

# ESTHER

## Esther chosen as queen by the Persian king

**1**<sup>1</sup>THE EVENTS HERE RELATED happened in the days of Ahasuerus, the Ahasuerus who ruled from India to Ethiopia, a hundred and twenty-seven provinces. <sup>2</sup>At this time he sat on his royal throne in Susa the capital city. <sup>3</sup>In the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for all his officers and his courtiers; and when his army of Persians and Medes, with his nobles and provincial governors, were in attendance, <sup>4</sup>he displayed the wealth of his kingdom and the pomp and splendour of his majesty for many days, a hundred and eighty in all. <sup>5</sup>When these days were over, the king gave a banquet for all the people present in Susa the capital city, both high and low; it was held in the garden court of the royal pavilion and lasted seven days. <sup>6</sup>There were white curtains and violet hangings fastened to silver rings with bands of fine linen and purple [bands ... purple: or white and purple cords], there were alabaster pillars and couches of gold and silver set on a mosaic pavement of malachite and alabaster, of mother-of-pearl and turquoise. <sup>7</sup>Wine was served in golden cups of various patterns: the king's wine flowed freely as befitted a king, <sup>8</sup>and the law of the drinking was that there should be no compulsion, for the king had laid it down that all the stewards of his palace should respect each man's wishes. <sup>9</sup>In addition, Queen Vashti gave a banquet for the women in the royal apartments of King Ahasuerus.

<sup>10</sup>On the seventh day, when he was merry with wine, the king ordered Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven eunuchs who were in attendance on the king's person, <sup>11</sup>to bring Queen Vashti before him wearing her royal crown, in order to display her beauty to the people and the officers; for she was indeed a beautiful woman. <sup>12</sup>But Queen Vashti refused to come in answer to the royal command conveyed by the eunuchs. This greatly incensed the king, and he grew hot with anger.

<sup>13</sup>Then the king conferred with his wise men versed in misdemeanours [*Or times*]; for it was his royal custom to consult all who were versed in law and religion, <sup>14</sup>those closest to him being Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media who had access to the king and held first place in the kingdom. <sup>15</sup>He asked them, 'What does the law require to be done with Queen Vashti for disobeying the command of King Ahasuerus brought to her by the eunuchs?' <sup>16</sup>Then Memucan made answer before the king and the princes: 'Queen Vashti has done wrong, and not to the king alone, but also to all the officers and to all the peoples in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. <sup>17</sup>Every woman will come to know what the queen has done, and this will make them treat their husbands with contempt; they will say, "King Ahasuerus ordered Queen Vashti to be brought before him and she did not come." <sup>18</sup>The great ladies of Persia and Media, who have heard of the queen's conduct, will tell all the king's officers about this day, and there will be endless disrespect and insolence! <sup>19</sup>If it please your majesty, let a royal decree go out from you and let it be inscribed in the laws of the Persians and Medes, never to be revoked, that Vashti shall not again appear

before King Ahasuerus; and let the king give her place as queen to another woman who is more worthy of it than she. <sup>20</sup>Thus when this royal edict is heard through the length and breadth of the kingdom, all women will give honour to their husbands, high and low alike.' <sup>21</sup>Memucan's advice pleased the king and the princes, and the king did as he had proposed. <sup>22</sup>Letters were sent to all the royal provinces, to every province in its own script and to every people in their own language, in order that each man might be master in his own house and control all his own womenfolk [and control ... womenfolk: *prob. rdg, Heb and speak in his own language*].

<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>Later, when the anger of King Ahasuerus had died down, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her. <sup>2</sup>So the king's attendants said, 'Let beautiful young virgins be sought out for your majesty; <sup>3</sup>and let your majesty appoint commissioners in all the provinces of your kingdom to bring all these beautiful young virgins into the women's quarters in Susa the capital city. Let them be committed to the care of Hegai, the king's eunuch in charge of the women, and let cosmetics be provided for them; <sup>4</sup>and let the one who is most acceptable to the king become queen in place of Vashti.' This idea pleased the king and he acted on it.

<sup>5</sup>Now there was in Susa the capital city a Jew named Mordecai son of Jair, son of Shimei, son of Kish, a Benjamite; <sup>6</sup>he had been carried into exile from Jerusalem among those whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah. <sup>7</sup>He had a foster-child Hadassah, that is Esther, his uncle's daughter, who had neither father nor mother. She was a beautiful and charming girl, and after the death of her father and mother Mordecai had adopted her as his own daughter. <sup>8</sup>When the king's order and his edict were published, and many girls were brought to Susa the capital city to be committed to the care of Hegai, Esther too was taken to the king's palace to be entrusted to Hegai, who had charge of the women. <sup>9</sup>She attracted his notice and received his special favour: he readily provided her with her cosmetics and her allowance of food, and also with seven picked maids from the king's palace, and he gave her and her maids privileges in the women's quarters.

<sup>10</sup>Esther had not disclosed her race or her family, because Mordecai had forbidden her to do so. <sup>11</sup>Every day Mordecai passed along by the forecourt of the women's quarters to learn how Esther was faring and what was happening to her.

<sup>12</sup>The full period of preparation prescribed for the women was twelve months, six months with oil and myrrh and six months with perfumes and cosmetics. When the period was complete, each girl's turn came to go to King Ahasuerus, <sup>13</sup>and she was allowed to take with her whatever she asked, when she went from the women's quarters to the king's palace. <sup>14</sup>She went into the palace in the evening and returned in the morning to another part of the women's quarters, to be under the care of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch in charge of the concubines. She did not again go to the king unless he expressed a wish for her; then she was summoned by name.

<sup>15</sup>When the turn came for Esther, daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai her adoptive father, to go to the king, she asked for nothing to take with her except what was advised by Hegai, the king's eunuch in charge of the women; and Esther charmed all who saw her. <sup>16</sup>When she was taken to King Ahasuerus in the royal palace, in the

seventh year of his reign, in the tenth month, that is the month Tebeth, <sup>17</sup>the king loved her more than any of his other women and treated her with greater favour and kindness than the rest of the virgins, He put a royal crown on her head and made her queen in place of Vashti. <sup>18</sup>Then the king gave a great banquet for all his officers and courtiers, a banquet in honour of Esther. He also proclaimed a holiday [*Or an amnesty*] throughout the provinces and distributed gifts worthy of a king.

<sup>19</sup>Mordecai was in attendance at court; <sup>20</sup>on his instructions Esther had not disclosed her family or her race, she had done what Mordecai told her, as she did when she was his ward. <sup>21</sup>One day when Mordecai was in attendance at court, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, keepers of the threshold, who were disaffected, were plotting to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. <sup>22</sup>This became known to Mordecai, who told Queen Esther; and she told the king, mentioning Mordecai by name. <sup>23</sup>The affair was investigated and the report confirmed; the two men were hanged on the gallows. All this was recorded in the royal chronicle in the presence of the king.

## **Haman's plot against the Jews**

**3**<sup>1</sup>AFTER THIS, KING AHASUERUS promoted Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, advancing him and giving him precedence above all his fellow-officers. <sup>2</sup>So the king's attendants at court all bowed down to Haman and did obeisance, for so the king had commanded; but Mordecai did not bow down to him or do obeisance. <sup>3</sup>Then the attendants at court said to Mordecai, 'Why do you flout his majesty's command?' <sup>4</sup>Day by day they challenged him, but he refused to listen to them; so they informed Haman, in order to discover if Mordecai's refusal would be tolerated, for he had told them that he was a Jew. <sup>5</sup>When Haman saw that Mordecai was not bowing down to him or doing obeisance, he was infuriated. <sup>6</sup>On learning who Mordecai's people were, he scorned to lay hands on him alone, and looked for a way to destroy all the Jews throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, Mordecai and all his race.

<sup>7</sup>In the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, in the first month, Nisan, they cast lots, Pur as it is called, in the presence of Haman, taking day by day and month by month, and the lot fell on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month [*and the lot ... twelfth month: prob. rdg, cp v13; Heb the twelfth*], the month Adar. <sup>8</sup>Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, 'There is a certain people, dispersed among the many peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom, who keep themselves apart. Their laws are different from those of every other people; they do not keep your majesty's laws. It does not befit your majesty to tolerate them. <sup>9</sup>If it please your majesty, let an order be made in writing for their destruction; and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to your majesty's officials, to be deposited in the royal treasury.' <sup>10</sup>So the king took the signet-ring from his hand and gave it to Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews; <sup>11</sup>and he said to him, 'The money and the people are yours; deal with them as you wish.'

<sup>12</sup>On the thirteenth day of the first month the king's secretaries were summoned and, in accordance with Haman's instructions, a writ was issued to the king's satraps and the governor of every province, and to the officers over each separate people: for each province in its own script and for each people in their own language. It was drawn up in

the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the king's signet. <sup>13</sup>Thus letters were sent by courier to all the king's provinces with orders to destroy, slay, and exterminate all Jews, young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month Adar, and to plunder their possessions. <sup>14</sup>A copy of the writ was to be issued as a decree in every province and to be published to all the peoples, so that they might be ready for that day. <sup>15</sup>The couriers were dispatched post-haste at the king's command, and the decree was issued in Susa the capital city. The king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city of Susa was thrown into confusion.

**4**<sup>1</sup>When Mordecai learnt all that had been done, he rent his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went through the city crying loudly and bitterly. <sup>2</sup>He came within sight of the palace gate, because no one clothed with sackcloth was allowed to pass through the gate. <sup>3</sup>In every province reached by the royal command and decree there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting and weeping and beating of the breast. Most of them made their beds of sackcloth and ashes. <sup>4</sup>When Queen Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her, she was distraught, and sent garments for Mordecai, so that they might take off the sackcloth and clothe him with them; but he would not accept them. <sup>5</sup>Then Esther summoned Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs who had been appointed to wait upon her, and ordered him to find out from Mordecai what the trouble was and what it meant. <sup>6</sup>Hathach went to Mordecai in the city square in front of the palace gate, <sup>7</sup>and Mordecai told him all that had happened to him and how much money Haman had offered to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews. <sup>8</sup>He also gave him a copy of the writ for their destruction issued in Susa, so that he might show it to Esther and tell her about it, bidding her go to the king to plead for his favour and entreat him for her people. <sup>9</sup>Hathach went and told Esther what Mordecai had said, <sup>10</sup>and she sent him back with this message: <sup>11</sup>'All the king's courtiers and the people of the provinces are aware that if any person, man or woman, enters the king's presence in the inner court unbidden, there is one law only: that person shall be put to death, unless the king stretches out to him the golden sceptre; then and then only shall he live. It is now thirty days since I myself was called to go to the king.'<sup>12</sup>But when they told Mordecai what Esther had said, <sup>13</sup>he bade them go back to her and say, 'Do not imagine that you alone of all the Jews will escape because you are in the royal palace. <sup>14</sup>If you remain silent at such a time as this, relief and deliverance for the Jews will appear from another quarter, but you and your father's family will perish. Who knows whether it is not for such a time as this that you have come to royal estate?' <sup>15</sup>Esther gave them this answer to take back to Mordecai: <sup>16</sup>'Go and assemble all the Jews to be found in Susa and fast for me; take neither food nor drink for three days, night or day, and I and my maids will fast as you do. After that I will go to the king, although it is against the law; and if I perish, I perish.'<sup>17</sup>So Mordecai went away and did exactly as Esther had bidden him.

**5**<sup>1</sup>On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, facing the palace itself; the king was seated on his royal throne in the palace, facing the entrance. <sup>2</sup>When the king caught sight of Queen Esther standing in the court, she won his favour and he stretched out to her the golden sceptre which he was holding. Thereupon Esther approached and touched the head of the sceptre. <sup>3</sup>Then the king said to her, 'What is it, Queen Esther? Whatever you ask of me, up to half my

kingdom, shall be given to you.' <sup>4</sup>If it please your majesty,' said Esther, 'will you come today, sire, and Haman with you, to a banquet which I have made ready for you?' <sup>5</sup>The king gave orders that Haman should be fetched quickly, so that Esther's wish might be fulfilled; and the king and Haman went to the banquet which she had prepared. <sup>6</sup>Over the wine the king said to Esther, 'Whatever you ask of me shall be given to you. Whatever you request of me, up to half my kingdom, it shall be done.' <sup>7</sup>Esther said in answer, 'What I ask and request of you is this. <sup>8</sup>If I have won your majesty's favour, and if it please you, sire, to give me what I ask and to grant my request, will your majesty and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet which I shall prepare for you both? Tomorrow I will do as your majesty has said.'

<sup>9</sup>So Haman went away that day in good spirits and well pleased with himself. But when he saw Mordecai in attendance at court and how he did not rise nor defer to him, he was filled with rage; <sup>10</sup>but he kept control of himself and went home. Then he sent for his friends and his wife Zeresh <sup>11</sup>and held forth to them about the splendour of his wealth and his many sons, and how the king had promoted him and advanced him above the other officers and courtiers. <sup>12</sup>'That is not all,' said Haman; 'Queen Esther invited no one but myself to accompany the king to the banquet which she had prepared; and she has invited me again tomorrow with the king. <sup>13</sup>Yet all this means nothing to me so long as I see that Jew Mordecai in attendance at court.' <sup>14</sup>Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, 'Let a gallows seventy-five feet high be set up, and recommend to the king in the morning to have Mordecai hanged upon it. Then go with the king to the banquet in good spirits.' Haman thought this an excellent plan, and he set up the gallows.

## **Haman's downfall and Mordecai's triumph**

**6**<sup>1</sup>THAT NIGHT SLEEP ELUDED THE KING, so he ordered the chronicle of daily events to be brought; and it was read to him. <sup>2</sup>Therein was recorded that Mordecai had given information about Bigthana and Teresh, the two royal eunuchs among the keepers of the threshold who had plotted to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. <sup>3</sup>Whereupon the king said, 'What honour or dignity has been conferred on Mordecai for this?' The king's courtiers who were in attendance told him that nothing had been done for Mordecai. <sup>4</sup>The king asked, 'Who is that in the court?' Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the palace to recommend to the king that Mordecai should be hanged on the gallows which he had prepared for him. <sup>5</sup>The king's servants answered, 'It is Haman standing there'; and the king bade him enter. <sup>6</sup>He came in, and the king said to him, 'What should be done for the man whom the king wishes to honour?' Haman said to himself, 'Whom would the king wish to honour more than me?' <sup>7</sup>And he said to the king, 'For the man whom the king wishes to honour, <sup>8</sup>let there be brought royal robes which the king himself wears, and a horse which the king rides, with a royal crown upon its head. <sup>9</sup>And let the robes and the horse be delivered to one of the king's most honourable officers, and let him attire the man whom the king wishes to honour and lead him mounted on the horse through the city square, calling out as he goes: "See what is done for the man whom the king wishes to honour." ' <sup>10</sup>Then the king said to Haman, 'Fetch the robes and the horse at once, as you have said, and do all this for Mordecai the Jew who is in attendance at court. Leave nothing undone of all that you have said.' <sup>11</sup>So Haman took

the robes and the horse, attired Mordecai, and led him mounted through the city square, calling out as he went: 'See what is done for the man whom the king wishes to honour.'

<sup>12</sup>Then Mordecai returned to court and Haman hurried off home mourning, with head uncovered. <sup>13</sup>He told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him. And this was the reply of his friends and his wife Zeresh: 'If Mordecai, in face of whom your fortunes begin to fall, belongs to the Jewish race, you will not get the better of him; he will see your utter downfall.'

<sup>14</sup>While they were still talking with Haman, the king's eunuchs arrived and hurried him away to the banquet which Esther had prepared.

**7**<sup>1</sup>So the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther. <sup>2</sup>Again on that second day, over the wine, the king said, 'Whatever you ask of me will be given to you, Queen Esther. Whatever you request of me, up to half my kingdom, it shall be done.' <sup>3</sup>Queen Esther answered, 'If I have found favour with your majesty, and if it please your majesty, my request and petition is that my own life and the lives of my people may be spared. <sup>4</sup>For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, slain, and exterminated. If it had been a matter of selling us, men and women alike, into slavery, I should have kept silence; for then our plight would not be such as to injure the king's interests.' <sup>5</sup>Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, 'Who is he, and where is he, who has presumed to do such a thing as this?' <sup>6</sup>'An adversary and an enemy,' said Esther, 'this wicked Haman.' At that Haman was dumbfounded in the presence of the king and the queen. <sup>7</sup>The king rose from the banquet in a rage and went to the garden of the pavilion, while Haman remained where he was, to plead for his life with Queen Esther; for he saw that in the king's mind his fate was determined. <sup>8</sup>When the king returned from the garden to the banqueting hall, Haman had flung himself across the couch on which Esther was reclining. The king exclaimed, 'Will he even assault the queen here in my presence?' No sooner had the words left the king's mouth than Haman hid his face in despair [Haman ... despair: *prob. rdg, Heb* they covered Haman's face]. <sup>9</sup>Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs in attendance on the king, said, 'At Haman's house stands the gallows, seventy-five feet high, which he himself has prepared for Mordecai, who once served the king well.' 'Hang Haman on it', said the king. <sup>10</sup>So they hanged him on the gallows that he himself had prepared for Mordecai. After that the king's rage abated.

**8**<sup>1</sup>On that day King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther the house of Haman, enemy of the Jews; and Mordecai came into the king's presence, for Esther had told him how he was related to her. <sup>2</sup>Then the king took off his signet-ring, which he had taken back from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther put Mordecai in charge of Haman's house.

<sup>3</sup>Once again Esther spoke before the king, falling at his feet in tears and pleading with him to avert the calamity planned by Haman the Agagite and to frustrate his plot against the Jews. <sup>4</sup>The king stretched out the golden sceptre to Esther, <sup>5</sup>and she rose and stood before the king, and said, 'May it please your majesty: if I have found favour with you, and if the proposal seems right to your majesty and I have won your approval, let a writ be issued to recall the letters which Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite wrote in pursuance of his plan to destroy the Jews in all the royal provinces.'

<sup>6</sup>For how can I bear to see the calamity which is coming upon my race? Or how can I bear to see the destruction of my family?' <sup>7</sup>Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, 'I have given Haman's house to Esther, and he has been hanged on the gallows, because he threatened the lives of the Jews. <sup>8</sup>Now you shall issue a writ concerning the Jews in my name, in whatever terms you think fit, and seal it with the royal signet; for an order written in the name of the king and sealed with the royal signet cannot be revoked.'

<sup>9</sup>And so, on the twenty-third day of the third month, the month Sivan, the king's secretaries were summoned; and a writ was issued to the Jews, exactly as Mordecai directed, and to the satraps, the governors, and the officers in the provinces from India to Ethiopia, a hundred and twenty-seven provinces, for each province in its own script and for each people in their own language, and also for the Jews in their own script and language. <sup>10</sup>The writ was drawn up in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the royal signet, and letters were sent by mounted couriers riding on horses from the royal stables. <sup>11</sup>By these letters the king granted permission to the Jews in every city to unite and defend themselves, and to destroy, slay, and exterminate the whole strength of any people or province which might attack them, women and children too, and to plunder their possessions, <sup>12</sup>throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month Adar. <sup>13</sup>A copy of the writ was to be issued as a decree in every province and published to all peoples, and the Jews were to be ready for that day, the day of vengeance on their enemies. <sup>14</sup>So the couriers, mounted on their royal horses, were dispatched post-haste at the king's urgent command; and the decree was issued also in Susa the capital city.

<sup>15</sup>Mordecai left the king's presence in royal robes of violet and white, wearing a great golden crown and a cloak of fine linen and purple, and all the city of Susa shouted for joy. <sup>16</sup>For the Jews there was light and joy, gladness and honour. <sup>17</sup>In every province and every city reached by the royal command and decree, there was joy and gladness for the Jews, feasting and holiday. And many of the peoples of the land professed themselves Jews, because fear of the Jews had seized them.

**9**<sup>1</sup>ON THE THIRTEENTH DAY of the twelfth month, the month Adar, the time came for the king's command and his edict to be carried out. The very day on which the enemies of the Jews had hoped to gain the upper hand over them was to become the day when the Jews should gain the upper hand over those who hated them. <sup>2</sup>On that day the Jews united in their cities in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to fall upon those who had planned their ruin. No one could resist them, because fear of them had seized all peoples. <sup>3</sup>All the officers of the provinces, the satraps and the governors, and all the royal officials, aided the Jews, because fear of Mordecai had seized them. <sup>4</sup>Mordecai had become a great personage in the royal palace; his fame had spread throughout all the provinces as the power of the man grew steadily greater. <sup>5</sup>So the Jews put their enemies to the sword, with great slaughter and destruction; they worked their will on those who hated them. <sup>6</sup>In Susa, the capital city, the Jews killed five hundred men and destroyed them; <sup>7</sup>and they killed also Parshandatha, Dalphon and Aspatha, <sup>8</sup>Poratha, Adalia and 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 touch the plunder.

<sup>11</sup>That day when the number of those killed in Susa the capital city came to the notice of the king, <sup>12</sup>he said to Queen Esther, 'In Susa, the capital city, the Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men and the ten sons of Haman. What have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? Whatever you ask further will be given to you; whatever more you seek shall be done.' <sup>13</sup>Esther answered him, 'If it please your majesty, let tomorrow be granted to the Jews in Susa to do according to the edict for today; and let the bodies of Haman's ten sons be hung up on the gallows.' <sup>14</sup>The king gave orders for this to be done; the edict was issued in Susa and Haman's ten sons were hung up on the gallows. <sup>15</sup>The Jews in Susa united again on the fourteenth day of the month Adar and killed three hundred men in Susa; but they did not touch the plunder.

<sup>16</sup>The rest of the Jews in the king's provinces had united to defend themselves; they took vengeance on [*prob. rdg, Heb got respite from*] their enemies by killing seventy-five thousand of those who hated them; but they did not touch the plunder. <sup>17</sup>This was on the thirteenth day of the month Adar, and they rested on the fourteenth day and made that a day of feasting and joy. <sup>18</sup>The Jews in Susa had united on the thirteenth and fourteenth days of the month, and rested on the fifteenth day and made that a day of feasting and joy. <sup>19</sup>This is why isolated Jews who live in remote villages keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar in joy and feasting, as a holiday on which they send presents of food to one another.

<sup>20</sup>Then Mordecai set these things on record and sent letters to all the Jews in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, far and near, <sup>21</sup>binding them to keep the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month Adar, year by year, <sup>22</sup>as the days on which the Jews obtained relief from their enemies and as the month which was changed for them from sorrow into joy, from a time of mourning to a holiday. They were to keep them as days of feasting and joy, days for sending presents of food to one another and gifts to the poor.

<sup>23</sup>So the Jews undertook to continue the practice that they had begun in accordance with Mordecai's letter. <sup>24</sup>This they did because Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted to destroy the Jews and had cast lots, Pur as it is called, with intent to crush and destroy them. <sup>25</sup>But when the matter came before the king, he issued written orders that the wicked plot which Haman had devised against the Jews should recoil on his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. <sup>26</sup>Therefore, these days were named Purim after the word Pur. Accordingly, because of all that was written in this letter, because of all they had seen and experienced in this affair, <sup>27</sup>the Jews resolved and undertook, on behalf of themselves, their descendants, and all who should join them, that they would without fail keep these two days as a yearly festival in the prescribed manner and at the appointed time; <sup>28</sup>that these days should be remembered and kept, generation after generation, in every family, province, and city, that the days of Purim should always be observed among the Jews, and that the memory of them should never cease among their descendants.

<sup>29</sup>Queen Esther daughter of Abihail gave full authority in writing to [*prob. rdg, Heb and*] Mordecai the Jew, to confirm this second letter about Purim. <sup>30</sup>Letters wishing peace and security were sent to all the Jews in the hundred and twenty-seven provinces of



King Ahasuerus, <sup>31</sup>making the observance of these days of Purim at their appointed time binding on them, as Mordecai the Jew [*prob. rdg, Heb adds* and Queen Esther] had prescribed. In the same way they had prescribed regulations for fasts and lamentations for themselves and their descendants. <sup>32</sup>The command of Esther confirmed these regulations for Purim, and the record is preserved in writing.

**10**<sup>1</sup>King Ahasuerus imposed forced labour on the land and the coasts and islands. <sup>2</sup>All the king's acts of authority and power, and the dignities which he conferred on Mordecai, are written in the annals of the kings of Media and Persia. <sup>3</sup>For Mordecai the Jew was second only to King Ahasuerus; he was a great man among the Jews and was popular with the mass of his countrymen, for he sought the good of his people and promoted the welfare of all their descendants [*Or* and was in friendly relations with all his race].