

Esther (Greek)

Contents

ESTHER

1[In the second year of the reign of Artaxerxes the great king, on the first day of Nisan, Mardocheus the son of Jairus, the son of Semeias, the son of Cisæus, of the tribe of Benjamin, ^{1b} a Jew dwelling in the city Susa, a great man, serving in the king's palace, saw a vision. ^{1c} Now he was of the captivity which Nabuchodonosor king of Babylon had carried captive from Jerusalem, with Jechonias the king of Judea.

1dAnd this was his dream: Behold, voices and a noise, thunders and earthquake, tumult upon the earth. ^{1e} And, behold, two great serpents came forth, both ready for conflict, and there came from them a great voice, ^{1f} and by their voice every nation was prepared for battle, even to fight against the nation of the just. ^{1g} And, behold, a day of darkness and blackness, tribulation and anguish, affliction and great tumult upon the earth. ^{1h} And all the righteous nation was troubled, fearing their own afflictions; and they prepared to die, and cried to God: ¹ⁱ and from their cry there came as it were a great river from a little fountain, even much water. ^{1k} And light and the sun arose, and the lowly were exalted, and devoured the honourable.

1lAnd Mardocheus who had seen this vision and what God designed to do, having awoke, kept it in his heart, and desired by all means to interpret it, even till night. ^{1m} And Mardocheus rested quiet in the palace with Gabatha and Tharrha the king's two chamberlains, eunuchs who guarded the palace. ¹ⁿ And he heard their reasonings and searched out their plans, and learnt that they were preparing to lay hands on king Artaxerxes: and he informed the king concerning them. ^{1o} And the king examined the two chamberlains, and they confessed, and were executed. ^{1p} And the king wrote these things for a memorial; also Mardocheus wrote concerning these matters. ^{1q} And the king commanded Mardocheus to attend in the palace, and gave him gifts for this service. ^{1r} And Aman the son of Amadathes the Bugæan was honourable in the sight of the king, and he endeavoured to hurt Mardocheus and his people, because of the two chamberlains of the king.]

1sAnd it came to pass after these things in the days of Artaxerxes,—(this Artaxerxes ruled over a hundred and twenty-seven provinces from India)— ² in those days, when king Artaxerxes was on the throne in the city of Susa, ³ in the third year of his reign, he made a feast to his friends, and the other nations, and to the nobles of the Persians and Medes, and the chief of the satraps.

4And after this, after he had shewn to them the wealth of his kingdom, and the abundant glory of his wealth during a hundred and eighty days, ⁵ when, I say, the days of the marriage feast were completed, the king made a banquet

to the nations who were present in the city six days, in the court of the king's house, ⁶ which was adorned with hangings of fine linen and flax on cords of fine linen and purple, fastened to golden and silver studs, on pillars of Parian marble and stone: there were golden and silver couches on a pavement of emerald stone, and of pearl, and of Parian stone, and open-worked coverings variously flowered, having roses worked round about; ⁷ gold and silver cups, and a small cup of carbuncle set out of the value of thirty thousand talents, abundant and sweet wine, which the king himself drank. ⁸ And this banquet was not according to the appointed law; but so the king would have it: and he charged the stewards to perform his will and that of the company. ⁹ Also Astin the queen made a banquet for the women in the palace where king Artaxerxes dwelt.

10Now on the seventh day the king, being merry, told Aman, and Bazan, and Tharrha, and Barazi, and Zatholtha, and Abataza, and Tharaba, the seven chamberlains, servants of king Artaxerxes, ¹¹ to bring in the queen to him, to enthrone her, and crown her with the diadem, and to shew her to the princes, and her beauty to the nations: for she was beautiful. ¹² But queen Astin hearkened not to him to come with the chamberlains: so the king was grieved and angered.

13And he said to his friends, Thus has Astin spoken: pronounce therefore upon this case law and judgment. ¹⁴ So Arkesæus, and Sarsathæus, and Malisear, the princes of the Persians and Medes, who were near the king, who sat chief in rank by the king, drew near to him, ¹⁵ and reported to him according to the laws how it was proper to do to queen Astin, because she had not done the things commanded of the king by the chamberlains.

16And Muchæus said to the king and to the princes, Queen Astin has not wronged the king only, but also all the king's rulers and princes: ¹⁷ for he has told them the words of the queen, and how she disobeyed the king. As then, said he, she refused to obey king Artaxerxes, ¹⁸ so this day shall the other ladies of the chiefs of the Persians and Medes, having heard what she said to the king, dare in the same way to dishonour their husbands. ¹⁹ If then it seem good to the king, let him make a royal decree, and let it be written according to the laws of the Medes and Persians, and let him not alter it: and let not the queen come in to him any more; and let the king give her royalty to a woman better than she. ²⁰ And let the law of the king which he shall have made, be widely proclaimed, in his kingdom: and so shall all the women give honour to their husbands, from the poor even to the rich.

21And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did as Muchæus had said, ²² and sent into all his kingdom through the several provinces, according to their language, in order that men might be feared in their own houses.

2And after this the king's anger was pacified, and he no more mentioned Astin, bearing in mind what she had said, and how he had condemned her. 2 Then the servants of the king said, Let there be sought for the king chaste and beautiful young virgins. 3 And let the king appoint local governors in all the provinces of his kingdom, and let them select fair and chaste young damsels and bring them to the city Susa, into the women's apartment, and let them be consigned to the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women; and let things for purification and other attendance be given to them. 4 And let the woman who shall please the king be queen instead of Astin. And the thing pleased the king; and he did so.

5Now there was a Jew in the city Susa, and his name was Mardocheus, the son of Jairus, the son of Semeias, the son of Cisæus, of the tribe of Benjamin; 6 who had been brought a prisoner from Jerusalem, which Nabuchodonosor king of Babylon had carried into captivity. 7 And he had a foster-child, daughter of Aminadab his father's brother, and her name was Esther; and when her parents were dead, he brought her up for a wife for himself: and the damsel was beautiful.

8And because the king's ordinance was published, many damsels were gathered to the city Susa under the hand of Gai; and Esther was brought to Gai the keeper of the women. 9 And the damsel pleased him, and she found favour in his sight; and he hastened to give her the things for purification, and her portion, and the seven maidens appointed her out of the palace: and he treated her and her maidens well in the women's apartment. 10 But Esther discovered not her family nor her kindred: for Mardocheus had charged her not to tell.

11But Mardocheus used to walk every day by the women's court, to see what would become of Esther. 12 Now this was the time for a virgin to go in to the king, when she should have fulfilled twelve months; for so are the days of purification fulfilled, six months while they are anointing themselves with oil of myrrh, and six months with spices and women's purifications. 13 And then the damsel goes in to the king; and the officer to whomsoever he shall give the command, will bring her to come in with him from the women's apartment to the king's chamber. 14 She enters in the evening, and in the morning she departs to the second women's apartment, where Gai the king's chamberlain is keeper of the women: and she goes not in to the king again, unless she should be called by name.

15And when the time was fulfilled for Esther the daughter of Aminadab the brother of Mardocheus' father to go in to the king, she neglected nothing which the chamberlain, the women's keeper, commanded; for Esther found grace in the sight of all that looked upon her. 16 So Esther went in to king

Artaxerxes in the twelfth month, which is Adar, in the seventh year of his reign. ¹⁷ And the king loved Esther, and she found favour beyond all the other virgins: and he put on her the queen's crown. ¹⁸ And the king made a banquet for all his friends and great men for seven days, and he highly celebrated the marriage of Esther; and he made a release to those who were under his dominion. ¹⁹ But Mardochæus served in the palace. ²⁰ Now Esther had not discovered her kindred; for so Mardochæus commanded her, to fear God, and perform his commandments, as when she was with him: and Esther changed not her manner of life.

²¹And two chamberlains of the king, the chiefs of the body-guard, were grieved, because Mardochæus was promoted; and they sought to kill king Artaxerxes. ²² And the matter was discovered to Mardochæus, and he made it known to Esther, and she declared to the king the matter of the conspiracy. ²³ And the king examined the two chamberlains, and hanged them: and the king gave orders to make a note for a memorial in the royal records of the good offices of Mardochæus, as a commendation.

³And after this king Artaxerxes highly honoured Aman son of Amadathes, the Bugæan, and exalted him, and set his seat above all his friends. ² And all in the palace did him obeisance, for so the king had given orders to do: but Mardochæus did not do him obeisance. ³ And they in the king's palace said to Mardochæus, Mardochæus, why dost thou transgress the commands of the king?

⁴Thus they spoke daily to him, but he hearkened not unto them; so they represented to Aman that Mardochæus resisted the commands of the king: and Mardochæus had shewn to them that he was a Jew. ⁵ And when Aman understood that Mardochæus did not obeisance to him, he was greatly enraged, ⁶ and took counsel to destroy utterly all the Jews who were under the rule of Artaxerxes.

⁷And he made a decree in the twelfth year of the reign of Artaxerxes, and cast lots daily and monthly, to slay in one day the race of Mardochæus: and the lot fell on the fourteenth day of the month which is Adar. ⁸ And he spoke to king Artaxerxes, saying, There is a nation scattered among the nations in all thy kingdom, and their laws differ from those of all the other nations; and they disobey the laws of the king; and it is not expedient for the king to let them alone. ⁹ If it seem good to the king, let him make a decree to destroy them: and I will remit into the king's treasury ten thousand talents of silver. ¹⁰ And the king took off his ring, and gave it into the hands of Aman, to seal the decrees against the Jews. ¹¹ And the king said to Aman, Keep the silver, and treat the nation as thou wilt.

12So the king's recorders were called in the first month, on the thirteenth day, and they wrote as Aman commanded to the captains and governors in every province, from India even to Ethiopia, to a hundred and twenty-seven provinces; and to the rulers of the nations according to their several languages, in the name of king Artaxerxes. ¹³ And the message was sent by posts throughout the kingdom of Artaxerxes, to destroy utterly the race of the Jews on the first day of the twelfth month, which is Adar, and to plunder their goods.

13a[And the following is the copy of the letter; The great king Artaxerxes writes thus to the rulers and inferior governors of a hundred and twenty-seven provinces, from India even to Ethiopia, who hold authority under him. ^{13b} Ruling over many nations, and having obtained dominion over the whole world, I was minded, (not elated by the confidence of power, but ever conducting myself with great moderation and with gentleness,) to make the lives of my subjects continually tranquil, desiring both to maintain the kingdom quiet and orderly to its utmost limits, and to restore the peace desired by all men. ^{13c} But when I had enquired of my counsellors how this should be brought to pass, Aman, who excels in soundness of judgment among us, and has been manifestly well inclined without wavering and with unshaken fidelity, and has obtained the second post in the kingdom, ^{13d} informed us that a certain ill-disposed people is mixed up with all the tribes throughout the world, opposed in their laws to every other nation, and continually neglecting the commands of the kings, so that the united government blamelessly administered by us is not quietly established. ^{13e} Having then conceived that this nation alone of all others is continually set in opposition to every man, introducing as a change a foreign code of laws, and injuriously plotting to accomplish the worst of evils against our interests, and against the happy establishment of the monarchy; ^{13f} we have accordingly appointed those who are signified to you in the letters written by Aman, who is set over the public affairs and is our second governor, to destroy them all utterly with their wives and children by the swords of the enemies, without pitying or sparing any, on the fourteenth day of the twelfth month Adar, of the present year; ^{13g} that the people aforesaid and now ill-disposed to us having been violently consigned to death in one day, may hereafter secure to us continually a well constituted and quiet state of affairs.]

14And the copies of the letters were published in every province; and an order was given to all the nations to be ready against that day. ¹⁵ And the business was hastened, and that at Susa: and the king and Aman began to drink; but the city was troubled.

4But Mardocheus having perceived what was done, rent his garments, and put on sackcloth, and sprinkled dust upon himself; and having rushed forth through the open street of the city, he cried with a loud voice, A nation that

has done no wrong is going to be destroyed. ² And he came to the king's gate, and stood; for it was not lawful for him to enter into the palace, wearing sackcloth and ashes. ³ And in every province where the letters were published, there was crying and lamentation and great mourning on the part of the Jews: they spread for themselves sackcloth and ashes.

⁴And the queen's maids and chamberlains went in and told her: and when she had heard what was done, she was disturbed; and she sent to clothe Mardocheus, and take away his sackcloth; but he consented not. ⁵ So Esther called for her chamberlain Achmetha, who waited upon her; and she sent to learn the truth from Mardocheus. ⁷ And Mardocheus shewed him what was done, and the promise which Aman had made the king of ten thousand talents to be paid into the treasury, that he might destroy the Jews. ⁸ And he gave him the copy of the writing that was published in Susa concerning their destruction, to shew to Esther; and told him to charge her to go in and intreat the king, and to beg him for the people, remembering, said he, the days of thy low estate, how thou wert nursed by my hand: because Aman who holds the next place to the king has spoken against us for death. Do thou call upon the Lord, and speak to the king concerning us, to deliver us from death.

⁹So Achmetha went in and told her all these words. ¹⁰ And Esther said to Achmetha, Go to Mardocheus, and say, ¹¹ All the nations of the empire know, that whoever, man or woman, shall go in to the king into the inner court uncalled, that person cannot live: only to whomsoever the king shall stretch out his golden sceptre, he shall live: and I have not been called to go in to the king, for these thirty days. ¹² And Achmetha reported to Mardocheus all the words of Esther.

¹³Then Mardocheus said to Achmetha, Go, and say to her, Esther, say not to thyself that thou alone wilt escape in the kingdom, more than all the other Jews. ¹⁴ For if thou shalt refuse to hearken on this occasion, help and protection will be to the Jews from another quarter; but thou and thy father's house will perish: and who knows, if thou hast been made queen for this very occasion? ¹⁵ And Esther sent the man that came to her to Mardocheus, saying, ¹⁶ Go and assemble the Jews that are in Susa, and fast ye for me, and eat not and drink not for three days, night and day: and I also and my maidens will fast; and then I will go in to the king contrary to the law, even if I must die. ¹⁷ So Mardocheus went and did all that Esther commanded him.

^{17a}[And he besought the Lord, making mention of all the works of the Lord; and he said, ^{17b} Lord God, king ruling over all, for all things are in thy power, and there is no one that shall oppose thee in thy purpose to save Israel.— ^{17c} For thou hast made the heaven and the earth, and every wonderful thing in the world under heaven. And thou art Lord of all, and

there is no one who shall resist thee the Lord. ^{17d} Thou knowest all things: thou knowest, Lord, that it is not in insolence, nor haughtiness, nor love of glory, that I have done this, to refuse obeisance to the haughty Aman. For I would gladly have kissed the soles of his feet for the safety of Israel. ^{17e} But I have done this, that I might not set the glory of man above the glory of God: and I will not worship any one except thee, my Lord, and I will not do these things in haughtiness. ^{17f} And now, O Lord God, the King, the God of Abraam, spare thy people, for our enemies are looking upon us to our destruction, and they have desired to destroy thine ancient inheritance. ^{17g} Do not overlook thy peculiar people, whom thou hast redeemed for thyself out of the land of Egypt. ^{17h} Hearken to my prayer, and be propitious to thine inheritance, and turn our mourning into gladness, that we may live and sing praise to thy name, O Lord; and do not utterly destroy the mouth of them that praise thee, O Lord.

¹⁷ⁱAnd all Israel cried with all their might, for their death was before their eyes. ^{17k} And queen Esther betook herself for refuge to the Lord, being taken as it were in the agony of death. And having taken off her glorious apparel, she put on garments of distress and mourning; and instead of grand perfumes she filled her head with ashes and dung, and she greatly brought down her body, and she filled every place of her glad adorning with the torn curls of her hair.

And she besought the Lord God of Israel, and said, ^{17l} O my Lord, thou alone art our king: help me who am destitute, and have no helper but thee, for my danger is near at hand. ^{17m} I have heard from my birth, in the tribe of my kindred, that thou, Lord, tookest Israel out of all the nations, and our fathers out of all their kindred for a perpetual inheritance, and hast wrought for them all that thou hast said. ¹⁷ⁿ And now we have sinned before thee, and thou hast delivered us into the hands of our enemies, because we honoured their gods: thou art righteous, O Lord. ^{17o} But now they have not been contented with the bitterness of our slavery, but have laid their hands on the hands of their idols, in order to abolish the decree of thy mouth, and utterly to destroy thine inheritance, and to stop the mouth of them that praise thee, and to extinguish the glory of thine house and thine altar, ^{17p} and to open the mouth of the Gentiles to speak the praises of vanities, and in order that a mortal king should be admired for ever.

^{17q}O Lord, do not resign thy sceptre to them that are not, and let them not laugh at our fall, but turn their counsel against themselves, and make an example of him who has begun to injure us. ^{17r} Remember us, O Lord, manifest thyself in the time of our affliction, and encourage me, O king of gods, and ruler of all dominion. ^{17s} Put harmonious speech into my mouth before the lion, and turn his heart to hate him that fights against us, to the utter destruction of him and of them that consent with him. ^{17t} But deliver

us by thine hand, and help me who am destitute, and have none but thee, O Lord. ^{17u} Thou knowest all things, and knowest that I hate the glory of transgressors, and that I abhor the couch of the uncircumcised, and of every stranger. ^{17w} Thou knowest my necessity, for I abhor the symbol of my proud station, which is upon my head in the days of my splendour: I abhor it as a menstruous cloth, and I wear it not in the days of my tranquillity. ^{17x} And thy handmaid has not eaten at the table of Aman, and I have not honoured the banquet of the king, neither have I drunk wine of libations. ^{17y} Neither has thy handmaid rejoiced since the day of my promotion until now, except in thee, O Lord God of Abraam. ^{17z} O God, who hast power over all, hearken to the voice of the desperate, and deliver us from the hand of them that devise mischief; and deliver me from my fear.

5And it came to pass on the third day, when she had ceased praying, that she put off her mean dress, and put on her glorious apparel. ^{1a} And being splendidly arrayed, and having called upon God the Overseer and Preserver of all things, she took her two maids, and she leaned upon one, as a delicate female, and the other followed bearing her train. ^{1b} And she was blooming in the perfection of her beauty; and her face was cheerful, as it were benevolent, but her heart was straitened for fear. ^{1c} And having passed through all the doors, she stood before the king: and he was sitting upon his royal throne, and he had put on all his glorious apparel, covered all over with gold and precious stones, and was very terrible. ^{1d} And having raised his face resplendent with glory, he looked with intense anger: and the queen fell, and changed her colour as she fainted; and she bowed herself upon the head of the maid that went before her. ^{1e} But God changed the spirit of the king to gentleness, and in intense feeling he sprang from off his throne, and took her into his arms, until she recovered: and he comforted her with peaceable words, and said to her, ^{1f} What is the matter, Esther? I am thy brother; be of good cheer, thou shalt not die, for our command is openly declared to thee, Draw nigh.

2And having raised the golden sceptre he laid it upon her neck, and embraced her, and said, Speak to me. ^{2a} And she said to him, I saw thee, my lord, as an angel of God, and my heart was troubled for fear of thy glory; for thou, my lord, art to be wondered at, and thy face is full of grace. ^{2b} And while she was speaking, she fainted and fell. Then the king was troubled, and all his servants comforted her.] ³ And the king said, What wilt thou, Esther? and what is thy request? ask even to the half of my kingdom, and it shall be thine. ⁴ And Esther said, To-day is my great day: if then it seem good to the king, let both him and Aman come to the feast which I will prepare this day. ⁵ And the king said, Hasten Aman hither, that we may perform the word of Esther. So they both come to the feast of which Esther had spoken.

6And at the banquet the king said to Esther, What is thy request, queen Esther? speak, and thou shalt have all that thou requirest. ⁷ And she said, My request and my petition are: ⁸ if I have found favour in the sight of the king, let the king and Aman come again to-morrow to the feast which I shall prepare for them, and to-morrow I will do the same.

9So Aman went out from the king very glad and merry: but when Aman saw Mardocheus the Jew in the court, he was greatly enraged. ¹⁰ And having gone into his own house, he called his friends, and his wife Zosara. ¹¹ And he shewed them his wealth, and the glory with which the king had invested him, and how he had caused him to take precedence and bear chief rule in the kingdom. ¹² And Aman said, The queen has called no one to the feast with the king but me, and I am invited to-morrow. ¹³ But these things please me not, while I see Mardocheus the Jew in the court. ¹⁴ And Zosara his wife and his friends said to him, Let there be a gallows made for thee of fifty cubits, and in the morning do thou speak to the king, and let Mardocheus be hanged on the gallows: but do thou go in to the feast with the king, and be merry. And the saying pleased Aman, and the gallows was prepared.

6But the Lord removed sleep from the king that night: and he told his servant to bring in the books, the registers of daily events, to read to him. ² And he found the records written concerning Mardocheus, how he had told the king concerning the two chamberlains of the king, when they were keeping guard, and sought to lay hands on Artaxerxes.

3And the king said, What honour or favour have we done to Mardocheus? And the king's servants said, Thou hast not done anything to him. ⁴ And while the king was enquiring about the kindness of Mardocheus, behold, Aman was in the court. And the king said, Who is in the court? Now Aman was come in to speak to the king, that he should hang Mardocheus on the gallows, which he had prepared. ⁵ And the king's servants said, Behold, Aman stands in the court. And the king said, Call him.

6And the king said to Aman, What shall I do to the man whom I wish to honour? And Aman said within himself, Whom would the king honour but myself? ⁷ and he said to the king, As for the man whom the king wishes to honour, ⁸ let the king's servants bring the robe of fine linen which the king puts on, and the horse on which the king rides, ⁹ and let him give it to one of the king's noble friends, and let him array the man whom the king loves; and let him mount him on the horse, and proclaim through the street of the city, saying, Thus shall it be done to every man whom the king honours. ¹⁰ Then the king said to Aman, Thou hast well said: so do to Mardocheus the Jew, who waits in the palace, and let not a word of what thou hast spoken be neglected.

11So Aman took the robe and the horse, and arrayed Mardocheus, and mounted him on the horse, and went through the street of the city, and proclaimed, saying, Thus shall it be to every man whom the king wishes to honour.

12And Mardocheus returned to the palace: but Aman went home mourning, and having his head covered. ¹³ And Aman related the events that had befallen him to Zosara his wife, and to his friends: and his friends and his wife said to him, If Mardocheus be of the race of the Jews, and thou hast begun to be humbled before him, thou wilt assuredly fall, and thou wilt not be able to withstand him, for the living God is with him. ¹⁴ While they were yet speaking, the chamberlains arrived, to hasten Aman to the banquet which Esther had prepared.

7So the king and Aman went in to drink with the queen. ² And the king said to Esther at the banquet on the second day, What is it, queen Esther? and what is thy request, and what is thy petition? and it shall be done for thee, to the half of my kingdom. ³ And she answered and said, If I have found favour in the sight of the king, let my life be granted to my petition, and my people to my request. ⁴ For both I and my people are sold for destruction, and pillage, and slavery; both we and our children for bondmen and bondwomen: and I consented not to it, for the slanderer is not worthy of the king's palace. ⁵ And the king said, Who is this that has dared to do this thing? ⁶ And Esther said, The adversary is Aman, this wicked man. Then Aman was troubled before the king and the queen.

7And the king rose up from the banquet to go into the garden: and Aman began to intreat the queen; for he saw that he was in an evil case.

8And the king returned from the garden; and Aman had fallen upon the bed, intreating the queen. And the king said, Wilt thou even force my wife in my house? And when Aman heard it, he changed countenance. ⁹ And Bugathan, one of the chamberlains, said to the king, Behold, Aman has also prepared a gallows for Mardocheus, who spoke concerning the king, and a gallows of fifty cubits high has been set up in the premises of Aman. And the king said, Let him be hanged thereon. ¹⁰ So Aman was hanged on the gallows that had been prepared for Mardocheus: and then the king's wrath was appeased.

8And in that day king Artaxerxes gave to Esther all that belonged to Aman the slanderer: and Mardocheus was called by the king; for Esther had shewn that he was related to her. ² And the king took the ring which he had taken away from Aman, and gave it to Mardocheus: and Esther appointed Mardocheus over all that had been Aman's.

3And she spoke yet again to the king, and fell at his feet, and besought him to do away the mischief of Aman, and all that he had done against the Jews. ⁴ Then the king stretched out to Esther the golden sceptre: and Esther arose to stand near the king. ⁵ And Esther said, If it seem good to thee, and I have found favour in thy sight, let an order be sent that the letters sent by Aman may be reversed, that were written for the destruction of the Jews, who are in thy kingdom. ⁶ For how shall I be able to look upon the affliction of my people, and how shall I be able to survive the destruction of my kindred?

7And the king said to Esther, If I have given and freely granted thee all that was Aman's, and hanged him on a gallows, because he laid his hands upon the Jews, what dost thou yet further seek? ⁸ Write ye also in my name, as it seems good to you, and seal it with my ring: for whatever orders are written at the command of the king, and sealed with my ring, it is not lawful to gainsay them.

9So the scribes were called in the first month, which is Nisan, on the three and twentieth day of the same year; and orders were written to the Jews, whatever the king had commanded to the local governors and chiefs of the satraps, from India even to Ethiopia, a hundred and twenty-seven satraps, according to the several provinces, according to their dialects.

10And they were written by order of the king, and sealed with his ring, and they sent the letters by the posts: ¹¹ wherein he charged them to use their own laws in every city, and to help each other, and to treat their adversaries, and those who attacked them, as they pleased, ¹² on one day in all the kingdom of Artaxerxes, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is Adar.

12aAnd the following is the copy of the letter of the orders.

12b[The great king Artaxerxes sends greeting to the rulers of provinces in a hundred and twenty-seven satrapies, from India to Ethiopia, even to those who are faithful to our interests. ^{12c} Many who have been frequently honoured by the most abundant kindness of their benefactors have conceived ambitious designs, and not only endeavour to hurt our subjects, but moreover, not being able to bear prosperity, they also endeavour to plot against their own benefactors. ^{12d} And they not only would utterly abolish gratitude from among men, but also, elated by the boastings of men who are strangers to all that is good, they suppose that they shall escape the sin-hating vengeance of the ever-seeing God. ^{12e} And oftentimes evil exhortation has made partakers of the guilt of shedding innocent blood, and has involved in irremediable calamities, many of those who were appointed to offices of authority, who had been entrusted with the management of their friends'

affairs; ^{12f} while men, by the false sophistry of an evil disposition, have deceived the simple candour of the ruling powers. ^{12g} And it is possible to see this, not so much from more ancient traditory accounts, as it is immediately in your power to see it by examining what things have been wickedly perpetrated by the baseness of men unworthily holding power. ^{12h} And it is right to take heed with regard to the future, that we may maintain the government in undisturbed peace for all men, ¹²ⁱ adopting needful changes, and ever judging those cases which come under our notice, with truly equitable decision.

^{12k}For whereas Aman, a Macedonian, the son of Amadathes, in reality an alien from the blood of the Persians, and differing widely from our mild course of government, having been hospitably entertained by us, ^{12l} obtained so large a share of our universal kindness, as to be called our father, and to continue the person next to the royal throne, revered of all; ^{12m} he, however, overcome by the pride of his station, endeavoured to deprive us of our dominion, and our life; ¹²ⁿ having by various and subtle artifices demanded for destruction both Mardochæus our deliverer and perpetual benefactor, and Esther the blameless consort of our kingdom, with their whole nation. ^{12o} For by these methods he thought, having surprised us in a defenceless state, to transfer the dominion of the Persians to the Macedonians. ^{12p} But we find that the Jews, who have been consigned to destruction by the most abominable of men, are not malefactors, but living according to the justest laws, ^{12q} and being the sons of the living God, the most high and mighty, who maintains the kingdom, to us as well as to our forefathers, in the most excellent order.

^{12r}Ye will therefore do well in refusing to obey the letters sent by Aman the son of Amadathes, because he that has done these things, has been hanged with his whole family at the gates of Susa, Almighty God having swiftly returned to him a worthy recompence. ^{12s} We enjoin you then, having openly published a copy of this letter in every place, to give the Jews permission to use their own lawful customs, and to strengthen them, that on the thirteenth of the twelfth month Adar, on the self-same day, they may defend themselves against those who attacked them in a time of affliction. ^{12t} For in the place of the destruction of the chosen race, Almighty God has granted them this time of gladness.

^{12u}Do ye therefore also, among your notable feasts, keep a distinct day with all festivity, that both now and hereafter it may be a day of deliverance to us and those who are well disposed toward the Persians, but to those that plotted against us a memorial of destruction. ^{12x} And every city and province collectively, which shall not do accordingly, shall be consumed with vengeance by spear and fire: it shall be made not only inaccessible to men, but also most hateful to wild beasts and birds for ever.] ¹³ And let the copies

be posted in conspicuous places throughout the kingdom, and let all the Jews be ready against this day, to fight against their enemies.

14So the horsemen went forth with haste to perform the king's commands; and the ordinance was also published in Susa.

15And Mardocheus went forth robed in the royal apparel, and wearing a golden crown, and a diadem of fine purple linen: and the people in Susa saw it and rejoiced. ¹⁶ And the Jews had light and gladness, ¹⁷ in every city and province wherever the ordinance was published: wherever the proclamation took place, the Jews had joy and gladness, feasting and mirth: and many of the Gentiles were circumcised, and became Jews, for fear of the Jews.

9For in the twelfth month, on the thirteenth day of the month which is Adar, the letters written by the king arrived. ² In that day the adversaries of the Jews perished: for no one resisted, through fear of them. ³ For the chiefs of the satraps, and the princes and the royal scribes, honoured the Jews; for the fear of Mardocheus lay upon them. ⁴ For the order of the king was in force, that he should be celebrated in all the kingdom. ⁶ And in the city Susa the Jews slew five hundred men: ⁷ both Pharsannes, and Delphon and Phasga, ⁸ and Pharadatha, and Barea, and Sarbaca, ⁹ and Marmasima, and Rupheus, and Arsæus, and Zabuthæus, ¹⁰ the ten sons of Aman the son of Amadathes the Bugæan, the enemy of the Jews, and they plundered their property on the same day: ¹¹ and the number of them that perished in Susa was rendered to the king. ¹² And the king said to Esther, The Jews have slain five hundred men in the city Susa; and how, thinkest thou, have they used them in the rest of the country? What then dost thou yet ask, that it may be done for thee?

13And Esther said to the king, Let it be granted to the Jews so to treat them to-morrow as to hang the ten sons of Aman. ¹⁴ And he permitted it to be so done; and he gave up to the Jews of the city the bodies of the sons of Aman to hang. ¹⁵ And the Jews assembled in Susa on the fourteenth day of Adar, and slew three hundred men, but plundered no property.

16And the rest of the Jews who were in the kingdom assembled, and helped one another, and obtained rest from their enemies: for they destroyed fifteen thousand of them on the thirteenth day of Adar, but took no spoil. ¹⁷ And they rested on the fourteenth of the same month, and kept it as a day of rest with joy and gladness. ¹⁸ And the Jews in the city Susa assembled also on the fourteenth day and rested; and they kept also the fifteenth with joy and gladness. ¹⁹ On this account then it is that the Jews dispersed in every foreign land keep the fourteenth of Adar as a holy day with joy, sending portions each to his neighbour.

20And Mardocheus wrote these things in a book, and sent them to the Jews, as many as were in the kingdom of Artaxerxes, both them that were near and them that were afar off, ²¹ to establish these as joyful days, and to keep the fourteenth and fifteenth of Adar; ²² for on these days the Jews obtained rest from their enemies: and as to the month, which was Adar, in which a change was made for them, from mourning to joy, and from sorrow to a good day, to spend the whole of it in good days of feasting and gladness, sending portions to their friends, and to the poor.

23And the Jews consented to this accordingly as Mardocheus wrote to them, ²⁴ shewing how Aman the son of Amadathes the Macedonian fought against them, how he made a decree and cast lots to destroy them utterly; ²⁵ also how he went in to the king, telling him to hang Mardocheus: but all the calamities he tried to bring upon the Jews came upon himself, and he was hanged, and his children. ²⁶ Therefore these days were called Phuræ, because of the lots; (for in their language they are called Phuræ;) because of the words of this letter, and because of all they suffered on this account, and all that happened to them. ²⁷ And Mardocheus established it, and the Jews took upon themselves, and upon their seed, and upon those that were joined to them to observe it, neither would they on any account behave differently: but these days were to be a memorial kept in every generation, and city, and family, and province. ²⁸ And these days of the Phuræ, said they, shall be kept for ever, and their memorial shall not fail in any generation.

29And queen Esther, the daughter of Aminadab, and Mardocheus the Jew, wrote all that they had done, and the confirmation of the letter of Phuræ. ³¹ And Mardocheus and Esther the queen appointed a fast for themselves privately, even at that time also having formed their plan against their own health. ³² And Esther established it by a command for ever, and it was written for a memorial.

10And the king levied a tax upon his kingdom both by land and sea. ² And as for his strength and valour, and the wealth and glory of his kingdom, behold, they are written in the book of the Persians and Medes, for a memorial. ³ And Mardocheus was viceroy to king Artaxerxes, and was a great man in the kingdom, and honoured by the Jews, and passed his life beloved of all his nation.

3a[And Mardocheus said, These things have been done of God. ^{3b} For I remember the dream which I had concerning these matters: for not one particular of them has failed. ^{3c} There was the little fountain, which became a river, and there was light, and the sun, and much water. The river is Esther, whom the king married, and made queen. ^{3d} And the two serpents are I and Aman. ^{3e} And the nations are those nations that combined to destroy the

name of the Jews. ^{3f} But as for my nation, this is Israel, even they that cried to God, and were delivered: for the Lord delivered his people, and the Lord rescued us out of all these calamities; and God wrought such signs and great wonders as have not been done among the nations. ^{3g} Therefore did he ordain two lots, one for the people of God, and one for all the other nations. ^{3h} And these two lots came for an appointed season, and for a day of judgment, before God, and for all the nations. ³ⁱ And God remembered his people, and vindicated his inheritance. ^{3k} And they shall observe these days, in the month Adar, on the fourteenth and on the fifteenth day of the month, with an assembly, and joy and gladness before God, throughout the generations for ever among his people Israel.

3lIn the fourth year of the reign of Ptolemy and Cleopatra, Dositheus, who said that he was a priest and a Levite, and Ptolemy his son, brought in the published letter of Phruræ, which they said existed, and which Lysimachus the son of Ptolemy, who was in Jerusalem, had interpreted.]