Haman was furious with Mordecai. <sup>10</sup> However, Haman controlled himself and he went home.

There he invited his friends over. Once they and his wife Zeresh had gathered, <sup>11</sup> Haman went into great detail about how much money and possessions he had, and how many children, and how the king had made him so important by promoting him above all the other nobles and officials.

<sup>12</sup> “Added to all that,” Haman went on, “I was the only other person Queen Esther invited to come to a dinner she had prepared for the king. I'm also invited by her to eat together with the king tomorrow.”

<sup>13</sup> Then he said, “But all of this is worthless\* to me while I keep on seeing Mordecai the Jew sitting at the palace gate.”

<sup>14</sup> His wife Zeresh and his friends told him, “Arrange for a pole to be set up, fifty cubits high. Then, in the morning, go and ask the king to have Mordecai impaled on it. Afterwards, you'll be happy as you go with the king to the dinner.” Haman thought this was good advice, so he had the pole set up.

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\* **5:13** “Worthless”: in other words it brought him no satisfaction.

## 6

<sup>1</sup> That night the king wasn't able to sleep, so he ordered the Book of Records of the King's Reign brought in so it could be read to him. <sup>2</sup> There he discovered the account of what Mordecai had reported about Bigthana and Teresh, the two king's eunuchs who were doorkeepers who had plotted to assassinate King Xerxes.

<sup>3</sup> “What honor or position did Mordecai receive as a reward for doing this?” asked the king.

“Nothing has been done for him,” replied the king's attendants.

<sup>4</sup> “Who's here in the court?” the king asked. Haman had just happened to arrive in the outer court of the royal palace to ask the king to have Mordecai impaled on the pole he had set up for him.

<sup>5</sup> The king's attendants told him, “Haman is waiting in the court.” “Tell him to come in,” the king ordered.

<sup>6</sup> When Haman came in, the king asked him, “What should be done for a man the king wants to honor?” Haman said to himself, “Who would the king want to honor except me?”

<sup>7</sup> So Haman said to the king, “A man whom the king wants to honor <sup>8</sup> should be brought royal robes the king has worn,\* a horse the king has ridden and which has a royal headdress on its head. <sup>9</sup> Have the robes and the horse handed over to one of the king's highest officials and

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\* **6:8** This was usually a crime punishable by death since it was close to claiming to be king. Only the king could authorize such a presumptuous act.

nobles. Let him make sure the man the king wishes to honor is dressed in the royal robes and that he rides on the horse through the city streets, and have the official announce before him, “This is what is done for the man the king wishes to honor!”

<sup>10</sup> Then the king told Haman, “Right! Off you go! Quickly get the royal robes and the horse, and do just what you've said for Mordecai the Jew sitting at the palace gate. Don't leave out anything that you mentioned.”

<sup>11</sup> Haman went and got the robes and the horse. He dressed Mordecai and placed him on the horse, and led him through the streets of the city, shouting before him, “This is what is done for the man the king wishes to honor!”

<sup>12</sup> Mordecai went back to the palace gate, but Haman rushed home, crying and covering his head in shame.

<sup>13</sup> Haman explained to his wife Zeresh and all his friends what had happened to him. These wise friends and his wife Zeresh told him, “If Mordecai is one of the Jewish people, and you have already begun to lose status before him—you won't be able to beat him! You're going to lose to him, you're going to fall!”<sup>†</sup> <sup>14</sup> While they were still talking to him, the king's eunuchs arrived and quickly took Haman to the dinner which Esther had prepared.

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<sup>†</sup> **6:13** Literally this phrase says, “to fall you will fall before him.”

## 7

<sup>1</sup> The king and Haman went to Queen Esther's dinner. <sup>2</sup> At this second dinner, as they were drinking wine, the king asked Esther again, "What are you really asking for, Queen Esther? It will be given to you. What do you want? You shall have it, as much as half my empire!"

<sup>3</sup> Queen Esther answered, "If the king looks on me favorably, and if it please Your Majesty to grant me my life, that is my request; and the lives of my people, that is what I ask. <sup>4</sup> For my people and I have been sold\* to be destroyed, killed, and annihilated. If we had only been sold as slaves, I would have kept quiet, because our suffering would not have justified disturbing the king."†

<sup>5</sup> The king asked Queen Esther, demanding to know, "Who is this? Where is the man who has dared to do this?"

<sup>6</sup> "The man, the opponent, the enemy, is this evil Haman!" Esther replied. Haman shook with terror in front of the king and the queen.

<sup>7</sup> The king was furious. He got up, leaving his wine, and went out into the palace garden. Haman stayed behind to beg for his life from Queen Esther, for he realized the king planned an evil‡ end for him. <sup>8</sup> When the king came back in from the palace garden to the dining room,

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\* **7:4** "Sold": or, "handed over." † **7:4** Or "although our suffering could not have compensated for what the king lost."

‡ **7:7** The same word is used here as Esther uses to describe Haman in verse 6.



Haman had thrown himself<sup>§</sup> on the couch where Queen Esther was.

The king shouted out, “Is he even going to rape the queen here in the palace, right in front of me?” As soon as the king said this, the servants covered Haman's face.

<sup>9</sup> Then Harbonah, one of the eunuchs attending the king, said: “Haman set up a pole beside his house for Mordecai, the one whose report saved the king's life. The pole is fifty cubits high.”

“Impale him on it!” the king ordered.

<sup>10</sup> So they impaled Haman on the pole that he had set up for Mordecai. Then the anger of the king died down.

## 8

<sup>1</sup> That very day King Xerxes gave Queen Esther the property that had belonged to Haman, the enemy of the Jews. Also, Mordecai came before the king, because Esther had explained who he was to her. <sup>2</sup> The king removed his signet ring which he had taken back from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. Esther put Mordecai in charge of Haman's property.

<sup>3</sup> Esther went to speak to the king again, falling down at his feet and weeping, pleading with him to do away with the evil scheme of Haman the Agagite that he had thought up to destroy the Jews.

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§ 7:8 “Thrown himself”: literally, “had fallen,” but this was not an accidental fall but a deliberate attempt to ask for mercy. However, this only compounded his guilt in the king's eyes.

<sup>4</sup> Once again the king held out the golden scepter to Esther. She got up and stood before him.

<sup>5</sup> Esther said, “If it please Your Majesty, and if he looks on me favorably, and if the king believes it is the right thing to do, and if he is pleased with me, let an order be issued that revokes the letters sent out by Haman, son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, with his devious scheme to destroy the Jews in all the provinces of the king. <sup>6</sup> For how can I bear to see the disaster about to fall on my people? How can I bear to see the destruction of my family?”

<sup>7</sup> King Xerxes said to Esther the Queen and Mordecai the Jew, “Notice that I have given Haman's estate to Esther, and he was impaled on a pole because he wanted to kill the Jews. <sup>8</sup> Now you may write an order regarding the Jews in whatever way you want, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's signet ring. For no decree written in the king's name and sealed with his signet ring can be revoked.”\*

<sup>9</sup> The king's secretaries were summoned, and on the twenty-third day of the third month, the month of Sivan, they wrote a decree of all of Mordecai's orders to the Jews and to the king's chief officers, the governors, and the nobles of the 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia. They wrote to every province in its own script, to

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\* **8:8** Esther has asked (verse 5) that the king's previous decree be revoked. King Xerxes reminds her that no decree can be revoked, however a new decree cannot be revoked either, and this can counteract the effect of the previous decree.

every people in their own language, and to the Jews in their own script and language. <sup>10</sup> He wrote in the name of King Xerxes and sealed it with the king's signet ring. He sent the letters by messenger on horseback, who rode fast thoroughbred horses of the king.

<sup>11</sup> The letters from the king authorized the Jews in every city to gather together in self-defense, and to destroy, kill, and annihilate any armed group of a people or province that might attack them, including women and children, and to confiscate their possessions. <sup>12</sup> This was to happen on one day throughout all the provinces of King Xerxes, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar.† <sup>13</sup> A copy of the decree was to be issued as law in every province and publicized to the people so that the Jews would be ready on that day to pay back their enemies. <sup>14</sup> By order of the king, the messengers riding the king's relay horses rushed out, hurrying on their way. The decree was also issued in the fortress of Susa.

<sup>15</sup> Then Mordecai left the king, wearing royal clothes of blue and white, with a large golden crown and a purple robe made of fine linen. The city of Susa shouted with joy. <sup>16</sup> For the Jews it was a bright time of happiness, joy, and respect. <sup>17</sup> In every province and in every city, wherever the king's order and decree had reached, the Jews were joyful and happy—they feasted and

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† **8:12** The same date as the original decree. See 3:13.

celebrated. Many people became Jews, because they had become afraid of them.

## 9

<sup>1</sup> On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, the king's order and decree were to be carried out. That day the enemies of the Jews had thought they would crush them, but the exact opposite happened—the Jews crushed their enemies. <sup>2</sup> The Jews gathered in their cities throughout the provinces of King Xerxes to attack those who wanted to destroy them. Nobody could oppose them, because all the other people were afraid of them. <sup>3</sup> All the officials of the provinces, the chief officers, the governors, and the king's officials helped the Jews, because they were afraid of Mordecai. <sup>4</sup> Mordecai had a great deal of power in the royal palace, and his reputation spread throughout the provinces as his power increased.

<sup>5</sup> The Jews attacked their enemies with swords, killing and destroying them, and they did whatever they wanted to their enemies. <sup>6</sup> In the fortress of Susa, the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men. <sup>7</sup> This included Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, <sup>8</sup> Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, <sup>9</sup> Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vaizatha, <sup>10</sup> the ten sons of Haman, son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews, but they did not take their possessions.

<sup>11</sup> The same day, when the number of those killed in the fortress of Susa was reported to the king, <sup>12</sup> he said to Queen Esther, “The Jews

have killed and destroyed five hundred men in the fortress of Susa, including Haman's ten sons. Imagine what they've done in the rest of the royal provinces! Now what is it you'd like to ask? It will be given to you. What more do you want? It will be granted."

<sup>13</sup> "If it please Your Majesty," Esther replied, "allow the Jews in Susa be allowed to do the same tomorrow as they did today, following the decree. Also, let the ten sons of Haman be impaled on poles."

<sup>14</sup> The king ordered this to be done. A decree was issued in Susa, and they impaled the bodies of Haman's ten sons. <sup>15</sup> On the fourteenth day of the month of Adar, the Jews in Susa gathered together again and killed three hundred men there, but again they did not take their possessions.

<sup>16</sup> The other Jews in the king's provinces also gathered to defend themselves and get rid of their enemies. They killed 75,000 who hated them, but did not touch their possessions.

<sup>17</sup> This happened on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar, and on the fourteenth day they rested and made it a day of feasting and celebration. <sup>18</sup> However, the Jews in Susa had gathered to fight on the thirteenth and the fourteenth days of the month. So they rested on the fifteenth day, and made that a day of feasting and celebration. <sup>19</sup> To this day rural Jews, living in the villages, observe the fourteenth day of the month of Adar as a day of celebration and

feasting, a holiday when they send gifts to one another.

<sup>20</sup> Mordecai recorded these events and sent letters to all the Jews throughout the provinces ruled by King Xerxes, near and far, <sup>21</sup> requiring them to celebrate every year the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar <sup>22</sup> as the time when the Jews rested from their victory over their enemies, and as the month when their sadness was turned into joy and their mourning into a time of celebration. He wrote them to observe the days as days of feasting and joy and giving gifts of food to one another and presents to the poor.

<sup>23</sup> The Jews agreed to continue what they had already started doing, following what Mordecai had written to them. <sup>24</sup> For Haman, son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted to destroy the Jews, and had cast “pur” (meaning a “lot”) to crush and destroy them. <sup>25</sup> But when it came to the king's attention, he sent out letters ordering that the evil scheme which Haman had planned against the Jews should rebound on him, and that he and his sons should be impaled on poles. <sup>26</sup> (That's why these days are called Purim, from the word Pur.\*)

As a result of all the instructions in Mordecai's letter, and what they'd seen, and what had happened to them, <sup>27</sup> the Jews committed themselves to adopt the practice that they and their descendants and all who join them should not forget to celebrate these two days as set down,

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\* **9:26** “Purim” is the plural of “pur.”

and at the right time every year. <sup>28</sup> These days were to be remembered and celebrated by every generation, family, province, and city, so that these days of Purim would always be observed among the Jews, and they would not be forgotten by their descendants.

<sup>29</sup> Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, wrote a letter, along with Mordecai the Jew, giving in her letter full authority to Mordecai's letter about Purim. <sup>30</sup> Letters expressing peace and reassurance were also sent all the Jews in the 127 provinces of the empire of King Xerxes. <sup>31</sup> They established these days of Purim at their given time as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had ordered, committing themselves and their descendants to the times of fasting and mourning. <sup>32</sup> In this way Esther's decree confirmed these practices regarding Purim, which were entered in the official record.

## 10

<sup>1</sup> King Xerxes imposed taxes throughout the empire, even to its most distant shores. <sup>2</sup> All he accomplished through his power and strength, as well as the complete account of the high position to which the king promoted Mordecai, are written down in the Book of the Records of the kings of Media and Persia. <sup>3</sup> For Mordecai the Jew was second-in-command to King Xerxes, leader of the Jews and highly-respected in the Jewish community, he worked to help his people and improve the security of all Jews.

**Free Bible Version**  
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Note that in addition to the rules above, revising and adapting God's Word involves a great responsibility to be true to God's Word. See Revelation 22:18-19.

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