

The Book of Esther

In the original Hebrew and English with insights from Malbim



Contents

*Dedicated to Jews under
the gun in the Holy Land
and around the world. May
we see a salvation reminiscent of
Purim, when those who sought to
destroy us suffered that very fate.
Bring the hostages home now!*

Introduction	4
Blessings before reading the Book of Esther	7
Chapter 1	8
Chapter 2	20
Chapter 3	30
Chapter 4	40
Chapter 5	46
Chapter 6	52
Chapter 7	58
Chapter 8	66
Chapter 9	74
Chapter 10	86
Blessings after reading the Book of Esther	87

Writing, design and art by Rabbi Boruch Merkur
Published by The Tree of Life Books. Email: info@thetreeoflifebooks.com
© Copyright 2024

THE HOLIDAY OF PURIM

Purim commemorates the Jewish people's deliverance from annihilation in the Persian Empire, around 2500 years ago. The day is observed through a festive meal (that includes wine or other intoxicating beverages), exchanging gifts of food, giving charity (to at least two needy people), and reading the Book of Esther (both on the eve of Purim and again the following day). The Book of Esther, known as Megillat Esther in Hebrew, vividly recounts the events leading up to this miraculous salvation.

THE BOOK OF ESTHER

Set in the Persian Empire under King Ahashverosh, typically identified as Xerxes, the Book of Esther is a complex narrative of palace intrigue, a reaffirmation of the Jewish faith, and divine intervention.

The story begins with the king's quest for absolute authority, followed by the rise of the wicked Haman, and his genocidal decree against the Jewish people. In response, Queen Esther and her cousin, Mordecai, orchestrate a counter-plot to save their people, rooted in faith, wisdom and political acumen.

The story is driven by the hidden hand of God, guiding events and turning the tables on the enemies of the Jewish people. Their survival and flourishing marks a triumph of faith and resilience that is celebrated annually on Purim.

AUTHORSHIP

The Book of Esther references its own

authorship, which is initially ascribed to Mordecai: "Mordecai recorded these events, and he sent dispatches to all the Jews" (Esther 9:20). But Esther's collaboration is suggested by the later verse: "Then Queen Esther, daughter of Abihail, wrote a second letter of Purim for the purpose of confirming with full authority the aforementioned letter of Mordecai the Jew" (9:29). The Talmud elaborates that the final, sacred form of the Book of Esther was written by the Men of the Great Assembly, a group of 120 sages and prophets, who rewrote it with Divine inspiration in the Holy Land (Bava Batra 15a).

PURIM OF THE FUTURE ERA

Purim's themes of redemption and divine providence resonate with the hope for a future when good overcomes evil, and the spiritual triumphs over the physical. In Jewish thought, Purim is considered a holiday that will continue to be celebrated even in the Messianic era, a future time of universal peace and divine revelation. In that time, all the other festivals will shine, but like a candle in broad daylight, whereas the powerful light of Purim will stand out in its brilliance forever.

The merit the Jewish people achieved in maintaining their faith throughout the year of the crisis was sufficient to not only miraculously save the Jewish people of that time, but to be celebrated and relived forever. Purim is a day that sets the Jewish people apart as God's precious nation, which will be fully realized with the imminent redemption. Happy Purim!

MALBIM

The Book of Esther tells a fascinating but complex story, often sufficing with tiny hints to move the plot or to characterize the motivations of its heroes and villains. To bring out its powerful and profound meaning, this edition features an interpretation infused with the fascinating insights of Malbim. His perspective sheds new light on the entire work, making it more accessible and inviting to all.

Rabbi Meir Leibush ben Yehiel Michel Weiser,



also known as Malbim (1809-1879), is a renowned Jewish scholar and commentator who has greatly influenced the field of Biblical interpretation. Malbim sheds light on the literal dimension of the Book of Esther as the palace drama unfolds, often exploring its underlying motivations.

Although never explicitly mentioned in the Book of Esther by name, God's invisible hand conducts every detail and nuance. Malbim's precise interpretation unveils the story's depth and the presence of the divine throughout its many shifts of fortune and acute transformations.

In order to make Malbim's teachings on the Book of Esther more accessible, this edition incorporates his insights into the story. Background and context is seamlessly woven into the commentary, resulting in an engaging style that reads like a narrative.

Let the inspiring words of the Book of Esther provide us with wisdom, insight, and bountiful joy, to help us fully celebrate the Festival of Purim, the happiest time of the year.



Blessings

before reading the Book of Esther on Purim

ON PURIM, BEFORE THE BOOK OF ESTHER IS READ, THE READER RECITES THE FOLLOWING THREE BLESSINGS. ALL THOSE PRESENT ANSWER "AMEN" AFTER EACH BLESSING:

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us concerning the reading of the Megillah.

(Amen)

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who performed miracles for our forefathers in those days, at this time.

(Amen)

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this occasion.

(Amen)



קורא המגילה מברך:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל מִקְרָא מְגִלָּה.
(אמן)

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בְּזְמַן הַזֶּה.
(אמן)

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
שֶׁהֲחַיָּנוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזְמַן הַזֶּה.
(אמן)

Chapter 1

THE PERSIAN KING AHASHVEROSH, RULING OVER 127 PROVINCES, SHOWCASES HIS WEALTH IN SHUSHAN WITH A GRAND FEAST. QUEEN VASHTI REFUSES TO APPEAR BEFORE HIM.

It happened in the days of Ahashverosh – that Ahashverosh who reigned over a hundred and twenty-seven provinces from India to Ethiopia.

In those days, when King Ahashverosh occupied the royal throne in the capital city, Shushan,

In the third year of his reign, he gave a banquet for all the officials and courtiers – the administration of Persia and Media, the nobles and the governors of the provinces in his service.

For no fewer than a hundred and eighty days he displayed the vast riches of his kingdom and the splendid glory of his majesty.

At the end of this period, the king gave a banquet for seven days in the court of the king’s palace garden for all the people who lived in the capital city, Shushan, high and low alike.

[There were hangings of] white cotton and blue wool, held up by cords of fine linen and purple wool to silver rods and alabaster columns; and there were couches of gold and silver on a pavement of marble, alabaster, mother-of-pearl, and mosaics.

Royal wine was served in abundance, as befits a king, in golden beakers, beakers of varied design.

And the rule for the drinking was, “No restrictions!” For the king had given orders to every palace steward

**וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ הוּא אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ הַמֶּלֶךְ מֵהַדָּוָר
וְעַד־כּוֹשׁ שִׁבְעַת עָשָׂר יָמִים וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה:**

**בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם כָּשְׁבַת אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ עַל
כֶּסֶף מַלְכוּתוֹ אֲשֶׁר בְּשׁוֹשַׁן הַבִּירָה:**

**בַּשָּׁבַת שְׁלוֹשׁ לַמַּלְכוּת עָשָׂה מִשְׁתֵּה לְכָל־שָׂרָיו וְעַבְדָּיו
חַיִּיל אֶפְרַס וּמְדֵי הַפְּרָתָמִים וְשָׂרֵי הַמְּדִינֹת לִפְנֵיָו:**

**בְּהִרְאֹתוֹ אֶת־עֲשָׂר כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ וְאֶת־יֹקֵר תַּפְאֲרָתָהּ
גְּדוּלְתוֹ יָמִים רַבִּים שְׂמוֹנִים וּמֵאָת יוֹם:**

**וּבְמִלּוּאֹת אֶל הַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה עָשָׂה הַמֶּלֶךְ לְכָל־הַעָם
הַנִּמְצָאִים בְּשׁוֹשַׁן הַבִּירָה לַמַּגְדוֹל וְעַד־קַטָּן
מִשְׁתֵּה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים בַּחֲצָר גִּנַּת בֵּיתוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ:**

**חֹדֶר אֶפְרַס וּתְכֵלֶת אַחֲזוּל בַּחֲבִלֵי־בַוֶּץ וְאַרְגָּמָן
עַל־גְּלִילֵי כֶסֶף וְעַמּוּדֵי שֵׁשׁ מִטּוֹת אֶזְהָב וְכֶסֶף
עַל רַצְפֹת בַּהֲטוֹשׁשׁ וְזָר וְסִתְרָת:**

**וְהַשְׁקוֹת בְּכֵלֵי זָהָב וּכְלִים מְכֻלִּים שׁוֹנִים
וַיְוֹ מַלְכוּת רַב כַּיָּד הַמֶּלֶךְ:**

**וְהַשְׁתִּיָּה כְדַת אֵין אֲגִס כִּי־כֹן אֶסֶד הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל
כָּל־רַב בֵּיתוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּרָצוֹן אִישׁ־וְאִישׁ:**

**גַּם וְשִׁתֵּי הַמַּלְכָּה עָשְׂתָה מִשְׁתֵּה נָשִׁים בֵּית
{הַמַּלְכוּת אֲשֶׁר לַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ: } ס**

**בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי כְּטוֹב לִב־הַמֶּלֶךְ בָּיָו אִמֶּר לְמַהוּמָן
בְּדָתָא חֲרַבּוֹנָא בְּגִתָּא וְאַבְגָּתָא זִתָּר וְכַרְכָּס שִׁבְעַת
הַסְרִיסִים הַמְשֻׁרְתִּים אֶת־פְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ:**

**לְהָבִיא אֶת־וְשִׁתֵּי הַמַּלְכָּה לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּכַתֵּר מַלְכוּת
לְהִרְאֹת הָעַמִּים וְהַשָּׂרִים אֶת־יְפוּהָ כִּי־טוֹבַת מְרָאָה הִיא:**

**וְתַמְאֵן הַמַּלְכָּה וְשִׁתֵּי לְבוֹא בְּדַבְרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר בִּיד
הַסְרִיסִים וַיִּקְצֹף הַמֶּלֶךְ מְאֹד וַחֲמָתוֹ בָּעָרָה בּוֹ:**

**וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְחַכְמֵים יִדְעֵי הַעֲתִים כִּי־כֹן
דָּבַר הַמֶּלֶךְ לִפְנֵי כָל־יְדָעֵי דַת וְדָוִן:**

**וְהַקְרַב אֵלָיו כְּרַשְׁנָא שִׁתָּר אֲדַמְתָּא תְרַשִׁישׁ
מֶרְס מְרֻסָּנָא מְמוּכָן שְׁבַעַת שָׂרֵי אֶפְרַס וּמְדֵי
רֵאִי פְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ הַיִּשְׁבִּים רֵאשְׁנָה בְּמַלְכוּת:**

**כְּדַל מַה־לַּעֲשׂוֹת בְּמַלְכָּה וְשִׁתֵּי עַל אֲשֶׁר לֹא־עָשְׂתָה
{אֶת־מֵאֶמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ בִּיד הַסְרִיסִים: } פ**

to comply with each man’s wishes.

In addition, Queen Vashti gave a banquet for women, in the royal palace of King Ahashverosh.

On the seventh day, when the king was merry with wine, he ordered Mehuman, Bizzetha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven eunuchs in attendance on King Ahashverosh,

To bring Queen Vashti before the king wearing a royal diadem, to display her beauty to the peoples and the officials; for she was a beautiful woman.

But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king’s command conveyed by the eunuchs. The king was greatly incensed, and his fury burned within him.

Then the king consulted the sages learned in procedure. For it was the royal practice [to turn] to all who were versed in law and precedent.

His closest advisers were Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven ministers of Persia and Media who had access to the royal presence and occupied the first place in the kingdom.

“What,” [he asked,] “shall be done, according to law, to Queen Vashti for failing to obey the command of King Ahashverosh conveyed by the eunuchs?”

Thereupon Memucan declared in the presence of the king and the ministers: “Queen Vashti has committed an offense not only against Your Majesty but also against all the officials and against all the peoples in all the provinces of King Ahashverosh.

**וַיֹּאמֶר (מוֹמֵכֹן) [מְמוּכָן] לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַשָּׂרִים לֹא
עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ לְבַדּוֹ עֹוֹתָהּ וְשִׁתֵּי הַמַּלְכָּה כִּי עַל־כָּל־הַשָּׂרִים
וְעַל־כָּל־הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל־מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ:**

**כִּי־יֵצֵא דְבַר־הַמַּלְכָּה עַל־כָּל־הַנָּשִׁים לְהַבְזוֹת
בְּעִלְיָהּ בְּעִינֵיהֶן בְּאִמְרֵם הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ אִמֶּר
לְהָבִיא אֶת־וְשִׁתֵּי הַמַּלְכָּה לִפְנֵי וְלֹא־בָּאָה:**

**וְהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה תֵּאֱמַרְנָה אֶשְׁרוֹת פְּרַס־וּמְדֵי אֲשֶׁר שָׁמְעוּ
אֶת־דְּבַר הַמַּלְכָּה לְכָל שָׂרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְכַדִּי בְּדָוִן וַיִּקְצֹף:**

**אִם־עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב יֵצֵא דְבַר־מַלְכוּת מִלְּפָנָיו וַיִּכְתַּב בְּדַתֵּי
פְּרַס־וּמְדֵי וְלֹא יַעֲבֹר אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תִבְּוֹא וְשִׁתֵּי לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ
אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ וּמַלְכוּתָהּ יִתֵּן הַמֶּלֶךְ לְרֵעֻתָהּ הַטּוֹבָה מִמֶּנָּה:**

**וְנִשְׁמַע פְּתֻגָּם הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה בְּכָל־מַלְכוּתוֹ כִּי רַבָּה
הִיא וְכָל־הַנָּשִׁים יִתְּנֵי וְקַר לְבַעֲלֵיהֶן לַמַּגְדוֹל וְעַד־קַטָּן:**

וַיִּטֵּב הַדָּבָר בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַשָּׂרִים נִעֲשֶׂה הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּדַבְרֵי מְמוּכָן:

**וַיִּשְׁלַח סְפָרִים אֶל־כָּל־מְדִינֹת הַמַּלְכָּה אֶל־מְדִינָה
וּמְדִינָה בְּכַתְּבָהּ וְאֶל־עַם וְעַם כְּלִשׁוֹנוֹ לְהִזְוֹת
{כָּל־אִישׁ שִׁרְךָ בְּבֵיתוֹ וּמְדַבֵּר כְּלִשׁוֹן עַמּוֹ: } פ**

For the queen’s behavior will make all wives despise their husbands, as they reflect that King Ahashverosh himself ordered Queen Vashti to be brought before him, but she would not come.

This very day the ladies of Persia and Media, who have heard of the queen’s behavior, will cite it to all Your Majesty’s officials, and there will be no end of scorn and provocation!

“If it please Your Majesty, let a royal edict be issued by you, and let it be written into the laws of Persia and Media, so that it cannot be abrogated, that Vashti shall never enter the presence of King Ahashverosh. And let Your Majesty bestow her royal state upon another who is more worthy than she.

Then will the judgment executed by Your Majesty resound throughout your realm, vast though it is; and all wives will treat their husbands with respect, high and low alike.”

The proposal was approved by the king and the ministers, and the king

In a time long ago, Ahashverosh, a man of common lineage, rose to unprecedented power, ruling over 127 provinces that spanned from India to Ethiopia. Unlike traditional rulers who inherited their thrones or expanded their kingdoms over time, Ahashverosh seized control through swift and aggressive military conquest. His humble origins were quickly forgotten as his reign extended over a vast empire.

By marrying Vashti, the Babylonian princess and descendant of Nebuchadnezzar, Ahashverosh solidified his claim to the throne, though it cast ambiguity on the nature of his reign. As a conqueror, Ahashverosh strived for unlimited power, but as a husband of the heir to the throne, his power was limited to the precedent set by prior kings.

In order to establish himself as an absolute monarch, Ahashverosh made the strategic decision to move his palace from Babylon to Shushan, in Persia. By selecting Shushan as his capital, Ahashverosh defied tradition, declaring his independence from customary norms of royal succession and authority. Sitting on his new throne, Ahashverosh cemented himself as

did as Memucan proposed.

Dispatches were sent to all the provinces of the king, to every province in its own script and to every nation in its own language, that every man should wield authority in his home and speak the language of his own people.

a formidable ruler unbound by the constraints of history.

These monumental changes occurred not after years of consolidation and acceptance, but from the very outset of his reign. In the third year of his reign, Ahashverosh held a grand banquet in an extravagant and unprecedented display of wealth and power. The banquet continued for a grand total of 180 days, where he showcased the incredible splendor and riches of his kingdom.

The seating was carefully arranged as a display of power, with the king's own officials and army seated at the forefront, followed by the governors and officials of Persia and Media. By prioritizing provincial leaders beneath his own servants, Ahashverosh emphasized his own supremacy and diminished their status. This calculated move helped establish a new order in the empire, where loyalty and service to Ahashverosh were valued above any previous regional prominence.

In a monarchy where the king is considered a custodian rather than the owner of the national treasury, such an extravagant banquet went against tradition. This grandiose display was



not simply a show of opulence, but a demonstration of ultimate power over everything in his realm.

After close to half a year of celebrating, King Ahashverosh made an unprecedented move. In contrast to the usual exclusive royal banquets attended by high-ranking officials and nobility, he hosted a second feast for all residents of Shushan, irrespective of social standing. The invitation read that all should attend "from the least to the greatest," sending the clear message that in his kingdom, all were equal subjects under his authority. The subversion of social hierarchies was a ploy intended to solidify his reign and reinforce his power over every individual, from the lowest peasant to the highest noble.

King Ahashverosh held this banquet in the royal courtyard, against Persian tradition, as this was a place reserved only for the elite. This brash move allowed all residents of Shushan to attend, blurring the lines between social classes. By doing so, Ahashverosh demonstrated his belief that everyone was subservient to him, regardless of their personal status.

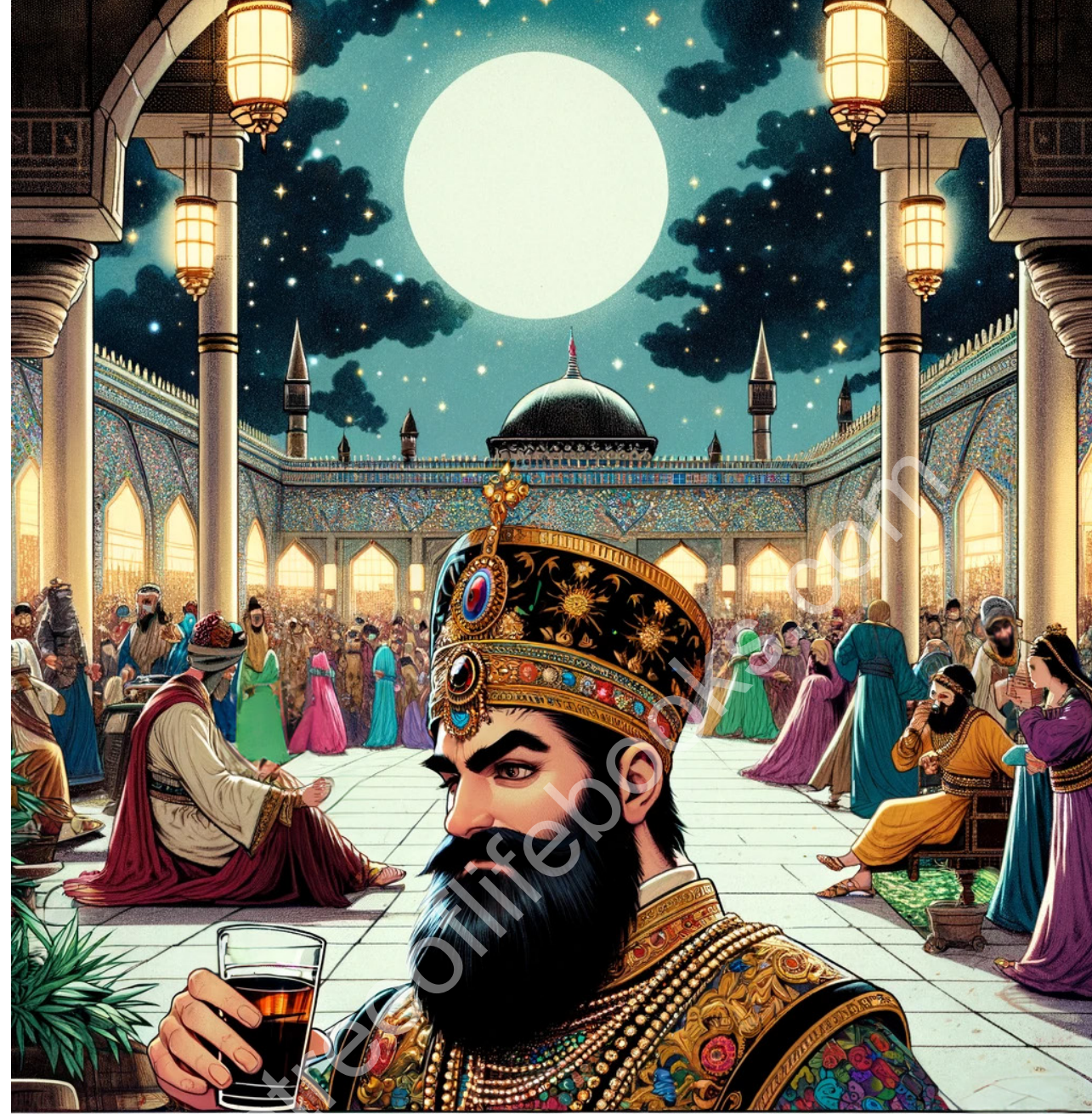
King Ahashverosh hosted the extravagant feast in the palace courtyard, free of the enclosure of walls or ceilings but overflowing with magnificence. Elegantly crafted pavilions adorned the courtyard, made of white cotton and blue wool, their beauty further enhanced by cords of fine linen and purple wool. The columns of these tents were crafted from alabaster, a material highly valued for its beauty and rarity, and were supported by rods of silver. The

seating arrangements were no less luxurious. Guests reclined on couches of gold and silver. The floor itself was a masterpiece, composed of marble, alabaster, mother-of-pearl, and detailed mosaics.

Each guest was treated to wine fit for a king, poured liberally from golden jugs adorned with intricate, unique designs. Decanters and goblets were provided to each guest, so no one had to pass or share. Unlike other feasts where limited vessels forced hasty consumption, each guest had their own golden vessel, allowing them to savor the wine. King Ahashverosh's banquet broke from tradition, as there were no restrictions on drinking. The copious flow of fine wine enticed the guests to celebrate, enhancing the king's reputation as a generous and beloved ruler.

The king's nontraditional approach to the banquet was a deliberate departure from Persian customs, where the most distinguished guests received preferential treatment. In contrast, at this feast, all were equal in their freedom to drink as they wished, disregarding hierarchical protocols. This egalitarian gesture could have been viewed as disrespectful towards the higher-ranking guests. So to avoid any perceived offense, King Ahashverosh issued a directive to prioritize each individual's preferences over traditional honor and rank. By doing so, he ensured that his relaxed attitude toward drinking would not be viewed as an attempt to diminish the esteemed guests' honor, but to promote inclusivity and personal choice.

At the lavish banquet, King Ahashverosh's



power and wealth were on full display. Meanwhile, Queen Vashti held a separate feast for women. Despite being a crucial figure in securing Ahashverosh' claim to the throne through her royal heritage, Vashti was limited to entertaining female guests and was confined indoors to the king's palace.

On the seventh day of the lavish banquet, King Ahashverosh, under the influence of wine and in a state of reckless abandon, sent out an order that would put to test the true power dynamics within the court. He commanded Queen Vashti to appear before the gathering of various nations and peoples, with an implied demand for her to be unclothed. Not only was this a display of poor judgment, but it was also a calculated move to assert his authority and reduce Vashti to nothing more than an object on display.

The king's eunuchs executed this command. It was customary for all high-ranking officials to escort a queen, but here the king chose to use his seven personal attendants. Instead of receiving the respect she was due as queen and heir to the throne, Vashti was summoned like a commoner. This action greatly diminished her role and underscored the king's power over her. The summons thus cast into light that Vashti held no real authority as a co-regent. Rather, she was merely at the mercy of the king's whims, more akin to a concubine than a true queen.

Queen Vashti was summoned by the king to display her beauty before the people and officials, wearing her royal diadem. This request revealed

that her authority as queen was granted by the king, as she was only to put on the crown in his presence.

But Vashti boldly refused to obey King Ahashverosh's command. Ahashverosh was infuriated by her refusal, not only on a personal level but also because it thwarted his attempts to secure absolute power.

Distraught, King Ahashverosh sought advice from his advisors. The counsel was comprised of his seven top advisers, carefully chosen for their knowledge of court life and their loyalty to the king. These were high-ranking ministers who held the king's trust and were intimately familiar with his disposition. By involving them in this matter, the king aimed to keep the matter within a small, elite circle to avoid public scrutiny. Their presence signaled the importance and confidentiality of the issue at hand, allowing the king to maintain control over the crisis and minimize any political fallout.

Through their close relationship with the king, these advisers were adept at deciphering his body language and interpreting his true intentions. Despite his display of anger, they knew he may be considering reconciliation or justification for Vashti's actions, which would greatly impact their recommendations.

The king wanted to consider both the legal and moral implications of her refusal, so he asked for the situation to be judged within the context of the law, distinguishing it from typical responses to rebellious commoners, where such legal considerations were ignored.



It was deemed disrespectful for Queen Vashti to be summoned by the king's eunuchs, providing justification for her reluctance. The king cleverly incorporated this detail into the inquiry, offering a plausible explanation for Vashti's refusal, as a reaction to an affront to her dignity as queen, rather than a direct act of rebellion against his orders.

In blatant disregard for the king's agenda, one of his advisors, Memucan, portrayed it as a personal insult to Ahashverosh. In addition, he argued, Vashti's disobedience set a dangerous precedent for the kingdom. Her actions could be seen as a challenge to the established order of governance.

Memucan warned of the dangers of "scorn and provocation," both of which could have dire consequences for the kingdom. "Scorn" means that wives would emulate Vashti's rebellion, undermining the social fabric in each household, whereas "provocation" refers to the impact on the officials if the queen's disobedience went unpunished, a sign of weakness in the king's power.

Memucan presented a solution to King Ahashverosh, namely, an edict that addressed Vashti's disobedience and amended the legal system. The new law would solidify the king's direct control over rulings and make his decrees permanent in Persia and Media. The king's authority would be strengthened by this change, ensuring every judgment remained a lasting part of the kingdom's legal framework.

To prevent any future reconciliation with Vashti,

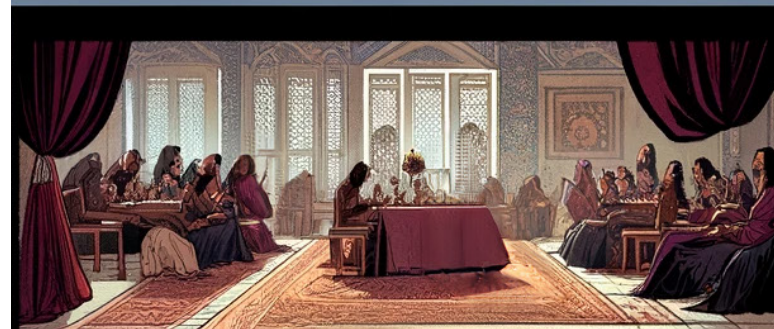
the king would issue a permanent decree forbidding her to appear before him. This move would deter wives from copying Vashti's example and disobeying their husbands. In fact, a law would be issued to reinforce the husbands' authority in the household. As for finding a replacement, the king would bestow Vashti's royal position upon someone more deserving.

In order to rectify the recent distortions in the kingdom, a new authority would be established as law. Any royal decree would now be issued directly from the king without requiring counsel from his ministers. This edict would grant King Ahashverosh unlimited power over the entire kingdom and make his decrees unassailable.

Memucan's proposals pleased King Ahashverosh, but in order to attain the unlimited power he desired, he needed the consent of the ministers. Surprisingly the ministers agreed, despite the fact that they stood to lose power, leaving the governance of law solely to the king. The king acted according to Memucan's advice, and his absolute authority became law.

Dispatches were sent throughout the empire, to every province in its own script and to every nation in its own language, that every man should wield authority in his home and speak the language of his own people.

There was wisdom behind responding to the crisis with Vashti by instituting these two enactments. Regarding speaking the native language: Originally, proclamations issued from the king, as well as letters sent to the king from all nations under Persian rule, were required



to be in the Persian language. But now that Ahashverosh insisted that he was the supreme ruler and not Persia, there was no difference between Persia and other places under his rule; all were subjugated under Ahashverosh and served him equally. Therefore, there was no advantage to the Persian script and language over other languages. For this reason, the decrees were written to every nation in their own language.

Regarding the decree that every man should be master in his own house: Until then, under Persian law, the woman had to submit to her husband only to honor him. But now, Ahashverosh gave the decree that men should rule over their wives and govern them like a

master over his maidservant, governing them as one would a material possession.

These two new decrees were intended to appease the subjects of the Persian empire, softening the impact of Memucan's aspirations for the king. To address the concern for the move to absolute authority, the decree was given that all languages should be equal, seemingly raising the stature of the individual nations and creeds to the same height as the Persian language. Similarly, every man now became a veritable master in his own home, diminishing the impact of Ahashverosh' rise to absolutism by sharing power with all men in domestic matters.



Chapter 2

KING AHASHVEROSH' ADVISORS SUGGEST FINDING A NEW QUEEN. ESTHER IS CROWNED QUEEN, AND MORDECAI UNCOVERS A PLOT AGAINST THE KING.

Some time afterward, when the anger of King Ahashverosh subsided, he thought of Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her.

The king's servants who attended him said, "Let beautiful young virgins be sought out for Your Majesty.

Let Your Majesty appoint officers in every province of your realm to assemble all the beautiful young virgins at the captial city Shushan, in the harem under the supervision of Hege, the king's eunuch, guardian of the women. Let them be provided with their cosmetics.

And let the maiden who pleases Your Majesty be queen instead of Vashti." The proposal pleased the king, and he acted upon it.

In the captial city Shushan lived a Jew by the name of Mordecai, son of Jair son of Shimei son of Kish, a Benjaminite.

[Kish] had been exiled from Jerusalem in the group that was carried into exile along with King Jeconiah of Judah, which had been driven into exile by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

He was foster father to Hadassah – that is, Esther – his uncle's daughter, for she had neither father nor mother. The maiden was shapely and beautiful; and when her father and mother died, Mordecai adopted her as his own daughter.

When the king's order and edict was proclaimed, and when many girls

אחר הדברים האלה בשלח חמת המלך אחשוורוש זכר אֶת־וַשְׁתִּי וְאֶת אֲשֶׁר־עָשְׂתָהּ וְאֶת אֲשֶׁר־נִגְזַר עָלֶיהָ:

וַיֹּאמְרוּ נַעֲרֵי־הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׂרָתָיו יִבְקָשׁוּ לַמֶּלֶךְ נְעוֹת בְּתוּלוֹת טוֹבוֹת מֵרָאָה:

וַיִּפְקֹד הַמֶּלֶךְ פְּקִידִים בְּכָל־מְדִינוֹת מְלֻכוֹתָו וַיִּקְבְּצוּ אֶת־כָּל־נַעֲרֵה־בְּתוּלֵה טוֹבוֹת מֵרָאָה אֶל־שׁוֹשָׁן הַבִּירָה אֶל־בַּיִת הַנָּשִׁים אֶל־יַד הַגָּא סָרִיס הַמֶּלֶךְ שֶׁמֶר הַנָּשִׁים וְנָתַן תַּמְרֵהֶן:

וְהַנַּעֲרָה אֲשֶׁר תֵּיטֵב בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ תִּמְלֹךְ תַּחַת (נ) לְנִשְׁתִּי וַיֵּיטֵב הַדָּבָר בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיַּעַשׂ כֵּן:

אִישׁ יְהוּדִי הָיָה בְּשׁוֹשָׁן הַבִּירָה וְשֵׁמוֹ מֵרְדֵכָי בֶן יָאִיר בֶּן־שִׁמְעִי בֶן־קֵישׁ אִישׁ יְמִינִי:

אֲנֹכִי הַגֵּלָה מִיְרוּשָׁלַיִם עִם־הַגֵּלָה אֲנֹכִי הַגֵּלָה עִם יְכִיָּה מֶלֶךְ־יְהוּדָה אֲשֶׁר הִגְלָה בְּבֹדֶכְנֶצֶר מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל:

וַיְהִי אִמֵּן אֶת־הַדָּפֶסָה הַיָּמָּה אֲסֵתֶר בַּת־דָּדּוּ כִּי אֵין לָהּ אָב וְאֵם וְהַנַּעֲרָה יִפְתֶּה־אֶל טוֹבֵת מֵרָאָה וּבְמֹת אַבִּיהָ וְאֵמָהּ לִקְחָהּ מֵרְדֵכָי לֹל לְבַת:

וַיְהִי בְהַשְׁמַע דְּבַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ וְדָלוּ וּבְהַקְבֵּץ נְעוֹת רְבוֹת אֶל־שׁוֹשָׁן הַבִּירָה אֶל־יַד הַגֵּי וְתִלְקַח אֲסֵתֶר אֶל־בַּיִת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל־יַד הַגֵּי שֶׁמֶר הַנָּשִׁים:

וַיֵּטֵב הַנַּעֲרָה בְּעֵינָיו וַתִּשָּׂא חֹסֶד לְפָנָיו וַיְבַהֵל אֶת־תַּמְרוּקֶיהָ וְאֶת־מְנוֹתֶיהָ לְתַת לָהּ וְאֶת שֵׁבַע הַנְּעוֹרוֹת הָרְאִיוֹת לְתַת־לָהּ מִבַּיִת הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיִּשְׁנֶה וְאֶת־נַעֲרוֹתֶיהָ לְטוֹב בַּיִת הַנָּשִׁים:

לֹא־הִגִּידָה אֲסֵתֶר אֶת־עַמָּהּ וְאֶת־מוֹלְדֹתָהּ כִּי (מֵרְדֵכָי אִמָּהּ עָלֶיהָ אֲנִי לֹא־תִגִּיד: ס)

וּבְכָל־יוֹם וַיֹּם מֵרְדֵכָי מִתְהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי חֹצֵר בֵּית־הַנָּשִׁים לְדַעַת אֶת־שְׁלוֹם אֲסֵתֶר וּמָה־יַעֲשֶׂה בָּהּ:

וּבְהַגִּיעַ תֵּרַ נַעֲרָה וְנַעֲרָה לְבֹא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ מִקֵּץ הַיּוֹם לָהּ הַיּוֹם הַנָּשִׁים שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר חֹדֶשׁ כִּי כֵן יִמְלֹאוּ יְמֵי מְרוּקֵיהֶן שְׁשָׁה חֳדָשִׁים בְּשִׁמְן הַמֶּר וְשֵׁשָׁה חֳדָשִׁים בְּבִשְׂמַיִם וּבְתַמְרוּקֵי הַנָּשִׁים:

וּבַיּוֹם הַנַּעֲרָה בָּאָה אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר תֹּאמַר יִגְתָּן לָהּ לְבֹא עִמָּהּ מִבַּיִת הַנָּשִׁים עַד־בַּיִת הַמֶּלֶךְ:

בַּעֲרָב I הַיָּמָּה בָּאָה לְבַבְקָר הַיָּמָּה שְׁנֵה אֶל־בַּיִת הַנָּשִׁים שְׁנֵי אֶל־יַד שְׁעַר־סָרִיס הַמֶּלֶךְ שֶׁמֶר הַפְּיִלְגָשִׁים לֹא־תָבוֹא

were assembled in the captial city Shushan under the supervision of Hegai, Esther too was taken into the king's palace under the supervision of Hegai, guardian of the women.

The girl pleased him and won his favor, and he hastened to furnish her with her cosmetics and her rations, as well as with the seven maids who were her due from the king's palace; and he treated her and her maids with special kindness in the harem.

Esther did not reveal her people or her kindred, for Mordecai had told her not to reveal it.

Every single day Mordecai would walk about in front of the court of the harem, to learn how Esther was faring and what was happening to her.

When each girl's turn came to go to King Ahashverosh at the end of the twelve months' treatment prescribed for women (for that was the period spent on beautifying them: six months with oil of myrrh and six months with perfumes and women's cosmetics,

and it was after that that the girl would go to the king), whatever she asked for would be given her to take with her from the harem to the king's palace.

She would go in the evening and leave in the morning for a second harem in charge of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch, guardian of the concubines. She would not go again to the king unless the king wanted her, when she would be summoned by name.

When the turn came for Esther daughter of Abihail – the uncle of Mordecai, who had

עוֹד אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי אִם־חִפְצָּ בָּהּ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְנִקְרָאָה בְּשֵׁם:

וּבְהַגִּיעַ תֵּרַ אֲסֵתֶר בַּת־אֲבִיתָיִל דָּד מֵרְדֵכָי אֲנִי לִקְחָהּ לֹל לְבַת לְבֹא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ לֹא בְקִשָּׁה דְבָר כִּי אִם אֶת־אֲשֶׁר יֹאמַר הַגֵּי סָרִיס־הַמֶּלֶךְ שֶׁמֶר הַנָּשִׁים וְתָהִי אֲסֵתֶר נְשֵׂאת חֹן בְּעֵינֵי כָל־רָאִיָּה:

וְתִלְקַח אֲסֵתֶר אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ אֶל־בַּיִת מְלֻכוֹתָו בְּחֹדֶשׁ הָעֵשְׂרִי הוֹאֲחֹדֶשׁ טַבַּת בְּשַׁנְת־שֵׁבַע לְמְלֻכוֹתָו:

וַיֹּאֲהֵב הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־אֲסֵתֶר מִכָּל־הַנָּשִׁים וְתִשָּׂאֲרוּן וְחֹסֶד לְפָנָיו מִכָּל־הַבְּתוּלוֹת וַיַּשֵּׂם כְּתָר־מְלֻכוֹת בְּרָאשָׁה וַיְמַלִּיכָהּ תַּחַת וְנִשְׁתִּי:

וַיַּעַשׂ הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁתָּה גְדוֹל לְכָל־שָׂרָיו וְעַבְדָּיו אֶת מִשְׁתָּה אֲסֵתֶר וְהַנְּחָה לְמַדִּינוֹל עֲשָׂה וַיִּתֵּן מִשְׂאֵת כֶּיֶד הַמֶּלֶךְ:

וּבְהַקְבֵּץ בְּתוּלוֹת שְׁנַיִת וּמֵרְדֵכָי יִשֵּׁב בְּשַׁעַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ:

אֵין אֲסֵתֶר מְגִדַת מוֹלְדֹתָהּ וְאֶת־עַמָּהּ כָּאֲשֶׁר אִמָּהּ עָלֶיהָ מֵרְדֵכָי וְאֶת־מֵאִמֶּר מֵרְדֵכָי אֲסֵתֶר (עֲשָׂה כָּאֲשֶׁר הִיתָה בְּאִמְנָה אִתּוֹ: ס)

בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם וּמֵרְדֵכָי יִשֵּׁב בְּשַׁעַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ קֶצֶף בְּגִלְתוֹ וְתָרַשׁ שְׁנֵי־סָרִיסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁמֵרֵי הַסֹּף וּיְבַקְשׁוּ לְשַׁלַּח יָד בְּמֶלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ:

וַיִּזְעַד הַדָּבָר לְמֵרְדֵכָי וַיִּגַּד לְאֲסֵתֶר הַמְּלֻכָה וַתֹּאמֶר אֲסֵתֶר לַמֶּלֶךְ בְּשֵׁם מֵרְדֵכָי:

וּיְבַקֵּשׁ הַדָּבָר וַיִּמְצָא וַיִּתְּלוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם עַל־עֵץ (וַיִּכְתֹּב בְּסֹפֶר דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים לְפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ: נ)

adopted her as his own daughter – to go to the king, she did not ask for anything but what Hegai, the king's eunuch, guardian of the women, advised. Yet Esther won the admiration of all who saw her.

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

The king loved Esther more than all the

other women, and she won his grace and favor more than all the virgins. So he set a royal diadem on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

The king gave a great banquet for all his officials and courtiers, "the banquet of Esther." He proclaimed a remission of taxes for the provinces and distributed gifts as befits a king.

When the virgins were assembled a second time, Mordecai sat in the palace gate.

But Esther still did not reveal her kindred or her people, as Mordecai had instructed her; for Esther obeyed Mordecai's bidding, as

*K*ing Ahashverosh's temper subsided, leaving him in a reflective state of mind. He couldn't help but ponder the fate of Vashti and the decree of exile he had passed against her. Memories of her beauty, noble heritage, and virtues flooded his thoughts, stirring a sense of longing and regret for overlooking these qualities in his anger.

Sensing his discomfort, the king's servants came forward with a proposal. "Your Majesty," they began cautiously, "it may be wise to seek out beautiful young maidens for you. Let them be chosen for their appearance, not their lineage or status." Lineage is immaterial for a ruler as exalted as Ahashverosh, they reasoned.

The advisors suggested that the king appoint officers across his vast realm to gather all the

she had done when she was under his care.

At that time, when Mordecai was sitting in the palace gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs who guarded the threshold, became angry, and plotted to do away with King Ahashverosh.

Mordecai learned of it and told it to Queen Esther, and Esther reported it to the king in Mordecai's name.

The matter was investigated and found to be so, and the two were hanged on the gallows. This was recorded in the book of chronicles in the presence of the king.

beautiful young virgins and bring them to the capital city of Shushan. There they would be placed under the supervision of Hegai, one of the king's eunuchs and trusted guardian of his harem.

Initially the approach was to attract willing candidates, showcasing the opportunity to become part of the royal household. However, the situation escalated with a second decree, mandating the forceful gathering of young women. This second decree carried a serious penalty for non-compliance.

In the capital city of Shushan, there lived a Jew from an illustrious background named Mordecai. Mordecai had assumed the role of foster parent to Esther, his cousin, who was affectionately known as Hadassah for her good deeds and qualities. As he had taken her in after her parents' death, Mordecai held significant



influence and responsibility over the young lady. He protected and guided her like a father.

Mordecai's preeminence is emphasized by his name, lineage, and tribal affiliation: the son of Jair, son of Shimei, son of Kish, a man from the tribe of Benjamin. Descending from the royal line of Saul, the first king of Israel, Mordecai commanded respect and recognition.

Mordecai concealed the beautiful young lady from the imperial search for a queen. This was a bold act of self sacrifice, as living in Shushan, the king's capital, such defiance put Mordecai at great risk. Had he lived elsewhere, he could plead ignorance. But in Shushan, where the king's decrees were well-known, that excuse was implausible.

Esther was beautiful of form and appearance, further increasing the peril of concealing her from the royal search. If it were discovered that Mordecai had hidden such a beautiful maiden, the consequences would be severe.

The presence of so many maidens in Shushan highlights the gravity and urgency of the king's decree, as anyone who concealed a woman, especially one as beautiful as Esther, faced grave consequences. Despite this, the righteous Mordecai and Esther did not willingly participate in the process.

Under the authority of the royal edict, many girls were assembled in the fortress of Shushan. Esther too was found and taken to the king's palace and placed under Hegai's supervision. Despite the forceful circumstances of her arrival, Hegai recognized Esther's potential for the monarchy, inclining him to forgive her reluctance.

Realizing the real possibility of Esther becoming the future queen, Hegai took exceptional steps for her. Unlike other women, she received cosmetics immediately, accelerating the usual twelve-month preparation process before meeting the king. She was also given special provisions, including seven maidens as attendants, a service typically provided only for the queen. Also, Hegai enhanced the living conditions for Esther and her maidens in the harem. They were allocated more spacious rooms and provided with superior food and amenities. Nevertheless, despite the special treatment and honor she received, Esther's heart was not swayed, and she had no desire to partake in the forced marriage.

Esther, under the guidance of Mordecai, chose not to reveal her people or her kindred. He hoped to save Esther by her being rejected by the king as someone of uncertain or common birth, rendering her unfit for queenship. Mordecai thought that as a result, the king would expel her from his palace, for he would not take a woman without any acknowledgment



of her pedigree. It would be like taking as his queen one who was abandoned at birth and left in the marketplace.

Mordecai, driven by his deep concern for Esther's well-being, would walk in front of the court of the harem every day to learn how Esther was faring.

Every woman underwent a year-long beautification process. The six winter months were spent being anointed with myrrh oil, which warms the limbs, and in the summer months, they were accustomed with perfumes and women's cosmetics.

After completing the lengthy beautification process, each young lady was granted the privilege to request anything she desired to take with her to the king's palace.

She would go before the king in the evening and then leave to a second harem overseen by Shaashgaz, the eunuch in charge of royal concubines. After the initial encounter with the king, the young lady would not return to him unless he specifically desired her presence and called for her by name.

When Esther, the daughter of Abihail, who was the uncle of Mordecai, was chosen to go before King Ahashverosh she chose to ask for nothing to take with her to the king except what Hegai, the king's eunuch, advised. This decision contrasts with the lavish, personal requests of the others, in a desperate attempt to impress the king.

Esther was taken to King Ahashverosh, in his royal palace, in the tenth month, which is the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. Despite the grandeur and prestige associated with being taken to the royal chamber, Esther felt nothing but forced.

When the king saw Esther, he loved her more than all the others, and she won his highest grace and favor. His affection was so great that it compelled him to personally place the crown on her head, a gesture signifying her immediate elevation to queen.

The king hosted a grand banquet for all his officials and courtiers, and called it "the banquet of Esther." This was not merely a celebration of her ascension to the throne but a strategic maneuver. Despite her new status as queen, Esther's national and familial origins remained a mystery to the king. To uncover these details, he employed three subtle yet calculated strategies.

Firstly he named the banquet in her honor to kindle Esther's pride. Secondly he issued a decree to alleviate taxes throughout his provinces, for surely Esther would want her hometown to be included in the tax relief. Finally, the king distributed gifts, suggesting that her nation would receive special gifts and favors from the king if only she would reveal it.

After Esther's coronation as queen, the remaining maidens were assembled a second time, but only to be sent back to their homes. The dismissal of the maidens was meant to reassure Esther that she would not be replaced by another and to convince her of the permanence



of her position. Surely now the king would accept her heritage, even if it was not illustrious. But despite all the king's calculated moves, Esther remained true to Mordecai's instructions and kept her origins a secret.

Meanwhile, Mordecai was appointed to sit at the king's gate as one of the ministers of justice, an honor granted to him because the beautiful Esther had been discovered in his house. At that time, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs who served as guards of the threshold, became disenfranchised with the king, and plotted to do away with him.

Mordecai learned of the assassination attempt and told Queen Esther. Mordecai did not explicitly instruct Esther to report this to the king in his name. Yet Esther, chose to relate that information to the king, explicitly crediting Mordecai.

The plot to kill the king was investigated and found to be true, and the rebellious eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh, were hanged on a gallows. However, Mordecai's act of loyalty to the king was not immediately rewarded, but noted in the official chronicles in the presence of the king.



Chapter 3

HAMAN CONNIVES HIS WAY TO THE HIGHEST OFFICE IN PERSIA. MORDECAI'S REFUSAL TO BOW TO HIM SPARKS HAMAN'S HATRED AND HIS SUBSEQUENT PLOT AGAINST THE JEWISH PEOPLE.

Some time afterward, King Ahashverosh promoted Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite; he advanced him and seated him higher than any of his fellow officials.

All the king's courtiers in the palace gate knelt and bowed low to Haman, for such was the king's order concerning him; but Mordecai would not kneel or bow low.

Then the king's courtiers who were in the palace gate said to Mordecai, "Why do you disobey the king's command?"

When they spoke to him day after day and he would not listen to them, they told Haman, in order to see whether Mordecai's resolve would prevail; for he had explained to them that he was a Jew.

When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel or bow low to him, Haman was filled with rage.

But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone; having been told who Mordecai's people were, Haman plotted to do away with all the Jews, Mordecai's people, throughout the kingdom of Ahashverosh.

In the first month, that is, the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahashverosh, pur – which means "the lot" – was cast before Haman concerning every day and every month, [until it fell on] the twelfth month, that is, the month of Adar.

Haman then said to King Ahashverosh, "There is a certain people, scattered and dispersed among the other peoples in

אחר | הדברים האלה גדל המלך אחשוורוש את־המון בן־המדתא האגגי וַיִּנְשְׂאֵהוּ וַיִּלְשֶׁם אֶת־בְּסָאוֹ מֵעַל כָּל־הַשָּׂרִים אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ:

וְכָל־עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר־בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ כֹּרְעִים וּמְשַׁתַּחֲוִים לְהִמָּן בִּיָּבֹן אֲוֵה־לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ וּמְרַדְּכֵי לֹא יִכְרַע וְלֹא יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה:

וַיֹּאמְרוּ עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר־בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְמֶרְדֵּכָי מִדּוּעַ אַתָּה עוֹבֵר אֶת מִצְוַת הַמֶּלֶךְ:

וַיְהִי (באמרם) [כָּאָמְרָם] אֵלָיו יוֹם יוֹם וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּגִּידוּ לְהִמָּן לְרֹאוֹל הַיַּעֲמֹדוֹ דְּבַר־י מְרַדְּכֵי כִי־הִגִּיד לָהֶם אֲשֶׁר־הוּא יְהוּדִי:

וַיֵּרָא הִמָּן כִּי־אִין מְרַדְּכֵי כִרְע וּמְשַׁתַּחֲוֶה לוֹ וַיִּמְלֵא הִמָּן חֲמָה:

וַיָּבֹד בְּעֵינָיו לְשַׁלַּח יָד בְּמֶרְדֵּכָי לְבַדּוֹ כִי־הִגִּידוּ לוֹ אֶת־עַם מְרַדְּכֵי וַיִּבְקֹשׁ הִמָּן לְהַשְׁמִיד אֶת־כָּל־הַיְהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל־מַמְלַכּוֹת אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ עִם מְרַדְּכֵי:

בַּחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן הוּא־חֹדֶשׁ נִסָּן בִּשְׁנַת שְׁתַּיִם עֶשְׂרֵה לְמֶלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ הַפּוֹל פּוֹרֵ הוּא הַגּוֹרֵל לִפְנֵי הִמָּן מִיּוֹם אֶל יוֹם וַיִּמְחֹדֵשׁ לְחֹדֶשׁ שְׁנַיִם־עָשָׂר הוּא־חֹדֶשׁ אָדָר: {ס}

וַיֹּאמֶר הִמָּן לְמֶלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ יִשְׁנֹו עִם־אֶחָד מִפְּזָר וּמִפְּרָד־בֵּין הָעַמִּים בְּכָל מְדִינֹת מְלֹכֹתָם וְדַתֵּיהֶם שְׁנוֹת מִכָּל־עַם וְאֶת־דַּתִּי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵיבָם עֲשִׂים וְלְמֶלֶךְ אִין־שֵׁה לְהִנְחִים:

אִם־עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב יִכְתֹּב לְאַבְדָּם וְעֲשֶׂרֶת אֲלָפִים כְּבַר־בָּסָף אֲשֶׁקוּל־עַל־יְדֵי עַשִׂי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲבֵי אֶל־גְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ:

וַיִּסַּר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־טַבַּעְתּוֹ מֵעַל יָדוֹ וַיִּתְּנֶה לְהִמָּן בֵּן־הַמְּדַתָּא הָאֲגָגִי צָרַר הַיְהוּדִים:

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהִמָּן הַבָּסָף נָתַן לָךְ וְהָעָם לַעֲשׂוֹת בּוֹ כַּטּוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ:

וַיִּקְרָא סְפָרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בַּחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן בְּשָׁלוֹשָׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם בּוֹ וַיִּכְתֹּב בְּכָל־אֲשֶׁר־אֲוֵה הִמָּן אֵל אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ־הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֵל־הַפְּחֹוֹת אֲשֶׁר אֵל־עַל־מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה וְאֵל־שָׂרֵי עַם וְעַם מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה כְּכַתְּבָהּ וְעַם וְעַם כְּלִשׁוֹנָה בְּשֵׁם הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ נִכְתָּב וְנִחְתָּם בְּטַבַּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ:

וּנְשַׁלַּח סְפָרִים בְּיַד הַרְצִיִם אֶל־כָּל־מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַשְׁמִיד לְהַרְגֹו וְלֹא־בָד אֶת־כָּל־הַיְהוּדִים מִנְעֵר וְעַד־זָמַן טָף וְנָשִׁים בְּיוֹם אֶחָד בְּשָׁלוֹשָׁה עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ שְׁנַיִם־עָשָׂר הוּא־חֹדֶשׁ אָדָר וְשָׁלַלְם לְבָזוֹ:

all the provinces of your realm, whose laws are different from those of any other people and who do not obey the king's laws; and it is not in Your Majesty's interest to tolerate them.

If it please Your Majesty, let an edict be drawn for their destruction, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the stewards for deposit in the royal treasury."

Thereupon the king removed his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the foe of the Jews.

And the king said, "The money and the people are yours to do with as you see fit."

On the thirteenth day of the first month, the king's scribes were summoned and a decree was issued, as Haman directed, to the king's satraps, to the governors of every province, and to the officials of every people, to every province in its own script and to every people in its own language. The orders were issued in the name of King Ahashverosh

After the assassination plot was foiled, King Ahashverosh forgot about Mordecai's role in saving his life. Out of misplaced gratitude, and in failing to determine how to reward Esther for bringing the matter to his attention, Ahashverosh sought to reward those responsible for

פְּתֹשְׁגָן הַכְּתָב דָּוָל בְּכָל־מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה גְּלוֹי לְכָל־הָעַמִּים הַיּוֹת עֲתִידִים לַיּוֹם הַזֶּה:

הַרְצִיִם יֵצְאוּ דְחוּפִים בְּדַבַּר הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַדַּת נִתְּנָה בְּשׁוֹשָׁן הַבִּינָה וְהַמֶּלֶךְ וְהִמָּן יִשְׁבּוּ לְשִׁתּוֹת וְהַעִיר שׁוֹשָׁן נְבֹכָה: {ס}

and sealed with the king's signet.

Accordingly, written instructions were dispatched by couriers to all the king's provinces to destroy, massacre, and exterminate all the Jews, young and old, children and women, on a single day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month – that is, the month of Adar – and to plunder their possessions.

The content of the document was to the effect that a law should be proclaimed in every single province; it was to be publicly displayed to all the peoples, so that they might be ready for that day.

The couriers went out posthaste on the royal mission, and the decree was proclaimed in the captial city Shushan. The king and Haman sat down to feast, but the city of Shushan was dumfounded.

advising the search for the new queen. The one who first introduced the idea was the eunuch, Mehuman. As a result, King Achashverosh promoted him, but soon forgot what he had done to earn it.

Amidst the confusion, it was easy for the shrewd and opportunistic Haman to step in. Through

crafty manipulations, Haman intimated to the king that it was he who had saved his life. Haman's plan worked and the king elevated him gradually through the ranks until he became the head of all ministers, the king's right hand.

Ahashverosh bestowed another honor upon Haman – all courtiers in the palace who held positions at the king's gate were required to bow and prostrate themselves before him. This was a great privilege, as typically such honor is reserved solely for the king, not one of his servants. But Ahashverosh waived this tradition and commanded that even at the king's gate, Haman should be shown this sign of respect and reverence. Nevertheless, Mordecai staunchly refused to bow.

The reason why Mordecai was so determined not to bow is because this act of prostration was intended to be idolatrous, as ancient pagan cultures attributed divinity to anyone of great stature claiming that they were touched by the gods. Being a monotheistic Jew, Mordecai refused to bow to avoid any association with this idolatrous practice.

Secondly, the king's decree only applied to those who met two conditions: being a servant of the king and holding office at the king's gate. Even though Mordecai met the condition of having a position at the king's gate, he was technically not a servant of the king. That is, according to Persian law at the time, Jews were not accepted as servants of the king.

Upon witnessing Mordecai's refusal to bow, the king's courtiers at the palace gate asked him,

"Why do you disobey the king's command?" They warned Mordecai repeatedly, day after day, before finally informing Haman that Mordecai would not bow to him due to his Jewish faith.

When Haman saw that Mordecai refused to bow he was filled with rage. Haman's malevolence and pride led him to expand his anger beyond Mordecai. The very mention of connecting Mordecai's stubbornness with a religious imperative ignited his hatred towards all Jews and their faith. He sought to eradicate all Jews because they were Mordecai's people and shared his religion.

Driven by vengeance towards Mordecai and to the Jewish faith, during the twelfth year of King Ahashverosh's reign, Haman began formulating his plan of genocide. It was the first month, Nisan, when a lot, called pur, was cast before Haman to determine which date would be most auspicious to seal the fate of the Jewish people.

The lot was cast on the thirteenth of Nisan, but that day came up in the lot as unpropitious. He cast lots for the fifteenth and sixteenth of Nisan, but the lot kept on dismissing each day, until Haman reached the end of the month.

So Haman started from the first day of the following month, Iyar, but again the lot rejected each day until the last possible day. That is, Haman started with the 14th of Nisan, then tried each day until he reached the 30th of Nisan, then he started from the 1st of Iyar and continued until he came to the thirteenth of Iyar, the last day it could have come out on, as



one day of a month must be selected according to the system. The suggestion was that Haman would have to wait an entire year, until the next year on the thirteenth of Nisan, to proceed with his diabolical plan.

So Haman thought that perhaps it is the month that was inopportune. So he began casting lots for the other months, starting with Nisan, but the lot negated that suggestion. The lot rejected every outcome, postponing the date from month to month until the final month of the year, which is Adar.

Haman did not cast lots for the days of the month again, as the thirteenth day had already been selected in the first casting. Thus, the lot fell on the thirteenth of Adar, eleven months away. The lot first postponed his plans from day to day, to the last possible outcome, and then from month to month, until the most distant month.

In any event, from the uncanny results of the lot casting, Haman should have recognized God's hand at work, setting everything in motion in a way that would provide time for the salvation of the Jewish people. Therefore, the Book of Esther refers to "the lot before Haman," as this lot had been prepared in advance from On High for the sake of Haman's downfall.

Haman proposed his plan of genocide to King Ahashverosh but deceived him by withholding crucial information. If the king had known that the people he was being persuaded to harm were the Jews, known for their wisdom and distinction, he would not have consented. Even if

it were an inferior or despised people, Haman's plan of annihilation would not have swayed the king. But Haman shrewdly skirted around their identity, referring to them as a vague and unknown group. He falsely accused the Jewish people of causing harm to all peoples, in matters of faith and politics.

Haman declared the Jewish people to be dispersed and spread out, suggesting they do not have a specific country, and they reside in various neighborhoods rather than designated cities. Furthermore, their presence extends beyond a few countries; they encompass all provinces of the empire. This dispersion allows their influence to permeate every community, causing widespread harm.

Their unique laws and customs, Haman explained to the king, set them apart from all other religions, with a multitude of diverse commandments that make their religion seem like many religions in one. Not only is their law different, but also their way of life, including food, clothing, and behavior, making them a source of discord within the empire.

Haman also accused them of not obeying the king's laws. This accusation was particularly manipulative, suggesting that their religious laws led them to disregard even the king's non-religious decrees, potentially inciting rebellion among other peoples. He contended that there was no benefit in tolerating them that could possibly outweigh the harm they purportedly caused.

Haman said to King Ahashverosh, "If it pleases



Your Majesty, let an edict be drawn for their destruction, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the stewards for deposit in the royal treasury." Haman, did not outright reveal his intention to exterminate the Jewish people physically. Instead he used language that suggested a desire to "destroy" them, ambiguously implying the eradication of their distinct identity and religious practices. This subtle use of language masked his true intent, which was far more sinister.

Haman's suggestion to the king cleverly avoided the impression of a direct financial burden on the royal treasury. He presented his scheme as one that would not only be self-funding but would also generate a considerable sum for the royal coffers. Haman claimed that those who would carry out his plan would do so with such enthusiasm and commitment to the cause that they would willingly contribute money to the royal treasury.

Believing that Haman was engaged in improving the kingdom by addressing what he sees as the need to bring a reckoning upon the Jewish people by wiping out their religious beliefs and practices. The king placed the money and manpower in Haman's hands to do what seemed right in his eyes, for the presumed betterment of the empire. Then the king handed over his signet ring to Haman giving Haman the power to seal documents in the king's name. Exploiting this trust, Haman authored edicts for the extermination of the Jews.

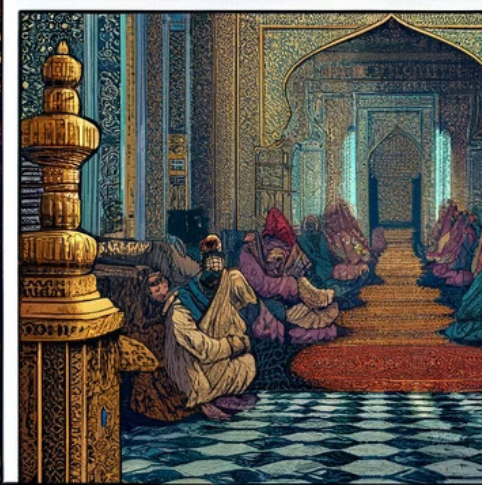
On the thirteenth day of the first month, fearing that King Ahashverosh might learn the truth

about the Jews and reconsider his decision, Haman had the letters drafted and sent out on that very day. These letters were not based on the king's specific instructions but on Haman's dictation. Yet the orders were issued in the name of King Ahashverosh and sealed with the royal signet ring. This swift action was a strategic move to prevent any possibility of the king retracting the decree, as once a royal edict written in the king's name is issued, it cannot be revoked.

The letters were delivered by couriers to all the king's provinces to destroy, massacre, and exterminate all the Jews, young and old, children and women, on the thirteenth day of Adar. Haman chose for the general destruction to happen in all provinces on the same day to ensure that there would be nowhere for survivors to seek refuge.

Haman deliberately avoids mentioning in his letters that the decree applies to all provinces in order to lead each governor and satrap to believe that the edict is specific to their province. This was to reduce the guilt of partaking in such a largescale genocide while simultaneously increasing their compliance and fear of deviating from an order targeting their province specifically.

The document sent to the provincial leaders was sealed with the king's signet, marked on the outside not to be opened until the 13th of Adar. Along with these sealed letters, open letters were sent, displayed to all peoples, readying them for an attack on the 13th of Adar. But only on that day would the sealed letters be opened



and the targeted group would be named.

This secrecy prevented the Jews from seeking help or intervention at the king's court, and ensured they wouldn't flee or hide, as they wouldn't know that they were to be the victims of the impending threat. Once the letters were opened, the local populations would rise up against the Jews, who would be caught unprepared when the true nature of the decree is revealed.

After the decree was sent out, Haman and the king sat down to feast in celebration. This is

further evidence that Ahashverosh was unaware of Haman's secret plan to annihilate all the Jewish people, for had he been aware of issuing a decree to destroy an entire nation, how could he sit down to feast? Among judges, it is customary not to drink wine on the day a death sentence is pronounced for even one individual. Certainly, when an entire nation was sold out for destruction, how could the king feast?

The people of Shushan were perplexed by the sealed documents, allowing in their ignorance the devious plan to proceed.



Chapter 4

AWARE OF HAMAN'S PLOT AGAINST THE JEWS, MORDECAI PUBLICLY MOURNS, PROMPTING WIDESPREAD FASTING. HE URGES QUEEN ESTHER TO INTERCEDE WITH KING AHASHVEROSH DESPITE THE RISK **When Mordecai learned all that had happened, Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes. He went through the city, crying out loudly and bitterly,**

until he came in front of the palace gate; for one could not enter the palace gate wearing sackcloth. –

Also, in every province that the king's command and decree reached, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing, and everybody lay in sackcloth and ashes. –

When Esther's maidens and eunuchs came and informed her, the queen was greatly agitated. She sent clothing for Mordecai to wear, so that he might take off his sackcloth; but he refused.

Thereupon Esther summoned Hathach, one of the eunuchs whom the king had appointed to serve her, and sent him to Mordecai to learn the why and wherefore of it all.

Hathach went out to Mordecai in the city square in front of the palace gate;

and Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and all about the money that Haman had offered to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews.

He also gave him the written text of the law that had been proclaimed in Shushan for their destruction. [He bade him] show it to Esther and inform her, and charge

וּמֶרְדֵּכַי יָדַע אֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשָׂה וַיִּקְרַע מְרֹדֵכַי אֶת־בְּגָדָיו וַיִּלְבַּשׁ שָׂק וַיֵּצֵא וַיִּצְאָה בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר וַיִּזְעַק זַעֲקָה גְדוֹלָה וַיִּמְרָה:

וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי אֵין לְבוֹא אֶל־שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ בִּלְבוּשׁ שָׂק:

וּבְכַל־מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה מִקּוֹם אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ וַדָּתוֹ מִגֵּיעַ אֶבֶל גְּדוֹל לַיהוּדִים וְצוֹם וּבְכִי וּמִסְפַּד שָׂק וַאֲפֹר יֵצַע לְרַבִּים:

וּתְבוּאֵינָה (וְתַבּוּאָנָה) נַעֲרוֹת אֶסְתֵּר וְסָרִיסֶיהָ וַיִּגִּידוּ לָהּ וַתַּחֲלֹתֵל הַמַּלְכָּה מֵאֵד וַתִּשְׁלַח בְּגָדִים לְהַלְבִּישׁ אֶת־מְרֹדֵכַי וְלִהְסִיר שָׂקוֹ מֵעָלָיו וְלֹא הִקְבִּל:

וַתִּקְרָא אֶסְתֵּר לְהַתִּיר מִסָּרִיסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר הֵעֲמִיד לִפְנֵיהָ וַתִּצְוֶהוּ עַל־מְרֹדֵכַי לְדַעַת מִהֵרָה וְעַל־מֵהֵרָה:

וַיֵּצֵא הַתִּיר אֶל־מְרֹדֵכַי אֶל־רְחוֹב הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ:

וַיִּגְדֵּל מְרֹדֵכַי אֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר קָרְהוּ וְאֵת פְּרָשֵׁת הַכֶּסֶף אֲשֶׁר אָמַר הַמֶּן לְשָׂקוֹל עַל־גִּבּוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ (בִּיהוּדִים) לֹא־בָדָם:

וְאֵת־פַּתְשֶׁגֶן כְּתֹב־הַדָּת אֲשֶׁר־נָתַן בְּשׂוֹשָׁן לְהַשְׁמִידָם גִּתָּן לֹא לְהִרְאוֹת אֶת־אֶסְתֵּר וּלְהַגִּיד לָהּ וּלְצִוּוֹת עָלֶיהָ לְבוֹא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַתְחַנְּנוֹ לוֹ וּלְבַקֵּשׁ מִלִּפְנֵיו עַל־עַמּוּהָ:

וַיָּבֹאוּ הַתִּיר וַיִּגְדֵּל לְאֶסְתֵּר אֶת דְּבָרֵי מְרֹדֵכַי:

וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר לְהַתִּיר וַתִּצְוֶהוּ אֶל־מְרֹדֵכַי:

כָּל־עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְעַם־מְדִינוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ יָדְעִים אֲשֶׁר כָּל־אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר יָבֹאוּ־אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל־הַחֲצֵר הַפְּנִימִית אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יִקְרָא אַחַת דָּתוֹ לְהַמִּית לְבָד מֵאֲשֶׁר יוֹשִׁיט־לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־שַׂרְבִּיט הַזֶּהב וְחַיָּה וְאִנִּי לֹא נִקְרָאתִי לְבוֹא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ זֶה שְׁלוֹשִׁים יוֹם:

{וַיִּגִּידוּ לְמֶרְדֵּכַי אֶת דְּבָרֵי אֶסְתֵּר: } פ

וַיֹּאמֶר מְרֹדֵכַי לְהַשִּׁיב אֶל־אֶסְתֵּר אֶת־תְּדַמִּי בְּנִפְשׁוֹ לְהַמְלֵט בֵּית־הַמֶּלֶךְ מִכָּל־הַיהוּדִים:

כִּי אִם־הִחַרְשׁ תַּחֲרִישׁ בְּעַת הַזֹּאת גְּרוּחַ וְהִצִּילָה יַעֲמוּד לַיהוּדִים מִמְּקוֹם אַחֵר וְאֵת וּבֵית־אֲבִיו תִּאֲבָדוּ וְיָמֵי יוֹדֵעַ אִם־לַעַת כָּזֹאת הִגַּעַת לְמַלְכוּת:

וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר לְהַשִּׁיב אֶל־מְרֹדֵכַי:

לָךְ כְּנוֹס אֶת־כָּל־הַיהוּדִים הַנִּמְצְאִים בְּשׂוֹשָׁן

her to go to the king and to appeal to him and to plead with him for her people.

When Hathach came and delivered Mordecai's message to Esther,

Esther told Hathach to take back to Mordecai the following reply:

“All the king’s courtiers and the people of the king’s provinces know that if any person, man or woman, enters the king’s presence in the inner court without having been summoned, there is but one law for him – that he be put to death. Only if the king extends the golden scepter to him may he live. Now I have not been summoned to visit the king for the last thirty days.”

When Mordecai was told what Esther had said,

Mordecai had this message delivered to Esther: “Do not imagine that you, of all the Jews, will escape with your life by being in the king’s palace.

Despite Haman’s attempts to keep the plan a secret, everything was revealed to Mordecai through divine oversight. This knowledge led Mordecai to prepare in two ways. Mordecai mournfully tore his clothes and dressed in sackcloth and ashes. These acts of repentance and prayer were intended to appeal directly to God, for it is He who controls the hearts of kings.

וְצוּמוֹ טָלִי וְאֶל־תֹּאכְלוּ וְאֶל־תִּשְׁתּוּ שְׁלֹשַׁת יָמִים לַיְלָה יוֹם גַּם־אֲנִי וְנַעֲרֹתַי אֲצוּם בְּן וּבְכֹן אָבוֹא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר לֹא־כָדַת וּכְאֲשֶׁר אֲבַדְתִּי אֲבַדְתִּי:

{וַיַּעֲבֵר מְרֹדֵכַי וַיַּעַשׂ כְּכָל־אֲשֶׁר־צִוְּתָהּ עָלָיו אֶסְתֵּר: } ס

On the contrary, if you keep silent in this crisis, relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another quarter, while you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows, perhaps you have attained this royal position for just such a crisis.”

Then Esther sent back this answer to Mordecai:

“Go, assemble all the Jews who live in Shushan, and fast on my behalf; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens will observe the same fast. Then I shall go to the king, though it is contrary to the law; and if I am to perish, I shall perish!”

So Mordecai went about [the city] and did just as Esther had commanded him.

And in his efforts to overturn the decree through natural means, Mordecai planned to make the situation known to all nations and the king himself in order to rally support for the plight of the Jewish people. To do so, Mordecai took to the streets, dressed in sackcloth and ashes, and publicly mourned, crying out loudly and bitterly.

Mordecai took his vigil as far as the palace

gate, a deliberate and conspicuous act aimed at attracting the attention of the royal court. Adhering to the rule against entering the palace gate in mourning attire, Mordecai went no further than the gate.

Mordecai's public outcry was the catalyst for spreading this devastating news to all the Jews throughout the kingdom. Upon hearing about the crisis the Jews experienced profound grief. They immediately took to fasting, weeping, and wailing, and everybody wore sackcloth and ashes.

Queen Esther's maidens and eunuchs informed her of Mordecai's mournful behavior and attire. Deeply troubled she sent a messenger with clothing for him to appear presentable enough to enter the king's gate. However, Mordecai refused the clothing, not wanting to rely on human contrivance in any way that would detract from his direct appeal to God.

Realizing that Mordecai was keeping a secret, Esther sent her trusted confidant, Hathach, a eunuch appointed to her. She commanded Hathach to discreetly investigate the nature and cause of the matter. Hathach went out, and Mordecai informed him of all the events that had befallen him, starting with the reason behind it, which was his refusal to bow down to Haman. He also revealed the hefty sum offered by Haman to finance the extermination of the Jews.

Mordecai handed Hathach a copy of the public notice, which referenced the future date when the sealed document calling for the

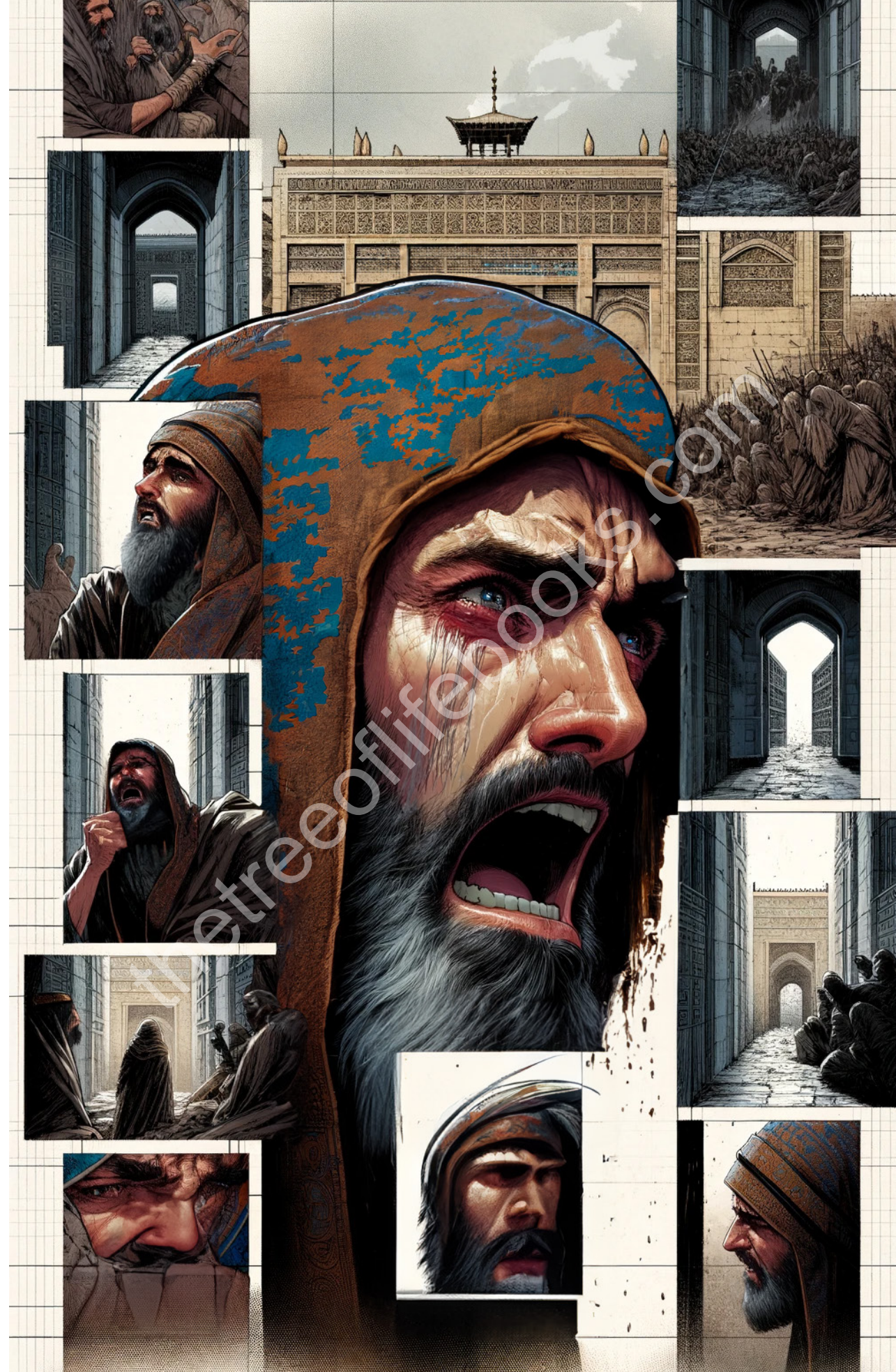
extermination of the Jewish people would be made known to all. Mordecai asked Hathach to show the public notice to Esther and inform her about Haman's decree. In this way, Mordecai urged Esther to go to the king and to plead with him for her people

Esther's message in reply to Mordecai was: "All the king's courtiers and the people of the king's provinces know that if any person, man or woman, enters the king's presence in the inner court without having been summoned, they are to be put to death. Only if the king extends the golden scepter to the uninvited visitor may he or she live. Now I have not been summoned to visit the king for the last thirty days."

Esther's message was meant to communicate her two concerns: Firstly, entering without being summoned poses a risk of death, and even if the king chooses to spare her, it would be seen as an act of grace rather than justice. This would limit her ability to advocate or plead on behalf of her people effectively.

Secondly, she suggests that a safer, more opportune moment for her to approach the king is likely to arise soon, given that she is usually called upon regularly. Hence, it would be more prudent to wait for a formal summons than to risk death and the loss of any chance to help her people.

Mordecai replied with this message to Esther: "Do not imagine that you, of all the Jews, will escape with your life by being in the king's palace." There are several ideas he draws to Esther's attention in his response.



Firstly, whenever we encounter events that deviate from the norm, it is incumbent upon us to recognize that they may be orchestrated by God for a specific purpose. Esther's ascent from her humble origins to the palace was extraordinary and seemed to be part of God's plan. Given the concurrent crisis facing the Jewish people, it appeared that Esther's elevation was divinely intended to offer a means of salvation.

Secondly, every tribulation that befalls the Jewish people has a destined predetermined moment for salvation. Esther's presence in the palace was solely to facilitate the salvation of Israel. This did not mean that the entire salvation depended solely on her. If she were to fail, other means of deliverance would surely arise. Therefore, Mordecai told her, "If you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place."

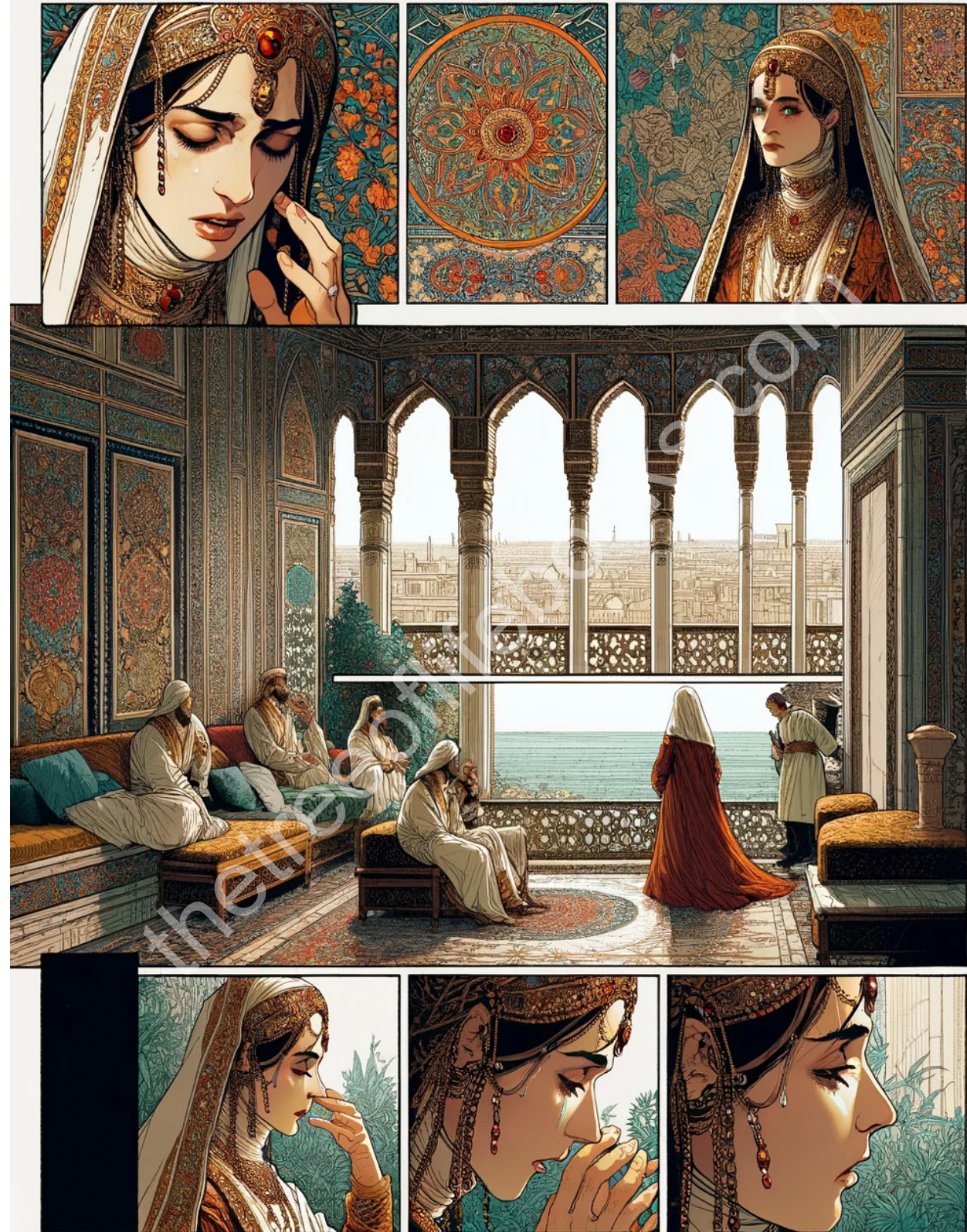
Mordecai continued, "And who knows, perhaps you have attained royalty for just such a time as this." Meaning that perhaps God appointed her for this specific time. If she waited until tomorrow, her time would have passed, as God would have arranged another means. Esther's position

would thus become redundant, and she would "perish along with her father's house." That is, her elevated status would no longer serve its purpose.

Then Esther sent back this answer to Mordecai: "Go, assemble all the Jews who live in Shushan, and fast on my behalf; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens will observe the same fast. Then I shall go to the king, though it is contrary to the law; and if I am to perish, I shall perish!"

By saying "And if I perish, I perish," Esther is acknowledging that the Jews would ultimately be saved by God, regardless of her actions, and that her involvement would merely expedite their deliverance, she resolved to proceed, trusting that even if she were to be executed, it would not spell the end of hope; salvation for the Jews would still arise through other means.

So Mordecai went about all the Jewish neighborhoods in Shushan and did as Esther had commanded him.



Chapter 5

ESTHER APPROACHES KING AHASHVEROSH, GAINING HIS FAVOR. HAMAN RAGES AT MORDECAI'S REFUSAL TO BOW TO HIM, LEADING HIM TO CONSTRUCT A GALLOWS FOR MORDECAI'S EXECUTION.

On the third day, Esther put on royal apparel and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, facing the king's palace, while the king was sitting on his royal throne in the throne room facing the entrance of the palace.

As soon as the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, she won his favor. The king extended to Esther the golden scepter which he had in his hand, and Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter.

"What troubles you, Queen Esther?" the king asked her. "And what is your request? Even to half the kingdom, it shall be granted to you."

"If it please Your Majesty," Esther replied, "let Your Majesty and Haman come today to the feast that I have prepared for him."

The king commanded, "Tell Haman to hurry and do Esther's bidding." So the king and Haman came to the feast that Esther had prepared.

At the wine feast, the king asked Esther, "What is your wish? It shall be granted to you. And what is your request? Even to half the kingdom, it shall be fulfilled."

"My wish," replied Esther, "my request – if Your Majesty will do me the favor, if it please Your Majesty to grant my wish and accede to my request – let Your Majesty and Haman come to the feast which I

ויהי א ביום השלישי ותלבש אסתר מלכות ותעמד
בחצר בית המלך הפנימית נכח בית המלך יושב
על־כסא מלכותו בבית המלכות נכח פתח הבית:

ויהי כראות המלך את־אסתר המלכה עומדת בחצר
נשאה חן בעיניו ויושט המלך לאסתר את־שרביט הזהב
(אשר בידו ותקרב אסתר ותגע בראש השרביט: ס)

ויאמר לה המלך מה־לך אסתר המלכה ומה־
בקשתך עד־חצי המלכות ויגתן לך:

ותאמר אסתר אם־על־המלך טוב יבוא המלך
והמן היום אל־המשטתה אשר־עשיתי לו:

ויאמר המלך מה־רו את־המן לעשות את־דבר אסתר
ויבא המלך והמן אל־המשטתה אשר־עשתה אסתר:

ויאמר המלך לאסתר במשטתה הנין מה־שאלתך
ויגתן לך ומה־בקשתך עד־חצי המלכות ותעש:

ותען אסתר ותאמר שאלתי ובקשתי:

אם־מצאתי חן בעיני המלך ואם־על־המלך טוב לתת
את־שאלתי ולעשות את־בקשתי יבוא המלך והמן אל־
המשטתה אשר אעשה להם ומחר אעשה כדבר המלך:

ויצא המן ביום ההוא שמח וטוב לב וכראות
המן את־מרדכי בשער המלך ולא־קם ולא־ע
ממונו וימלא המן על־מרדכי חמה:

ויתאפק המן ויבוא אל־ביתו וישלח ויבא
את־אהביו ואת־גורש אשתו:

ויספור להם המן את־כבוד עשרו ורב בגיו ואת־כל־אשר
גדלו המלך ואת־אשר נשאו על־השרים ועבדי המלך:

ויאמר המן אף לא־הביאה אסתר המלכה עם־
המלך אל־המשטתה אשר־עשתה כי אם־אותי
וגם־למחר אני קרוא־לה עם־המלך:

וכל־זה איננו שוה לי בכל־עת אשר אני ראה
את־מרדכי היהודי יושב בשער המלך:

ותאמר לו וְרַשׁ אֲשֵׁרְךָ וְכָל־אֲהָבָיו יַעֲשׂוּ־עִלְיָ גְבוּהַ
חַמְשִׁים אַמָּה וּבְבִקְרֵי אָמֵר לַמֶּלֶךְ וַיִּתְּלוּ אֶת־
מַרְדֳּכָי עָלָיו וּבָא־עִם־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל־הַמִּשְׁתָּה שְׂמֵחַ
(וַיִּקַּב הַדָּבָר לִפְנֵי הַמֶּן וַיַּעַשׂ הַעֵץ: ס)

will prepare for them; and tomorrow I will do Your Majesty's bidding."

That day Haman went out happy and lighthearted. But when Haman saw Mordecai in the palace gate, and Mordecai did not rise or even stir on his account, Haman was filled with rage at him.

Nevertheless, Haman controlled himself and went home. He sent for his friends and his wife Zeresh,

and Haman told them about his great wealth and his many sons, and all about how the king had promoted him and advanced him above the officials and the king's courtiers.



In the third day, Esther put on royal garments. Esther's role as queen suited her perfectly and her appearance was so majestic that all who saw her recognized that she was fit for royalty, as if she was clothed in righteousness itself.

Esther positioned herself in front of the king's personal chambers, but by divine providence, the king happened to be sitting in the royal house with his throne facing the entrance, enabling him to see Esther immediately.

As soon as the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, she won his favor. The king's affection for Esther was so great that he never considered that the rule that no one could enter the inner court of the king without permission would apply to Esther. His love for her was such that her presence in his royal house was always

"What is more," said Haman, "Queen Esther held a feast, and besides the king she did not invite anyone but me. And tomorrow as well I am invited by her along with the king.

Yet all this means nothing to me every time I see that Jew Mordecai sitting in the palace gate."

Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, "Let a gallows be erected, fifty cubits high, and in the morning ask the king to have Mordecai hanged on it. Then you can go happily with the king to the feast." The proposal pleased Haman, and he erected the gallows.

a joy and a privilege, and he never entertained the thought that she would need to stand in the court waiting for the scepter to be extended to her.

Therefore, when the king saw her humbly standing in the courtyard and not entering, even though she was his beloved queen and the decree should not have applied to her, this further gained his favor. Ahashverosh saw her unassuming presentation as a reflection of her genuine modesty. Moved by his affection, the king willingly extended to Esther the golden scepter, which by divine providence he had in his hand. Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter.

King Ahashverosh asked, "What troubles you, Queen Esther?" and "What is your request?" Ahashverosh assured her, "Even to half the kingdom, it shall be granted to you,"

"If it pleases Your Majesty," Esther replied, "let Your Majesty and Haman come today to the feast that I have prepared for him." Inviting Haman allowed for the opportunity to catch him off guard, depriving him of the opportunity to prepare a defense, potentially leading to the king's swift and impassioned judgment in Esther's favor during the feast.

Furthermore, Esther understood the cyclical nature of fortune, especially for the wicked. Seeing Haman's success at its peak suggested his imminent downfall. By inviting him, Esther heightened his perceived triumph, ironically setting the stage for his demise.

The king commanded, "Tell Haman to hurry and do Esther's bidding." So the king and Haman came to the feast that Esther had prepared.

At the wine feast, the king asked Esther, "What is your wish? And it shall be granted to you. And what is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it shall be fulfilled."

"My wish," replied Esther, "my request..." "If Your Majesty will do me the favor, if it pleases Your Majesty to grant my wish and accede to my request, let Your Majesty and Haman come to the feast which I will prepare for them; and tomorrow I will do Your Majesty's bidding."

Haman left the wine party feeling happy and lighthearted. Until that day, despite all his achievements, Haman had never truly been happy or content. Each time he advanced in prestige and power, he longed for what was still out of reach, diminishing the value he

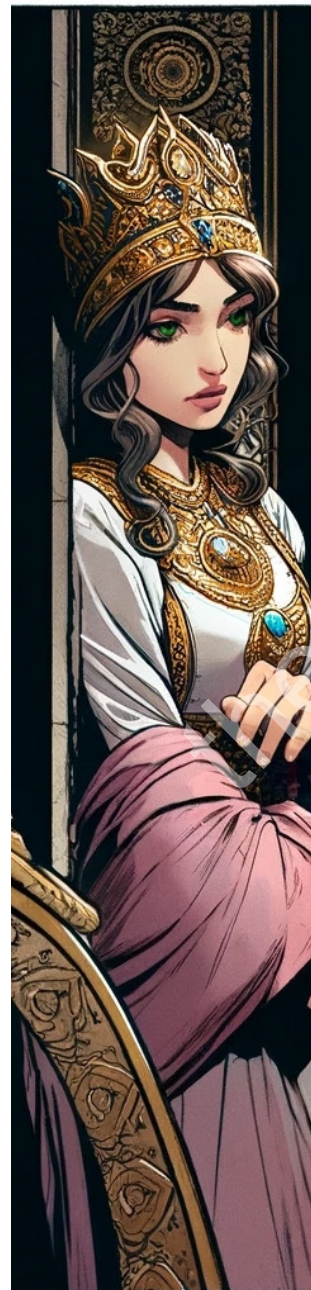
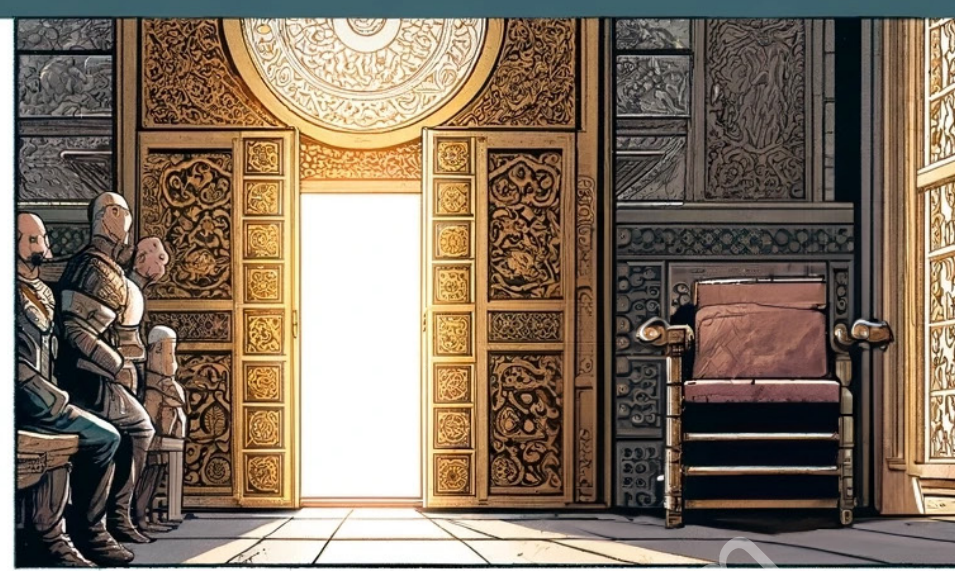
attributed to his previous achievements. But on that particular day, having reached the pinnacle of greatness and honor, and seemingly on par with the king, this was the first time he felt satisfied.

But when Haman saw Mordecai in the palace gate, and Mordecai did not rise or even stir on his account, and showed no fear despite knowing his life was at stake, Haman became filled with rage at him.

Haman wanted to immediately return to the king and accuse Mordecai and push for his execution, but he managed to control his anger and go home instead. He summoned his friends and his wife Zeresh to discuss the matter with them.

Haman bragged to them about his great wealth and his many sons, and all about how the king had promoted him and advanced him above all the other officials and courtiers. Haman's decision to recount his great wealth, numerous sons, and his high status was rooted in a problem he had due to his perceived greatness. Until then, Haman had refrained from acting against Mordecai due to the perceived indignity of having a dispute or legal action against a Jew who was, in Haman's opinion, beneath his dignity to even notice. This sense of self-importance made Mordecai's disrespect seem more egregious, but simultaneously preventing Haman from retaliating directly, as doing so would diminish his own honor.

"What is more," Haman continued, "Queen Esther held a feast, and besides the king she



did not invite anyone but me. And tomorrow as well I am invited by her along with the king." Haman noted that Queen Esther only invited him to her feast, which is significant because typically such a feast would call for all the king's officials to be present. It is unheard of to have a feast for just one or two individuals. Haman's personal invitation, therefore implied, that he was as significant as all the king's officials combined in the queen's eyes.

He further emphasized that he was also invited for the next day, again acknowledging his importance. Haman interpreted this as the queen recognizing his influence over the king, believing she invited him so that he might support her in her request to the king. This, in Haman's perspective, demonstrated that he held greater power than even the queen herself, as she seemed to rely on his favor.

"Yet all this means nothing to me every time I see that Jew Mordecai sitting in the palace gate!" he yelled in a fury.

Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, "Let a gallows be erected, fifty cubits high, and in the morning, ask the king to have Mordecai hanged on it. Then you can go gaily with the king to the feast." This advice was shrewd, paving a path whereby Haman could avenge Mordecai without compromising his own dignity. If Haman were to punish Mordecai solely for not bowing to him, it would be seen as a petty personal vendetta, diminishing Haman's stature. However, if the punishment is framed as a royal decree against rebellion, it would not reflect poorly on Haman. In such cases, the person chosen for punishment is typically the most despised, and the execution is done in a highly visible manner. By hanging Mordecai on a tall gallows, fifty cubits high, it would serve as a warning and spectacle, showing the consequences of defiance.

The proposal pleased Haman, and he erected the gallows.



Chapter 6

AHASHVEROSH DISCOVERS MORDECAI'S UNACKNOWLEDGED ACT OF SAVING HIS LIFE. WHEN HAMAN COMES TO SEEK MORDECAI'S EXECUTION, THE KING INSTEAD ORDERS HAMAN TO PUBLICLY HONOR MORDECAI.

That night, sleep deserted the king, and he ordered the book of records, the chronicles, to be brought; and it was read to the king.

There it was found written that Mordecai had denounced Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs who guarded the threshold, who had plotted to do away with King Ahashverosh.

"What honor or advancement has been conferred on Mordecai for this?" the king inquired. "Nothing at all has been done for him," replied the king's servants who were in attendance on him.

"Who is in the court?" the king asked. For Haman had just entered the outer court of the royal palace, to speak to the king about having Mordecai hanged on the gallows he had prepared for him.

"It is Haman standing in the court," the king's servants answered him. "Let him enter," said the king.

Haman entered, and the king asked him, "What should be done for a man whom the king desires to honor?" Haman said to himself, "Whom would the king desire to honor more than me?"

So Haman said to the king, "For the man whom the king desires to honor, let royal garb which the king has worn be brought, and a horse on which the king has ridden and on whose head a royal diadem has been set;

בלילה ההוא נדדה שנת המלך ויאמר להביא את ספר הזכרונות דברי הימים ויהיו נקראים לפני המלך:

וימצא כתוב אשר הגיד מרדכי על-בגתנא ותרש שני סריסי המלך משמרי הסף אשר בקשו לשלח יד במלך אחשוורוש:

ויאמר המלך מה-נעשה יקר וגדולה למרדכי על-זה ויאמרו נערי המלך משרתיו לא-נעשה עמו דבר:

ויאמר המלך מי בחצר והמן בא לחצר בית-המלך התיצוה לאמר למלך לתלות את-מרדכי על-העץ אשר-הכין לו:

ויאמרו נערי המלך אליו הגה המן עמד בחצר ויאמר המלך יבוא:

ויבוא המן ויאמר לו המלך מה-לעשות ב'איש אשר המלך חפץ ביקרו ויאמר המן בלבו למי יחפץ המלך לעשות יקר יותר ממני:

ויאמר המן אל-המלך איש אשר המלך חפץ ביקרו:

יבאו לבוש מלכות אשר לבש-בו המלך וסוס אשר רכב עליו המלך ואשר נתן בתר מלכות בראשו:

ונתון הלבוש והסוס על-יד-איש משרי המלך הפרתמים והלבישו את-האיש אשר המלך חפץ ביקרו והרביהו על-הסוס ברחוב העיר וקראו לפניו בכה יעשה לאיש אשר המלך חפץ ביקרו:

ויאמר המלך להמן מה-הח את-הלבוש ואת-הסוס כאשר דברת ועשה-כן למרדכי היהודי היושב בשער המלך אל-תפל דבר מכל אשר דברת:

ויקח המן את-הלבוש ואת-הסוס וילבש את-מרדכי וירביהו ברחוב העיר ויקרא לפניו בכה יעשה לאיש אשר המלך חפץ ביקרו:

וישב מרדכי אל-שער המלך והמן נדחף אל-ביתו אבלי וחסוי ראש:

ויספר המן לורש אשתו ולכל-אהביו את כל-אשר קרהו ויאמרו לו חכמיו וורש אשתו אם מרע היהודים מרדכי אשר החלות לנפל לפניו לא-תובל לו כי-נפול תפול לפניו:

עודם מדברים עמו וסריסי המלך הגיעו ויבהלו להביא את-המן אל-המשתה אשר-עשתה אסתר:

and let the attire and the horse be put in the charge of one of the king's noble courtiers. And let the man whom the king desires to honor be attired and paraded on the horse through the city square, while they proclaim before him: This is what is done for the man whom the king desires to honor!"

"Quick, then!" said the king to Haman. "Get the garb and the horse, as you have said, and do this to Mordecai the Jew, who sits in the king's gate. Omit nothing of all you have proposed."

So Haman took the garb and the horse and arrayed Mordecai and paraded him through the city square; and he proclaimed

That night, sleep deserted the king, and he ordered the book of records, the chronicles, to be brought. During that sleepless night, the king realized the gravity of Esther's request. Aware of her repeated emphasis on finding favor in his eyes, he sensed an unfulfilled obligation on his part, likely towards someone who had benefited him greatly. This led him to order the book of records to be brought and read before him.

There it was found written that it was not Haman who had informed the king of the assassination attempt, but Mordecai. This revelation corrected the king's misconception that had led to Haman's elevation, when in truth this honor belonged to Mordecai.

The king inquired, "What honor or advancement

before him: This is what is done for the man whom the king desires to honor!

Then Mordecai returned to the king's gate, while Haman hurried home, his head covered in mourning.

There Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had befallen him. His advisors and his wife Zeresh said to him, "If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish stock, you will not overcome him; you will fall before him to your ruin."

While they were still speaking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hurriedly brought Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared.

has been conferred on Mordecai for this?" This reflects his expectation of two distinct acknowledgments for Mordecai's deed: immediate honor for the act of saving the king's life and future promotion to a higher position among the officials.

"Nothing at all has been done for him," replied the king's servants who were in attendance.

"Who is in the court?" the king asked. By divine providence at that moment, Haman had just entered the outer courtyard of the royal palace, in order to speak to the king about having Mordecai hanged on the gallows he had prepared for him.

"It is Haman standing in the court," the king's servants responded.

"Let him enter," said the king.

Haman entered, and the king asked him, "What should be done for a man whom the king desires to honor?" The king cleverly orchestrated the scenario, knowing Haman would presume the honor was meant for himself. King Ahashverosh intended to use Haman's vanity to benefit Mordecai, the rightful recipient of this honor.

By inquiring specifically about the honor and not mentioning greater elevation or status, Ahashverosh ensured that Haman would not realize the king's thoughts were not actually about him. Haman had already achieved the highest status among the king's officials. Thus, by focusing on honor alone, the king misled Haman to propose lavish honors, which Ahashverosh planned to bestow upon Mordecai instead. This strategy was part of the king's larger plan to transfer the high status and honors from Haman to Mordecai, who truly deserved them.

Haman thought to himself, "Whom would the king desire to honor more than me?" Accordingly he responded "For the man whom the king desires to honor, let royal garb which the king has worn be brought, and a horse on which the king has ridden and on whose head a royal diadem has been set. And let the attire and the horse be put in the charge of one of the king's noble courtiers. And let the man whom the king desires to honor be attired and paraded on the horse through the city square, while they proclaim before him: This is what is done for the man whom the king desires to

honor!"

Haman envisioned himself as the recipient of this honor. His use of plural language in the suggestion indicates that he wanted multiple esteemed individuals to carry out this lavish display of honor, further magnifying the significance and reach of the celebration.

The king, realizing that Haman's rise to greatness was undeserved, was struck by Haman's extreme arrogance. In his eyes this was tantamount to Haman confessing that he wanted to take the king's scepter, seeking nothing less than the kingship itself.

"Quick, then!" said the king to Haman in a fit of rage. "Get the garb and the horse, as you have said, and do this to Mordecai the Jew, who sits in the king's gate. Omit nothing of all you have proposed." The king insisted, for everything should be done by Haman himself without assistance from other courtiers. It was fitting for Haman himself to do this, as he had claimed such unwarranted greatness.

So Haman took the garb and the horse and arrayed Mordecai and paraded him through the city square; and he proclaimed before him: "This is what is done for the man whom the king desires to honor!"

Then Mordecai returned to the king's gate, while Haman hurried home, his head covered in mourning. Thus, Mordecai returned to his elevated status, while Haman descended towards his downfall.



When he arrived at home, Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had befallen him. This was an attempt to to reassure them that the incident was just a coincidence, and there was still hope that he might later succeed in executing Mordecai.

However, his advisors and his wife Zeresh cautioned him for his own good, "If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish stock, you will not overcome him; you will fall before him to your ruin." If Mordecai was of Jewish descent, they reasoned, a people under God's special providence, then it was clear that these events were not happenstance but divine intervention.

Therefore, they suggested that Haman could only succeed if he humbled himself before Mordecai, causing Mordecai to cease his

prayers and repentance, thus allowing Haman to prevail. However, as long as Haman continued his aggression, Mordecai would intensify his service of God, and the Israelites would prevail.

While they were still speaking with him, the king's eunuchs arrived and hurriedly brought Haman to the banquet Esther had prepared. This too was under divine supervision. The eunuchs arrived in the middle of the conversation, hearing what was being discussed among them, including Haman's intention to further persuade the king to have Mordecai executed. It was during this revealing moment that Charbonah, one of the eunuchs present, became aware of the gallows Haman had prepared for Mordecai.



Chapter 7

UPON LEARNING OF HAMAN'S PLOT TO DESTROY ESTHER AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE, KING AHASHVEROSH ORDERS HIS EXECUTION ON THE VERY GALLOWS HAMAN HAD PREPARED FOR MORDECAI.

So the king and Haman came to feast with Queen Esther.

On the second day, the king again asked Esther at the wine feast, "What is your wish, Queen Esther? It shall be granted to you. And what is your request? Even to half the kingdom, it shall be fulfilled."

Queen Esther replied: "If Your Majesty will do me the favor, and if it pleases Your Majesty, let my life be granted me as my wish, and my people as my request."

For we have been sold, my people and I, to be destroyed, massacred, and exterminated. Had we only been sold as bondmen and bondwomen, I would have kept silent; for the adversary is not worthy of the king's trouble."

Thereupon King Ahashverosh demanded of Queen Esther, "Who is he and where is he who dared to do this?"

"The adversary and enemy," replied Esther, "is this evil Haman!" And Haman cringed in terror before the king and the queen.

The king, in his fury, left the wine feast for the palace garden, while Haman remained to plead with Queen Esther for his life; for he saw that the king had resolved to destroy him.

When the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet room, Haman was lying prostrate on the couch on which Esther reclined. "Does he mean," cried the king, "to ravish the queen in my own palace?" No sooner

ויבא המלך והמון לשמות עם-אסתר המלכה:

ויאמר המלך לאסתר גם ביום השני במשתה
היו מה-שאלתך אסתר המלכה ותתנו לך
ומה-בקשתך עד-חצי המלכות ותעש:

ותען אסתר המלכה ותאמר אם-מצאתי חן בעיניך המלך
ואם-על-המלך טוב תנתן-לי נפשי בשאלתי ועמי בבקשתי:

כי נמכרנו אני ועמי להשמיד להרוג ולאבד
ואלו לעבדים ולשפחות נמכרנו החרשתי
לכי אין הצר שיה בגזק המלך: (ס)

ויאמר המלך אחשוורוש ויאמר לאסתר המלכה מי
הוא זה ואיזה הוא אשר-מלאו לבו לעשות כן:

ותאמר אסתר איש צר ואוהב המון הרע הזה
והמון נבעת מלפני המלך והמלכה:

והמלך קם בחמתו ממשתה היון אל-גגת הביתו
והמון עמד לבקש על-נפשו מאסתר המלכה כי
ראה כי-כלתה אליו הרעה מאת המלך:

והמלך שב מגגת הביתו אל-בית משתה היון והמון נפל
על-המטה אשר אסתר עליה ויאמר המלך ה'גם לכבוש את-
המלכה עמי בבית הדבר יצא מפי המלך ופגי המון חפו: (ס)

ויאמר חרבונה אחד מן-הסרסים לפני המלך גם הנה-העץ
אשר-עשה המון למרדכי אשר דבר-טוב על-המלך עמד
בבית המון גבה חמשים אמה ויאמר המלך תלהו עליו:

ויתלו את-המון על-העץ אשר-הבין
למרדכי וחמת המלך שקבה: (פ)

did these words leave the king's lips
than Haman's face was covered.

Then Harbonah, one of the eunuchs
in attendance on the king, said,
"What is more, a gallows is standing
at Haman's house, fifty cubits high,
which Haman made for Mordecai – the
man whose words saved the king."
"Hang him on it!" the king ordered.

So they hanged Haman on the gallows
which he had put up for Mordecai,
and the king's fury abated.



The king and Haman came to feast with Queen Esther. On the second day, the king again asked Esther at the wine feast, "What is your wish, Queen Esther? It shall be granted to you. And what is your request? Even to half the kingdom, it shall be fulfilled."

Achashverosh adds the title "Queen Esther" when referring to her here, signifying the king's increased affection. The suggestion is that even if she asks for something grand, befitting her status as queen, he would grant it to her in this auspicious moment.

Queen Esther replied: "If Your Majesty will do me the favor, and if it pleases Your Majesty, let my life be granted me as my wish, and my people as my request." As explained earlier, the "wish" is what one asks for their own needs, while the "request" is for the benefit of others. Esther is saying that her personal need is nothing other than her own life. Likewise, her request for her people is not wealth or honor, but their salvation from annihilation.

Esther's plea implies that saving her people's lives is so paramount that she would sacrifice her own life, if necessary, to ensure their safety. Her approach to the king is framed in a personal context – her inability to endure the destruction of her people and homeland – yet the essence and ultimate purpose of her plea is the salvation of her people.

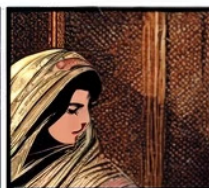
Ahashverosh might have misunderstood Esther's request for her people when she said, "How can I endure to see the evil that will come

to my people?" implying the primary concern was for herself, unable to witness the destruction of her people and homeland. However, Esther valued her people's survival so highly that she would agree to perish alone as long as her people were saved. In this way, her "wish" to the king is about herself, as in "How can I endure to see," but the core of her "request" and its ultimate goal is about her people.

"For we have been sold, my people and I, to be destroyed, massacred, and exterminated." Here Esther presents two arguments: Firstly, she was the primary reason for the decree against her people. That is, Haman's main intention was to destroy her, and he found a pretext against her people so he could later claim she was doomed to death and kill her as well. Secondly, the nature of the "sale" itself was not for the purpose of enslavement but for sheer destruction and extermination.

Esther clarifies to the king how Haman deceived him in two ways: First, Haman told the king, "There is one people," implying a seemingly insignificant nation, while it was actually her people, the nation among whom she belonged, which Haman should have disclosed. Second, in saying "let it be written to destroy them," Haman misled the king to think it was just about abolishing their nation and religion, not their physical destruction, as he in fact sold them for massacre and annihilation.

Therefore, Esther continues: "Had we only been sold as bondmen and bondwomen, I would have kept silent; for the adversary is not worthy of the king's trouble." However, since the sale



was for their destruction, and was based on deceit, it necessitated her intervention.

Countering Haman's claim that the Jews were detrimental to the king, Esther maintained that Haman does not justify the harm he inflicts upon the king's realm. In essence, Haman's existence is more damaging than the alleged harm from the Jews.

Thereupon King Ahashverosh demanded of Queen Esther, "Who is he and where is he who dared to do this?" In his enquiry, the king first addressed everyone present in the house, including Haman, expressing his astonishment about the identity of the person who would commit such an atrocity.

When no one responded, he specifically asked Queen Esther to identify the man. He inquired about two things: first, the identity of the man who committed such an outrage, and second, the reason that incited him to act. This is why he says, "where is he," meaning what was the directive or motive that filled that man's heart to act in such a treasonous manner.

"The adversary and enemy," replied Esther, "is this evil Haman!" And Haman cringed in terror before the king and the queen.

Esther responds to the king's question about the motive behind the atrocious act by stating that it was because Haman is both an adversary and an enemy. She emphasizes these two terms because an adversary actively oppresses another person, while an enemy wishes ill on someone but might not act on it. An adversary

actively oppresses another, while an enemy harbors ill will but may not act on it. Typically, someone excessively cruel can be an enemy before becoming an adversary, with enmity usually fading after vengeance. However, Haman's cruelty was such that he remained an enemy even after causing harm, driven by his deep-seated hatred to oppress the Israelites.

Haman's reaction of cringing in terror before the king and queen illustrates his dilemma. He could have justified his actions to the king, claiming his accusations against the Jews were factual and not borne of enmity. But this would have intensified Esther's anger. Alternatively, pleading with Esther, asserting that he was unaware of her Jewish identity, and promising to advocate for the Jews would have only increased the king's wrath. This would suggest Haman's actions were not rooted in truth but in fear of Esther's reaction, leaving Haman terrified and speechless in the presence of both the king and queen.

The king, in his fury, left the feast for the palace garden, while Haman remained to plead with Queen Esther for his life, for he saw that the king had resolved to destroy him.

When the king left for the palace garden, Haman saw it as a favorable moment and an immediate opportunity to plead for his life directly with Esther. When the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet room, Haman was lying prostrate on the couch on which Esther reclined. The king, already enraged, now perceived Haman's actions as an additional immediate threat to Esther. "Does



he mean," cried the king in astonishment, "to ravish the queen in my own palace?"

No sooner did these words leave the king's lips than Haman's face was covered, which was a Persian custom to cover the face of someone the king is angry with, to quell the king's wrath.

Then Harbonah, one of the eunuchs in attendance, said, "What is more, a gallows is standing at Haman's house, fifty cubits high, which Haman made for Mordecai – the man whose words saved the king."

Harbonah, who had gone to call Haman to the feast and overheard Haman's plot, knew about the gallows. Haman had erected a gallows to hang Mordecai, who was found guilty of no crime. This provided additional proof of Haman meddling, for Mordecai had only brought benefit to the king, informing on the would-be assassins and saving the king's life. It was Mordecai's fortune and heroism, rather, that

angered Haman, prompting his plot to have Mordecai hanged.

It is suggested here that Haman was complicit in conspiring against the king. The mention of the fifty cubit-high gallows on Haman's property suggests that it remained standing and visible to all, which would be seen as a huge insult to the king. While Mordecai was given royal clothing and praised by the king, the gallows for his execution remained on display, indicating that the very person being honored by the king is actually destined to be hanged. There could be no greater rebellion than this!

Recognizing the severity of Haman's betrayal, the king ordered Haman to be hanged on the very gallows he had prepared for Mordecai, symbolizing the fate of all who oppose the king. So they hanged Haman on the gallows which he had put up for Mordecai, and the king's fury abated.



Chapter 8

KING AHASHVEROSH GIVES HAMAN'S PROPERTY TO QUEEN ESTHER. MORDECAI IS PUBLICLY HONORED AND ESTHER PLEADS WITH THE KING TO COUNTERMAND HAMAN'S DECREE AGAINST THE JEWS.

That very day King Ahashverosh gave the property of Haman, the enemy of the Jews, to Queen Esther. Mordecai presented himself to the king, for Esther had revealed how he was related to her.

The king removed his ring, which he had taken back from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai; and Esther put Mordecai in charge of Haman's property.

Esther spoke to the king again, falling at his feet and weeping, and beseeching him to avert the evil plotted by Haman the Agagite against the Jews.

The king extended the golden scepter to Esther, and Esther arose and stood before the king.

"If it pleases Your Majesty," she said, "and if I have won your favor and the proposal seems right to Your Majesty, and if I am pleasing to you – let dispatches be written countermanding those which were written by Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, containing his plot to annihilate the Jews throughout the king's provinces.

For how can I bear to see the disaster which will befall my people! And how can I bear to see the destruction of my kindred!"

Then King Ahashverosh said to Queen Esther and Mordecai the Jew, "I have given Haman's property to Esther, and he has been hanged on the gallows for scheming against the Jews.

בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא נָתַן הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶחָשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ לְאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה אֶת־בַּיִת הַמֶּן צִנֹּר (הַיְהוּדִים) [וּמִרְדֵּכָי בָּא לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי־הִגִּידָה אֶסְתֵּר מַה הוּא־לָהּ:

וַיִּסֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־טַבַּעְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱבִיל מֵהֶמֶן וַיִּתְּנָהּ (לְמִרְדֵּכָי וַתִּשֶׂם אֶסְתֵּר אֶת־מִרְדֵּכָי עַל־בַּיִת הַמֶּן: }ס

וַתּוֹסֶף אֶסְתֵּר וַתְּדַבֵּר לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וַתִּפֹּל לִפְנֵי רַגְלָיו וַתִּבֶךְ וַתַּחֲנֹן־לוֹ לְהַעֲבִיר אֶת־רֵעַל הַמֶּן הָאֲגָגִי וְאֵת מַחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר חָשַׁב עַל־הַיְהוּדִים:

וַיּוֹשֶׁט הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאַסְתֵּר אֵת שְׂרָבֵט הַזָּהָב וַתִּקֶּם אֶסְתֵּר וַתַּעֲמִד לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ:

וַתֹּאמֶר אִם־עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב וְאִם־מִצָּאתִי חַן לִפְנֵי וְכָשֵׁר הַדְּבָר לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְטוֹבָה אֲנִי בְּעֵינָיו יִכְתֹּב לְהַשִּׁיב אֶת־הַסְּפָרִים מִחֲשַׁבַּת הַמֶּן בְּן־הַמַּדְרֵאא הָאֲגָגִי אֲשֶׁר כָּתַב לְאֲבָד אֶת־הַיְהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל־מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ:

כִּי אֵיכָבֵדָה אוֹכַל־וְרָאִיתִי בְרָעָה אֲשֶׁר־יִמָּצֵא אֶת־עַמִּי (וְאֵיכָבֵדָה אוֹכַל־וְרָאִיתִי בְּאַבְדָן מוֹלֵדְתִי: }ס

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶחָשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ לְאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה וּלְמִרְדֵּכָי הַיְהוּדִי הִנֵּה בֵּית־הַמֶּן נִתְּתִי לְאַסְתֵּר וְאֵתוֹ תְּלוּ עַל־הַעֵץ עַל אֲשֶׁר־שָׁלַח יָדוֹ (בַּיְהוּדִים):

וְאַתֶּם בְּתַבּוּ עַל־הַיְהוּדִים כְּטוֹב בְּעֵינֵיכֶם בְּשֵׁם הַמֶּלֶךְ וַחֲתַמּוּ בְּטַבַּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי־כָתַב אֲשֶׁר־נִכְתַּב בְּשֵׁם־הַמֶּלֶךְ וַנַּחֲתוּם בְּטַבַּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ אִין לְהַשִּׁיב:

וַיִּקְרָא סִפְרֵי־הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּעֵת־הַהִיא בַּחֲדָשׁ הַשְּׁלִישִׁי הוּא־חֲדָשׁ סִיוָן בְּשִׁלּוּשָׁה וְעֶשְׂרִים בּוֹ וַיִּכְתַּב בְּכָל־אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה מִרְדֵּכָי אֶל־הַיְהוּדִים וְאֵל הָאֲחַשְׁדָּרְפָּנִים וְהַפְּחוּתִים וְשָׂרֵי הַמְּדִינֹת אֲשֶׁר מִהַדּוֹ וְעַד־כּוּשׁ שֶׁבַע וְעֶשְׂרִים וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה כְּכַתְּבָהּ וְעַם וְעַם כָּל־שָׁנָה וְאֵל־הַיְהוּדִים כְּכַתְּבָם וְכָל־שׁוֹנָם:

וַיִּכְתֹּב בְּשֵׁם הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶחָשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ וַיַּחֲתֶם בְּטַבַּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיִּשְׁלַח סְפָרִים בְּיַד הַרְצָיִם בְּסוּסִים רַכְבֵי הַרְכָּשׁ הָאֲחַשְׁתַּרְתָּנִים בְּנֵי הַרְמָכִים:

אֲשֶׁר נָתַן הַמֶּלֶךְ לַיְהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל־עִיר־וְעִיר לְהַקְהֵל וְלַעֲמִד עַל־נַפְשָׁם לְהַשְׁמִיד וְלְהַרְג וּלְאַבֵּד אֶת־כָּל־חַיִּיל עַם וּמְדִינָה הַצָּרִים אֲתֶם עוֹף וְנִשְׁיָם וְשָׁלַלְם לְכּוֹד:

בַּיּוֹם אַחָד בְּכָל־מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶחָשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ בְּשִׁלּוּשָׁה עָשָׂר לְחֲדָשׁ שְׁנִים־עָשָׂר הוּא־חֲדָשׁ אָדָר:

And you may further write with regard to the Jews as you see fit. [Write it] in the king's name and seal it with the king's signet, for an edict that has been written in the king's name and sealed with the king's signet may not be revoked."

So the king's scribes were summoned at that time, on the twenty-third day of the third month, that is, the month of Sivan; and letters were written, at Mordecai's dictation, to the Jews and to the satraps, the governors and the officials of the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces from India to Nubia: to every province in its own script and to every people in its own language, and to the Jews in their own script and language.

He had them written in the name of King Ahashverosh and sealed with the king's signet. Letters were dispatched by mounted couriers, riding steeds used in the king's service, bred of the royal stud,

to this effect: The king has permitted the Jews of every city to assemble and fight for their lives; if any people or province attacks them, they may destroy, massacre, and exterminate its armed force together with women and children, and plunder their possessions –

on a single day in all the provinces of King Ahashverosh, namely, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, that is, the month of Adar.

The text of the document was to be issued as a law in every single province: it was to be publicly displayed to all the peoples, so

פִּתְשָׁגָן הַכְּתָב הַנֶּהְיָה דָּל בְּכָל־מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה גְלוּי לְכָל־הָעַמִּים וְלַהֲיוֹת (הַיְהוּדִים) [הַיְהוּדִים] (עַתִּידִים) לַיּוֹם הַזֶּה לְהַנְקֵם מֵאִיבֵיהֶם:

הַרְצָיִם רַכְבֵי הַרְכָּשׁ הָאֲחַשְׁתַּרְתָּנִים יִצְאוּ מִבְּהֵלִים וְיִדְחוּפִים בְּדַבַּר הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהִדָּת נִתְּנָה בְּשׁוֹשֶׁן הַבִּירָה: }ס

וּמִרְדֵּכָי יֵצֵא מִלִּפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּלְבוּשׁ מַלְכוּת תְּכֵלֶת וְחֹר וְעֵטָרַת זָהָב גְּדוּלָה וְתַכְרִיחַ בּוּץ וְאַרְגָּמָן וְהַעִיר שׁוֹשֶׁן צְהֵלָה וְשִׁמְחָה:

לַיְהוּדִים הֵיטָה אוֹרָה וְשִׁמְחָה וְשִׁשְׁוֹן וְיָקָר:

וּבְכָל־מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה וּבְכָל־עִיר וְעִיר מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ וְדָתוֹ מִגֵּיעַ שִׁמְחָה וְשׁוֹשׁוֹן לַיְהוּדִים מִשְׁתָּה וַיּוֹם טוֹב וְרַבִּים מִעַמִּי הָאָרֶץ מִתְּיָהוּדִים כִּי־נִפְּל פְּסַד־הַיְהוּדִים עֲלֵיהֶם:

that the Jews should be ready for that day to avenge themselves on their enemies.

The couriers, mounted on royal steeds, went out in urgent haste at the king's command; and the decree was proclaimed in the captial city Shushan.

Mordecai left the king's presence in royal robes of blue and white, with a magnificent crown of gold and a mantle of fine linen and purple wool. And the city of Shushan rang with joyous cries.

The Jews enjoyed light and gladness, happiness and honor.

And in every province and in every city, when the king's command and decree arrived, there was gladness and joy among the Jews, a feast and a holiday. And many of the people of the land professed to be Jews, for the fear of the Jews had fallen upon them.

That very day King Ahashverosh gave the property of Haman, the enemy of the Jews, to Queen Esther. There was an ancient edict that the property of those executed by the king belonged to the king. However, the king wanted to demonstrate that Haman was not hanged for rebelling against him but for his actions against the queen and her nation, the Jewish people.

Therefore, the king gave Haman's house to Esther. Since he was executed on her account, his property rightfully belonged to her. Haman is, therefore, referred to here as "the enemy of the Jews," as his execution was due to his enmity towards them.

Mordecai presented himself to the king, for Esther had revealed how he was related to her. That is, Mordecai was immediately elevated by the king and given permission to present himself before the king whenever he wished, without having to wait to be summoned or for the scepter to be extended to him.

After Ahashverosh seized the ring from Haman and returned it to Mordecai, Queen Esther granted Mordecai two of Haman's most prized possessions – his wealth and the honor bestowed upon him by the king. In one swift move, Mordecai became the rightful owner of Haman's riches and reputation, as the saying goes: "The wicked plot, but the righteous are clothed with honor." With regard to Haman's honor, the king removed his ring and presented it to Mordecai, and in terms of his wealth, Esther put Mordecai in charge of Haman's property.

Esther saw the king grant her other requests but remain silent on the main issue: the salvation of her people. Fear gripped her. She worried the king had already decided against her primary request and was deflecting with other gifts, as someone might do when reluctant to fulfill a beloved's wish. If he had intended to grant her main request, he would have first addressed it before offering other consolations. Therefore, she felt compelled to appeal more intensely and earnestly at this moment.

Esther spoke to the king again, falling at his feet and weeping, and beseeching him to avert the evil plotted by Haman the Agagite against the Jews. The king extended the golden scepter to Esther, indicating permission for Esther to rise and speak. And Esther arose and stood before the king. "If it pleases Your Majesty," she said, "and if I have won your favor and the proposal seems right to Your Majesty, and if I am pleasing to you – let dispatches be written countermanding those which were written by Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, containing his plot to annihilate the Jews throughout the king's provinces."

Esther is asking the king to send couriers to recall the sealed dispatches detailing Haman's plot. This act would avert any disgrace to the king since the ministers are not yet aware of the dispatches' contents. Additionally, she argued that the king shouldn't worry about setting a precedent for changing his mind, as the original decrees were not genuinely his but Haman's plot

Esther's plea provides a rationale against



writing new sealed letters to be opened at the designated time, contradicting the original letters, because of two major issues: The first, "For how can I bear to see the disaster which will befall my people" – immediately until the appointed time arrives? During this period, the Israelites would surely be subject to plunder and disgrace. But the main concern was that when the time arrived, the last letters would not be heeded: "And how can I bear to see the destruction of my kindred!"

King Ahashverosh did not agree but instead suggested a prudent strategy. He said to Queen Esther and Mordecai the Jew, "I have given Haman's property to Esther, and he has been hanged on the gallows for scheming against the Jews." These publicized actions demonstrated that the simple understanding of the first letters, as a call for the genocide of the Jewish people, was in flagrant contempt of the king's will.

He continued "And you may further write with regard to the Jews as you see fit. [Write it] in the king's name and seal it with the king's signet, for an edict that has been written in the king's name and sealed with the king's signet may not be revoked." Instead of recalling Haman's edicts he proposed writing new ones in support of the Jews. Thus, on the appointed day, fearing a fate like Haman's, the ministers would likely disregard the first letters in favor of the second, and help the Jews. The people, unaware of the first letters' contents, wouldn't be informed, as the ministers would conceal them, eliminating any remaining fear or danger.

So the king's scribes were summoned at that time, on the twenty-third day of the third month, that is, the month of Sivan; and letters were written, at Mordecai's dictation, to the

Jews and to the satraps, the governors and the officials of the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces from India to Ethiopia: to every province in its own script and to every people in its own language, and to the Jews in their own script and language.

The reason for waiting until the 23rd of Sivan to dispatch the letters is so the same messengers who had delivered Haman's edicts would also deliver these new ones, ensuring that their words would be believed. They did not return until the 23rd of Sivan, necessitating the wait.

Mordecai took the additional step of including letters specifically to the Jews, thus reinforcing the authority of these new documents, lending them credibility. For the ministers who received both sets of documents, it essentially granted them the discretion to act as they saw fit, since both orders remained effective. However, for those who only received the last letters and not the first, it revealed the intention that they were not given a choice to act as they wished. Since these individuals did not receive the first set of letters, they only had the instructions from the second set. Consequently, the second set of instructions stands and effectively nullifies the first.

Mordecai had them written in the name of King Ahashverosh and sealed with the king's signet. Letters were dispatched by mounted couriers, riding steeds used in the king's service, bred of the royal stud. The letter permitted the Jews of every city to assemble and fight for their lives; if any people or province attacked them, they may destroy, massacre, and exterminate its armed force together with women and children, and plunder their possessions.

When Mordecai issued his decree, he specified that the Jews were to both destroy their



enemies and seize their spoils on the same day. This contrasts with Haman's original decree, who fearing that people would be more focused on looting than carrying out the genocide, specified that only after destroying the Jews on one specific day, their spoils could be taken. Mordecai's intent was for the Jews to focus on vengeance rather than plundering; it would be dishonorable to give the impression that their primary objective was to loot.

On a single day, the Jewish defense was permitted in all the provinces of King Ahashverosh, namely, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, that is, the month of Adar. Mordecai made it clear in his decree that the defensive actions and the spoiling of their enemies would encompass all the provinces of the king, a point which Haman had omitted in his decree. Haman deliberately left out this detail, fearing that the ministers might be reluctant to execute such a sweeping decree, annihilating an entire nation. Haman preferred that each minister think the decree was only applicable to their own province. Mordecai's intention, however, was the opposite: to ensure that everyone knew the situation had turned around.

The text of the document was to be issued as a law in every single province: it was to be publicly displayed to all the peoples, so that the Jews should be ready for that day to avenge themselves on their enemies.

The couriers, mounted on royal steeds, went out

in urgent haste at the king's command; and the decree was proclaimed in Shushan, the capital city. Mordecai cleverly did not issue the decree in Shushan until the couriers had departed. This strategy mirrored the same concern that Haman had previously harbored, which was the fear that by making such announcements known to the enemies of the Jews, it might prompt them to seek advocates with the king to change the decree. Now, Mordecai was concerned that announcing the decree among the Jews' adversaries could lead them to vie for more influence and overturn their plans for defense.

Mordecai left the king's presence in royal robes of blue and white, with a magnificent crown of gold and a mantle of fine linen and purple wool. Mordecai did not assume any greatness until he was certain that there would be hope and salvation for his troubled brethren. Only then did he wear royal robes, not before. In celebration, the city of Shushan rang with joyous cries.

The Jews enjoyed light and gladness, happiness and honor. Jewish people all over were uplifted to a profound sense of joy and visible delight, along with immense honor. When the messengers arrived and the king's decree was delivered to each province and city, there was gladness and joy among the Jews, and they celebrated by feasting. The festival caught on and made an impact on the non-Jewish residents too, many of who professed to be with the Jews, for the fear of the Jews had fallen upon them.



Chapter 9

EMPOWERED BY ROYAL DECREES, THE JEWS DEFEAT THEIR ENEMIES ON THE 13TH OF ADAR, REVERSING THEIR EXPECTED FATE. THE JEWS IN SHUSHAN CONTINUE THEIR DEFENSE ON THE 14TH DAY, WHILE THE OTHER JEWS REST AND CELEBRATE.

And so, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month – that is, the month of Adar – when the king’s command and decree were to be executed, the very day on which the enemies of the Jews had expected to get them in their power, the opposite happened, and the Jews got their enemies in their power.

Throughout the provinces of King Ahashverosh, the Jews gathered in their cities to attack those who sought their harm; and no one could withstand them, for the fear of them had fallen upon all the peoples.

Indeed, all the officials of the provinces – the satraps, the governors, and the king’s stewards – showed deference to the Jews, because the fear of Mordecai had fallen upon them.

For Mordecai was now powerful in the royal palace, and his fame was spreading through all the provinces; the man Mordecai was growing ever more powerful.

The Jews struck all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, with slaughter and destruction, and did as they pleased to those who hated them.

In the captial city Shushan the Jews killed a total of five hundred men.

They also killed Parshandatha,

Dalphon, Aspatha, Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and

ובשנים עשר חדש הוא חדש אדר בשלושה עשר יום זו אשר הגיע דבר המלך ודתו להעשות ביום אשר שברו איבי היהודים לשלוט בהם ונהפוך הוא אשר ישלטו היהודים המה בשנאייהם:

נקהלו היהודים בעריהם בכל מדינות המלך אחשוורוש לשלח יד במבקשי רעתם ואיש לא עמד לפנייהם כי נפל פחדם על כל העמים:

וכל שרי המדינות והאחשודרפנים והפחות ועשי המלאכה אשר למלך מנשאים את היהודים כי נפל פחד מדרכי עליהם:

כי גדול מרדכי בבית המלך ושמעו הולך בכל המדינות כי האיש מרדכי הולך וגדול:

וינו היהודים בכל איבייהם מכת חרב והרג ואבדו ויעשו בשנאייהם כרצונם:

ובשושן הבירה הרגו היהודים ואבד חמש מאות איש:

ואת פרשנדתא ואת דלפון ואת אספתא:

ואת פורתא ואת אדליא ואת ארדתא:

ואת פרמשתא ואת אריסי ואת ארדי ואת וינתא:

ועשרת בני המן בן המדנתא צר כל היהודים הרגו ובבזה לא שלחו את ידם:

ביום ההוא בא מספר ההרגים בשושן הבירה לפני המלך:

ויאמר המלך לאסתר המלכה בשושן הבירה הרגו היהודים ואבד חמש מאות איש ואת עשרת בני המן בשאר מדינות המלך מה עשו ומה שאלתר וינתו לה ומה בקשתר עוד ותעש:

ותאמר אסתר אם על המלך טוב ינתו גם מחור ליהודים אשר בשושן לעשות כדת היום ואת עשרת בני המן יתלו על העץ:

ויאמר המלך להעשות כן ונתנתו דת בשושן ואת עשרת בני המן תלו:

ויקהלו (היהודיים) [היהודים] אשר בשושן גם ביום ארבעה עשר לחדש אדר ויהרגו בשושן שלש מאות איש ובבזה לא שלחו את ידם:

Vaizatha, the ten sons of Haman son of Hammedatha, the foe of the Jews. But they did not lay hands on the spoil.

When the number of those slain in the captial city Shushan was reported on that same day to the king,

the king said to Queen Esther, “In the captial city of Shushan alone the Jews have killed a total of five hundred men, as well as the ten sons of Haman. What then must they have done in the provinces of the realm! What is your wish now? It shall be granted to you. And what else is your request? It shall be fulfilled.”

“If it please Your Majesty,” Esther replied, “let the Jews in Shushan be permitted to act tomorrow also as they did today; and let Haman’s ten sons be hanged on the gallows.”

The king ordered that this should be done, and the decree was proclaimed in Shushan. Haman’s ten sons were hanged:

and the Jews in Shushan gathered again on the fourteenth day of Adar and slew three hundred men in Shushan. But they did not lay hands on the spoil.

The rest of the Jews, those in the king’s provinces, likewise gathered and fought for their lives. They disposed of their enemies, killing seventy-five thousand of their foes; but they did not lay hands on the spoil.

That was on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar; and they rested on the fourteenth day and made it a day of feasting and merrymaking.

But the Jews in Shushan gathered on both the thirteenth and fourteenth days,

ושאר היהודים אשר במדינות המלך נקהלו ועמד על נפשם ונולח מאיביהם והרג בשנאייהם חמשה ושבעים אלף ובבזה לא שלחו את ידם:

ביום שלוש עשר לחדש אדר וזו בארבעה עשר זו ועשה אתו יום משתה ושמחה:

והיהודיים) [היהודים] אשר בשושן נקהלו) בשלושה עשר זו ובארבעה עשר זו וזו בחמשה עשר זו ועשה אתו יום משתה ושמחה:

על כל היהודים (הפרוזים) [הפרזים] הישבים בערי הפרוזות עשים את יום ארבעה עשר לחדש אדר שמחה (ומשתה ויום טוב ומשלח מנות איש לרעהו: {

ויכתב מרדכי את הדברים האלה וישלח ספרים אל כל היהודים אשר בכל מדינות המלך אחשוורוש הקרובים והרחוקים:

לקיים עליהם להיות עשים את יום ארבעה עשר לחדש אדר ואת יום חמשה עשר זו בכל שנה ושנה:

כימים אשר נחו בהם היהודים מאיבייהם והחדש אשר נהפך להם מגון לשמחה ומאכל ליום טוב לעשות אותם מי משתה ושמחה ומשלח מנות איש לרעהו ומתנות לאבניים:

וקבל היהודים את אשר החלו לעשות ואת אשר כתב מרדכי אליהם:

כי המן בן המדנתא האגגי צר כל היהודים חשב על היהודים לאבדם והפול הוא הגולל להם ולאבדם:

ובבאה לפני המלך אמר עס הספור שוב מחשבתו הרעה אשר חשב על היהודים על ראשו ותלו אתו ואת בניו על העץ:

על כל הקראו לימים האלה פורים על שם הפור על כל דברי האגרת הזאת ומה דאו על ככה ומה הגיע אליהם:

קיימו (וקבל) [וקבלו] היהודים א עליהם א ועל זרעם ועל כל הנולדים עליהם ולא יעבור להיות עשים את שני הימים האלה ככתבם וכזמנם בכל שנה ושנה:

והימים האלה נקרים ונעשים בכל דור ודור משפחה ומשפחה מדינה ומדינה ועיר ועיר וימי הפורים האלה

and so rested on the fifteenth, and made it a day of feasting and merrymaking.

That is why village Jews, who live in unwalled towns, observe the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and make it a day of merrymaking and feasting, and as a holiday and an occasion for sending gifts to one another.

Mordecai recorded these events, and he sent dispatches to all the Jews throughout the provinces of King Ahashverosh, near and far,

charging them to observe the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar, every year –

the same days on which the Jews enjoyed relief from their foes and the same month which had been transformed for them from one of grief and mourning to one of festive joy. They were to observe them as days of feasting and merrymaking, and as an occasion for sending gifts to one another and presents to the poor.

The Jews accordingly assumed as an obligation that which they had begun to practice and which Mordecai prescribed for them.

For Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the foe of all the Jews, had plotted to destroy the Jews, and had cast pur – that is, the lot – with intent to crush and exterminate them.

But when [Esther] came before the king, he commanded: “With the promulgation of this decree, let the evil plot, which he devised against the Jews, recoil on his own head!” So they hanged him and his sons on the gallows.

לֹא יַעֲבֹרוּ מִתּוֹךְ הַיְּהוּדִים וְזָכְרוּם לֹא־יִסּוּף מִזֶּרְעָם: (ס)

וְיִתְקַבְּלוּ אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה בְּתִיבֵי חֵטְא וּמְרֻדְבֵי הַיְּהוּדִי
אֶת־כָּל־תְּקוּף לְקַיֵּם אֶת אֲגַרְת הַפָּרִים הַזֹּאת הַשְּׂבִיט:

וַיִּשְׁלַח סְפָרִים אֶל־כָּל־הַיְּהוּדִים אֶל־שִׁבְעַ וְעֶשְׂרִים
וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה מְלֻכּוֹת אַחַשְׁוֵרֶשׁ דְּבָרֵי שְׁלוֹם וְאַמֶּת:

לְקַיֵּם אֶת־יְמֵי הַפָּרִים הָאֵלֶּה בְּזִמְנֵיהֶם כְּאִשְׁרֵי קַיֵּם
עֲלֵיהֶם מְרֻדְבֵי הַיְּהוּדִי וְאֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה וְכְאִשְׁרֵי קַיֵּמוּ
עַל־נַפְשָׁם וְעַל־זֶרְעָם דְּבָרֵי הַצּוֹמוֹת וְזַעֲקָתָם:

וּמֵאֲמַר אֶסְתֵּר קַיֵּם דְּבָרֵי הַפָּרִים הָאֵלֶּה וְנִכְתָּב בְּסֵפֶר: (ס)

For that reason these days were named Purim, after “pur.”

In view, then, of all the instructions in the said letter and of what they had experienced in that matter and what had befallen them,

the Jews undertook and irrevocably obligated themselves and their descendants, and all who might join them, to observe these two days in the manner prescribed and at the proper time each year.

Consequently, these days are recalled and observed in every generation: by every family, every province, and every city.

And these days of Purim shall never cease among the Jews, and the memory of them shall never perish among their descendants.

Then Queen Esther daughter of Abihail wrote a second letter of Purim for the purpose of confirming with full authority the aforementioned letter of Mordecai the Jew.

Dispatches were sent to all the Jews in the hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the realm of Ahashverosh with an

ordinance of “equity and honesty:”

To observe these days of Purim in their proper time, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had decreed for them – and as they decreed for themselves and for

And so, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month – that is, the month of Adar – when the king’s command and decree were to be executed, the very day on which the enemies of the Jews had expected to annihilate them, the opposite happened, and the Jews vanquished their enemies.

According to astrological beliefs of the time, Israel’s star was at its lowest, while Amalek’s (Haman’s lineage) was at its peak, explaining Haman’s choice of this particular day. However, a remarkable reversal occurred. Not only did the adversaries of the Jews fail to overpower them, but they also fell from the height of their power to the depths, while the Jews rose from the brink of destruction to greatness.

In the major fortified cities throughout the provinces of King Ahashverosh, where the king’s officials, deputies, and army were located, the Jews gathered in self-defense, to attack those who sought their harm. In fact, the king provided military protection and active official support to the Jews, to the point that their adversaries feared approaching or confronting them.

Indeed, all the officials of the provinces – the satraps, the governors, and the king’s stewards,

their descendants – the obligation of the fasts with their lamentations.

And Esther’s ordinance validating these observances of Purim was recorded in a scroll.

who had royal authority from Haman’s edict to annihilate the Jews, chose to hide the edict and instead actively supported the Jews against their enemies because the fear of Mordecai had fallen upon them. For Mordecai was highly respected and feared in the royal palace and his fame was spreading throughout all the provinces; the man Mordecai was growing ever more powerful.

Here we learn that Mordecai embodied three prominent roles. Firstly, he held a significant position within the king’s own palace, essentially being the chief of the royal household. Secondly, his fame spread throughout all the provinces, indicating his role as a deputy to the king, responsible for administering the provinces. Lastly, the phrase “the man Mordecai was growing ever more powerful” reflects his military successes in subjugating many regions under King Ahashverosh’s rule.

Jews around the world lashed out at their enemies with the stroke of the sword, asserting their will upon those who hated them. The Jews certainly did not have permission to kill anyone they chose. The authority given to them was specifically to take revenge against their tormentors. After it became apparent that no one was able to stand against them in the major cities, they only targeted known enemies

whose hostility towards the Jews was widely recognized and who had taken initiative in their efforts to harm them.

The distinction between “enemies” and “those who hated them” is significant here. An enemy is one whose enmity is openly displayed, whereas a hater’s animosity is not openly revealed. Hence, the verse specifies that they acted upon their haters “as they wished,” meaning they could publicly denounce and humble them, but this did not extend to killing them as it did with their overt enemies.

In Shushan, the capital city, the Jews killed a total of five hundred men. They also killed Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vaizatha, the ten sons of Haman son of Hammedatha, the foe of the Jews. But they did not lay hands on the spoils.

On that day, the number of those slain in Shushan, the capital city was reported to the king. Since the Jews were only permitted to kill their outright enemies, those whose hostility towards them was well-known and publicly expressed, the large number of those killed indicated the multitude of adversaries who had risen against them. Therefore, the count of the slain was promptly brought before the king. This was to demonstrate the vast number of adversaries arrayed against them, showing that even after the king’s decree, there were still as many as five hundred individuals who dared to stand against the Jews in Shushan and were consequently slain.

Then the king said to Queen Esther, “In the capital city of Shushan alone the Jews have killed a total of five hundred men, as well as the ten sons of Haman. What then must they have done in the provinces of the realm?!” The king, upon learning of the events in Shushan, realized the extensive number of the Jews’ adversaries and the need for additional measures to protect them. He noted that even in Shushan, the capital city where royal authority is strongest, the Jews had to defend themselves against so many adversaries, killing five hundred men. This led the king to ponder the situation in other provinces, where the king’s influence might be less direct, and the Jews possibly faced even greater opposition.

The king assured Esther that her further requests for the safety and defense of the Jews would be granted, saying: “What is your wish now? It shall be granted to you. And what else is your request? It shall be fulfilled.”

“If it please Your Majesty,” Esther replied, “let the Jews in Shushan be permitted to act tomorrow also as they did today; and let Haman’s ten sons be hanged on the gallows.” Her request was intended to instill fear and dread in the enemies of the Jews, indicating that the king’s support for them was still firmly in place.

Esther specifically referred to the city as “Shushan” rather than “Shushan the capital,” because Shushan was divided into two parts: the capital area, where the king and his nobles resided, known as “Shushan the capital,” and the broader city area simply referred to as “Shushan.” On the thirteenth day, the Jews



defended themselves in the capital. Esther's request was that they be allowed to eliminate their remaining enemies in the broader city area on the fourteenth day. Additionally, she asked for Haman's ten sons to be hanged publicly, to further deter any aggression towards the Jewish people.

The king ordered that this should be done, and the decree was proclaimed in Shushan. Haman's ten sons were hanged: and the Jews in Shushan gathered again on the fourteenth day of Adar and slew three hundred men in Shushan. But they did not lay hands on the spoils.

The rest of the Jews, those in the king's provinces, likewise gathered and fought for their lives. They disposed of their enemies, killing seventy-five thousand of their foes; but they did not lay hands on the spoils. This verse specifically addresses the situation in unwalled cities, in contrast to the walled cities where the royal officers resided and where royal troops provided protection, the Jews did not need to actively defend themselves. In contrast, in the rural and smaller unwalled areas, the Jews faced real combat as their enemies indeed took up arms against them. The Jews in these areas had to gather and stand up for their lives, engaging in actual warfare. Hence, the verse specifies that they killed their enemies, indicating a comprehensive defeat, including those of Amalekite descent. In the walled cities, on the other hand, the phrase "they did as they pleased to their enemies" suggests a less violent resolution.

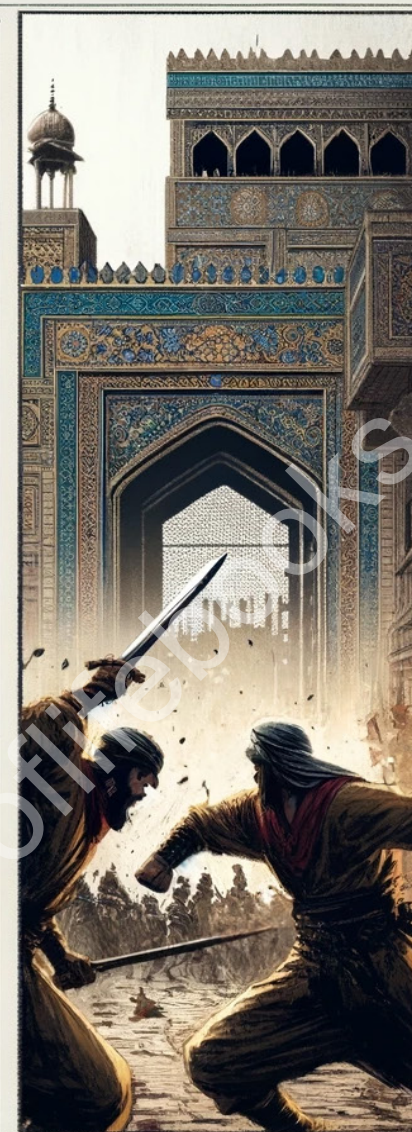
The fighting took place on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar, and they rested on the

fourteenth day and made it a day of feasting and merrymaking. (But the Jews in Shushan gathered on both the thirteenth and fourteenth days, and so rested on the fifteenth, and made it a day of feasting and merrymaking.) That is why village Jews, who live in unwalled towns, observe the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and make it a day of merrymaking and feasting, and as a holiday for sending gifts to one another.

However, in the walled cities where the king's army was present to protect the Jews, these days were not celebrated as days of feasting. In contrast, the village Jews, who were in genuine danger from their enemies and without the king's army's protection, faced imminent peril. Therefore, only the village Jews observed these days as days of feasting and joy.

Mordecai recorded these events. And he sent dispatches to all the Jews throughout the provinces of King Ahashverosh, near and far. That is, Mordecai, having noticed that the Jews in the walled cities had not accepted the celebration of Purim because they were unaware of the full extent of the miracle, wrote to them. They were indeed in danger on that day, as Haman's decree was still technically in effect.

The miracle that occurred was the fear of Mordecai falling upon the officials, leading them to conceal the initial edicts. Therefore, Mordecai felt compelled to explain all these events in detail, informing them that the original edicts had not been revoked and that they, too, were in danger.



The dispatches that Mordecai sent charged the Jewish people, both in walled and unwalled cities, to observe both the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar, every year. The month of Adar was thus transformed for them from one of grief to joy, and from mourning to a festive day. To reflect this transformation, they were to celebrate these days with feasting and happiness, and as an occasion for sending gifts to one another and presents to the poor.

The Jews accordingly assumed as an obligation what they had begun to practice and which Mordecai had outlined for them. That is, all of Israel took upon themselves both obligations: the practices that they “began on their own,” which were the villagers observing the fourteenth day that they had initiated themselves, and also what “Mordecai prescribed” to them, which was for those in the walled cities to observe the fifteenth day.

For Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the foe of all the Jews, had plotted to destroy the Jews, and had cast a pur – that is, a lot – with the intent to crush and exterminate them. But when Esther came before the king, he commanded: “With the promulgation of this decree, let the evil plot, which Haman devised against the Jews, rebound on his own head!” So they hanged him and his sons on the gallows.

For that reason, these days were named Purim, after “pur,” a lot, symbolizing the transformation of Haman’s “pur” (lot) into a triumph for the Jews.

In accordance with Mordecai’s letter explaining

the true danger they faced and the miraculous nature of their salvation, all the Jews undertook, and irrevocably obligated themselves, as well as their descendants, and all who might join them, to observe these two days in the manner prescribed and at the proper time each year.

Mordecai publicized that the annihilation and plunder of the Jewish people was planned for all provinces of the king, while Haman had concealed this fact. Haman had feared that if he would have informed the officers that it was a comprehensive decree, they might be reluctant to destroy an entire nation. Therefore, he wanted each governor to think that the decree was only in his province. Mordecai on the other hand, wanted the opposite – for everyone to know that the lot cast had turned out for the good, for joy and gladness for the Jews in all provinces throughout the empire.

These days are, therefore, recalled and observed in every generation – by every family, every province, and every city. They are remembered through the reading of the Book of Esther and observed by engaging in feasting, joy, and the exchange of gifts of food in every generation. Indeed, these days of Purim shall never cease among the Jewish people, and the memory of them shall never perish among their descendants.

The scholars of the time were reluctant to include the Megillah into the sacred writings. Therefore, Queen Esther, daughter of Abihail wrote a second letter of Purim for the purpose of confirming with full authority the composition of Mordecai the Jew. She sent the Megillah



as it is known today, from “It happened in the days of Achashverosh” to its completion, urging the scholars to canonize it as part of the holy scriptures (the 24 books of the Bible, Tanach), thus establishing its status and ensuring its observance in future generations as a rabbinical injunction.

Dispatches were sent to all the Jews in the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the realm of Achashverosh with an ordinance of “equity and honesty.” These messengers were sent as a means to resolve the rabbinic dispute that had arisen, and to seek the truth according to Jewish law, affirming the Megillah as part of Tanach.

These days of Purim shall be observed at their proper time, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had decreed for them – and as they decreed for themselves and for their descendants – the obligation of the fasts with their lamentations.

And Esther’s ordinance validating these observances of Purim was recorded in a scroll. According to Esther’s words and arguments to the sages, these practices of Purim were established as a perpetual ordinance and the scroll of Esther was canonized with the other sacred writings. This resolved the dispute among the sages who now concurred with Esther’s perspective.



Chapter 10

MORDECAI, REVERED AMONG HIS PEOPLE AND SECOND ONLY TO KING AHASHVEROSH, EXPANDS THE KINGDOM'S INFLUENCE AND DEDICATES HIMSELF TO THE WELFARE OF HIS PEOPLE.

King Ahashverosh imposed tribute on the mainland and the islands.

All his mighty and powerful acts, and a full account of the greatness to which the king advanced Mordecai, are recorded in the Chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia.

For Mordecai the Jew ranked next to King Ahashverosh and was highly

Mordecai, in his administration of the kingdom, was so successful in conquering many territories with the king's army that King Ahashverosh was able to impose a tax on all the lands and islands adjacent to his kingdom.

The strength and might achieved under Mordecai's administration led to the increased

וַיִּשָׁם הַמֶּלֶךְ (אחשֶׁרֶשׁ) אֶמֶס
עַל-הָאָרֶץ וְאֵי הַיָּם:

וְכָל-מַעֲשָׂה תִקְפוֹ וְגִבּוֹרָתוֹ וּפְרָשֵׁת גְּדֻלַּת
מֶרְדֳּכָי אֲשֶׁר גָּדְלוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ הַלְּאִיָּהֶם כְּתוּבִים
עַל-סֵפֶר דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים לְמַלְכֵי מֵדִי וּפְרָס:

כִּי אֶמְרָדְכָי הַיְהוּדִי מִשְׁנֵה לְמֶלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ וְגָדוֹל לַיהוּדִים
וְרָצִי לְרֵב אֲחִיו דָּרָשׁ טוֹב לְעַמּוֹ וְדָבַר שְׁלוֹם לְכָל-יִצְרָעוֹ:

regarded by the Jews and popular with the multitude of his brethren; he sought the good of his people and interceded for the welfare of all his kindred.

stature of King Ahashverosh, who advanced Mordecai to greatness. These events are fully explained in the Book of Chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia.

For Mordecai the Jew ranked second to King Ahashverosh and was highly regarded by the Jews and popular with the multitude of his brethren; he sought the good of his people and interceded for the welfare of all his kindred.

Blessings

after reading the Book of Esther on Purim

AFTER THE READING, IF A QUORUM IS PRESENT, THE READER RECITES THE FOLLOWING AND THOSE LISTENING ANSWER "AMEN":

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who wages our battles, defends our rights, avenges the wrong done to us, punishes our oppressors on our behalf, and brings retribution upon all our mortal enemies. Blessed are You Lord, who exacts payment from all their oppressors; God who delivers. (Amen)

The rose of Jacob thrilled with joy and exulted when they beheld Mordecai garbed in royal blue. You have always been their

salvation, their hope in every generation, to make known that all who place their hope in You shall not be put to shame, nor shall all those who trust in You be disgraced forever. Cursed be Haman who sought to destroy me; blessed be Mordecai the Jew. Cursed be Zeresh the wife of [Haman] who terrified me; blessed be Esther, who [interceded] on my behalf. Cursed be Haman who sought to destroy me; blessed be Mordecai the Jew. Cursed be Zeresh the wife of [Haman] who terrified me; blessed be Esther, who [interceded] on my behalf. Cursed be all the wicked; blessed be all the righteous; and may Charvonah also be remembered favorably.



אם נוכחים בקריאה מנין, הקורא אומר את הברכה הבאה:
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַרְבֵּה.
אֶת רִיבֵנו וְהִדָּן אֶת דֵּינֵנו וְהַנּוֹקֵם
אֶת נַקְמַתֵנו וְהַנִּפְרָע לָנוּ מִצָּרֵינוּ
וְהַמְשַׁלֵּם גְּמוּל לְכָל אוֹיְבֵי נַפְשֵׁנוּ
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָהוָה הַנִּפְרָע לְעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל.
מִכָּל צָרֵיהֶם הָאֵל הַמוֹשִׁיעַ
(אמן)

שׁוֹשְׁנֵת יַעֲקֹב צִהְלָה וְשִׂמְחָה, בְּרֵאוֹתֶם יַחַד תִּכְלַת מֶרְדֳּכָי.
תְּשׁוּעַתֶם הֵייתָ לְנִצָּחַ, וְתַקְוַתֶם בְּכָל דּוֹר וְדוֹר, הַלְּהוֹדִיעַ
שֶׁכֶּל הַיּוֹף לֹא יִבְשׂוּ וְלֹא יִקְלְמוּ לְנִצָּחַ כָּל הַחַוְתִּים בָּהּ. אֲרוּר
הַמֵּן אֲשֶׁר בִּקֵּשׁ לְאַבְדֵי, בְּרוּךְ מֶרְדֳּכָי הַיְהוּדִי, אֲרוּרָה זָרֶשׁ
אִשֶׁת מִפְחִידִי, בְּרוּכָה אִסְתֵר בַּעֲדִי, אֲרוּרִים כָּל הַרְשָׁעִים,
בְּרוּכִים כָּל הַצְּדִיקִים, וְגַם חַרְבוֹנָה זְכוּר לְטוֹב.



tree of life books