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Ester

Introduction

This account tells about the life of a young Jewish woman named Ester. These events happened back when King Ahashverosh (more widely known as King Xerxes) ruled over the kingdom of Paras. After Queen Vashti was banished for refusing to dance in front the king's guests at a drinking party, Ester was chosen as the new queen without revealing her Jewish background. But there was a high official called Haman who was offended by Ester's Jewish guardian and in his anger, determined to annihilate all of the Yehudim from the kingdom. This account reveals how Eter's courage and her love for her Jewish people leads her to help them and eventually helps to save their lives.
The account also reveals the source of a Jewish feast named 'Purim', which to this day is a time when Jewish people celebrate how God saved them from their enemy, Haman.

Main components of this account

Ester becomes Queen of Paras *1:1–2:23*
Haman's threat to the Yehudim *3:1–5:14*
Haman's execution *6:1–7:10*
The Jewish people destroy their enemies *8:1–10:3*

Lighter type marks additions. Underscores join parts of a single source word.
Struck words are untranslated. The ◘ sign marks a verse with no text.
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Empress Vashti refuses Emperor Ahashverosh

1:1 The following events happened during the reign of Emperor Ahashverosh (Ahasuerus/Xerxes).[1] (Also known as King Ahashverosh, he ruled the 127 provinces of Paras (Persia) extending from Hodu to Kush (Ethiopia).) **2** In those days, he ruled his empire from Shushan (Susa),[2] city.

3 In the third year of his reign, he hosted a celebration for all of his officials and for every important person who worked for him, the wealthy landowners, the officials of the provinces, as well as the officers who served in the army of the combined empire of Paras and Maday (Media). He was present in person **4** to host the six-month celebration which, displayed the incredible wealth and prestige of his empire and his personal wealth and power.

5 At the end of that time, the emperor hosted another celebration, but this time for all the people in the royal fort in Shushan, from the leading citizens to the least prestigious. He held this celebration over an entire week in the enclosed garden of the royal palace. **6** There were white and blue curtains hanging from white and purple cords attached to silver rings on marble pillars. The guests reclined on gold and silver couches set on a mosaic floor made of red and white marble, mother-of-pearl and other expensive stones. **7** Drinks were served in golden goblets, and each one was a unique design. The king's wine seemed limitless as he displayed his generosity, **8** and it was served according to his rule: there was no compulsion to drink, but his servants were to give each guest however much they wanted.

9 Meanwhile, Queen Vashti was hosting a celebration for the women in a different part of the royal palace.

10 On the last day of the celebrations, when the emperor was pleasantly tipsy, he ordered seven of his chief servants (Mehuman, Bizta, Harvona, Bigta, Avagta, Zetar, and Karkas) **11** to bring Queen Vashti to him, wearing her royal crown, in order to show the officials and other people how good-looking she was, because she was very beautiful. **12** The servants told her Ahashverosh's (Ahasuerus'/Xerxes') command, but Queen Vashti refused to come. When they reported back to Ahashverosh, he was furious and sat there raging for a while.

13–14 Eventually he discussed it with his close advisors who knew the law and could make good decisions. (These seven officials; Karshena, Shetar, Admata, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena and Memukan; were from various places. They advised the emperor personally, so were the most powerful officials in the empire.) **15** 'According to our law,' he asked, 'what should be done with Empress Vashti, since she refused to obey my command when the servants passed it on to her?'

16 Memukan replied, addressing the whole group, 'Empress Vashti has done wrong, and not only against the emperor. She has also done wrong against all the officials and people groups of the empire. **17** Soon women all over the empire will hear about what the empress did and they'll say, "Emperor Ahashverosh commanded his servants to bring Empress Vashti to him, but she didn't go!" Then women will stop respecting their husbands. **18** Even today, the important wives in the empire will hear what the empress did and start doing the same to their husbands; it will result in contempt on her part and anger on his. **19** If it pleases you to do so, your majesty, you should personally issue a royal decree and have it added to the laws of Paras (Persia) and Maday (Media) which cannot be repealed. This decree should say that Vashti can never again come into your presence. Then you should choose a different woman for the royal position – someone who's better than her. **20** Have your decree proclaimed throughout your empire, even though it's so huge, and then all women, what-

1 **RV 1:1 · Cross-ref.** Ezr 4:6.

2 **RV 1:2 · Note** Known as 'Susa' in many 20th century translations, even though earlier English translations often got it correct.

ever their status or position, will respect their husbands.'

21 Memukan's advice seemed like a good idea to the emperor and his officials, so that's what they did. **22** They wrote letters to every province using its own alphabet and to each people group in its own language. The letters said that men should be the masters over their wives and children, and that a husband should be able to give orders to his wife in his own language and that she should understand and obey him.

Beautiful Ester enters the king's harem

2:1 Some time later when King Ahashverosh (Ahasuerus/Xerxes) no longer felt so angry, he started to miss Vashti. But when she'd disobeyed his command, he had made a decree that she could never come into his presence again. **2** So some of the young men who served the king suggested to him, "Your majesty, you should get a new wife for yourself. You could tell your servants to look for young virgins who are very beautiful. **3** You could assign officers in each province of your empire to bring every virgin who is very beautiful here to your capital city of Shushan (Susa). They could stay in the harem for virgins under the custody of Hegay, the castrated royal guardian who takes care of the young women who live there and he could arrange for them to receive beauty treatments. **4** Then you could decide which young woman you like best and then make her queen instead of Vashti."

The king liked what they suggested, so he did it.

5 At that time, there was a Jewish man named Mordekai living in the capital city of Shushan. (He was from the tribe of Benyamin: his father was Yair, his grandfather was Shimei, and his great-grandfather was Kish **6** who'd been taken away from Yerushalem (Jerusalem) and led to Bavel (Babylon) when King Nevukadnetsar (Nebuchadnezzar) of Bavel had exiled Yekaneyah, the king of Yehudah (Judah), along with many of his people.)[3] **7** Now Mordekai was taking care of his cousin, who was an orphan. When her father and mother had died, Mordekai had adopted her as his own daughter. Her Hebrew name was Hadasah, and her Persian name was Ester. Ester was now a young woman and she was exceptionally attractive.

8 So when the king's command and decree became known, many young women were being brought into the capital city of Shushan and placed under Hegay's charge, and this is what happened to Ester. (Hegay was the overseer of the women.) **9** Hegay was very impressed with Ester, and he treated her favourably. He quickly arranged for Ester to receive her beauty treatments and her allotment of food, as well as choosing seven female servants from the king's palace and assigning them to be her personal attendants. He also moved Ester and her attendants to the best rooms in the harem for virgins. **10** (Ester hadn't revealed her family ties or her Jewishness to anyone, because Mordekai had instructed her not to.)

11 Every day Mordekai would walk around in front of the courtyard of the women's harem to find out from others how Ester was doing and how she was being treated.

12 Each young woman would get twelve months of beauty treatment according to the Persian law for women—there would be six months of applying oil of myrrh, then six months of perfumes and other lotions designed for women. Then their turn would come, one at a time, to be taken to King Ahashverosh (Ahasuerus/Xerxes). **13** The young woman was allowed to take whatever she wanted from the harem when she went to the king's house. **14** She'd be taken across in the evening, and in the morning she'd be led out to the other harem which was for the concubines. (That harem was overseen by Sha'ashgaz, another castrated royal guardian.) The women taken there wouldn't go again to the king's house unless he had especially liked them and summoned her back by name.

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3 **RV 2:6 · Cross-ref.** 2Ki 24:10-16; 2Ch 36:10.

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Ester becomes queen

15 Now Ester was the daughter of Mordekai's uncle, Avihayil, from whom Mordekai had adopted her as his own daughter. When it was her turn to go to the king, she didn't ask for anything other than what Hegay, the king's trusted official in charge of the harem, had advised, and everyone who saw Ester liked her.
16 So Ester was taken to King Ahashverosh (Ahasuerus/Xerxes) at his royal palace in January, in the seventh year of his reign, 17 and the king loved Ester more than any of the other women. He treated her more kindly and more favourably than any of the other young women who had become his concubines. He put a royal crown on her head and made her the new queen to replace Vashti. 18 Then the king hosted a large celebration and invited all his officials and servants to a feast to celebrate Ester becoming queen. He proclaimed that this would be a time to celebrate for people in all of the provinces of his empire when they wouldn't have to pay taxes, and he gave many generous gifts.

Mordekai and Ester earn the king's favour

19 Later on, King Ahashverosh (Ahasuerus/Xerxes) had his officers bring more virgins to Shushan (Susa). During this time, Mordekai had been given a position by the king so he sat there at the king's gate. 20 Ester had still not told anyone that she was Jewish because Mordekai had warned her not to tell anyone. What's more, she continued to follow all of Mordekai's instructions, just as she had done when she was still under his guardianship.
21 One day when Mordekai was on duty at the king's gate, two of the king's guards who protected the doorway to the king's private rooms became angry with the king and so they planned to assassinate King Ahashverosh. (Their names were Bigtan and Teresh.) 22 But when Mordekai heard what they were planning, he told Queen Ester about it and she told the king, explaining that Mordekai had given her the information. 23 When the matter was investigated and the facts discovered, both conspirators were impaled on sharpened wooden poles, and in the presence of the king, the incident was recorded in the royal record of events.

Haman plans to annihilate the Yehudim

3:1 Some time later, King Ahashverosh (Ahasuerus/Xerxes) promoted Haman, one of his officials (and the son of Hamedata who was a descendant of Agag). The king gave Haman a very important position—more important than any of his other officials. 2 Then the king commanded that all his other officials had to bow down in front of Haman to honour him, and they were doing this at the king's gate, except for Mordekai who refused to bow down to reverence Haman.
3 "Why are you disobeying the king's command?" asked the other royal servants at the king's gate. 4 Mordekai told them that it was because he was a Yehudi (Jew) (and Yehudim (Jews) only worship Yahweh). He didn't listen to their warnings so they told Haman about it to see if he would tolerate Mordekai in keeping refusing to bow down. 5 When Haman saw that Mordekai would not bow down to him or show him reverence, he was furious. 6 But Haman despised the idea of just punishing Mordekai because he'd been told that Mordekai didn't bow to him because Mordekai was a Yehudi. So Haman decided to annihilate all of Mordekai's people, i.e., all the Yehudim throughout the kingdom of Ahashverosh.
7 In early April of the twelfth year of King Ahashverosh' reign, Haman got his servants to throw dice to select the best month and the best day to kill the Yehudim, and the 13th of March was chosen.
8 Then Haman went to King Ahashverosh and said, "Your Majesty, there is a certain group of people who live among the other peoples in every province of your empire. They have their own set of laws, so they don't obey your laws. It's not good for you to allow them to continue to live in your empire. 9 Your majesty, if you approve of this plan, then write a decree saying that all of the Yehudim must be destroyed. When they're dead, we can take all of their possessions, and from that I will give 300 tons of

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silver to your administrators for them to put into your royal treasuries."

10 This seemed sensible to the king so he removed his signet ring from his finger and he gave it[4] to Haman (the son of Hamedata, the Agagi, the adversary of the Yehudim). **11** The king told Haman, "You can keep the money for yourself, and you can do whatever you want to do with those people."

12 On the thirteenth day of that same month, Haman called in the royal scribes, and he dictated a letter to them. He told them to send copies to the royal officials, the governors of each province, and the leaders of each people group within the empire. The scribes translated the letter so it could be sent to each province using its own alphabet and to each people group in its own language. To show that he was sending the letter under the king's own authority, Haman sealed each copy of the letter with the ring that had the king's official seal on it. **13** Couriers delivered the letters to the officials in every province in the empire. The letters said to completely destroy all the Yehudim, including the children and women, on a single day. That was to be the thirteenth day of March early in the following year. The letters also stated that those who killed the Yehudim could take everything that belonged to them. **14** The letter told the officials to display copies where everyone could see them—that way all the people in every single province would know that the king had commanded this, and they could get ready for when the day came.

15 So couriers hurried off with the letters as the king had commanded. A herald in the capital city of Shushan (Susa) also proclaimed what the letters said. Then the king and Haman relaxed and drank together, but there was total confusion in Shushan about how all of this would work out.

Mordekai asks the queen for help

4:1 When Mordekai found out about what had been done, he tore his clothes and dressed in sackcloth and threw ashes over himself (as a sign of mourning or distress) and went out into the city centre, wailing loudly and bitterly. **2** But no one was wearing mourning garb was allowed inside the king's gate, so when Mordekai reached the gate, he had to stay just outside it. **3** In every province of the empire, the letter that said to destroy the Yehudim (Jews) was publicly displayed and when the Yehudim heard about it, they were incredibly upset. They skipped meals and wailed loudly, and many of them also wore sackcloth and threw ashes on themselves and lay on the ground.

4 When Queen Ester's young female attendants came with her guardians and told her what was going on outside, even the queen became very scared. She sent Mordekai some good clothes to wear instead of the sackcloth, but he wouldn't accept them. **5** The king had assigned some of the royal guardians to Ester personally, so Ester called for one of them—a man named Hatak. She told him to go out and speak with Mordekai and find out what he was so distressed about. **6** So Hatak went out to talk to Mordekai who was out in the plaza in front of the king's gate. **7** Mordekai told him everything that Haman was planning to do and even told him how much money Haman had said the king would get for his treasuries if the king commanded people to kill all the Yehudim. **8** Mordekai also gave Hatak a copy of the letter that the announcers had read out loud in Shushan (Susa), that said that people must kill all the Yehudim. He told Hatak to show the letter to Ester so that she would know exactly what it said and also told him to urge her to go to the king personally and to beg him desperately to save her people from destruction. **9** So Hatak returned to the queen and told her what Mordekai had said, **10** and Ester told him to go back to Mordekai with this message: **11** "There's a law about going to the king that applies to everyone in the kingdom, both men and women.

4 RV 3:10 · Note Having the king's signet ring enabled Haman to stamp the king's seal (like a signature) onto the newly drafted laws.

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If anyone goes into the inner courtyard of the palace, where the king can see them, and the king has not summoned them, that person will be executed. Only if the king holds out his golden scepter to them, then they will live. (Everyone in the whole empire knows this law.) The king hasn't called for me in over a month, and if I go in without being summoned, I could be put to death."

12 So Hatak went back to Mordekai and told him what the queen had said. 13 Mordekai told Hatak to tell this to Ester: "Don't imagine that just because you live there in the king's palace that you'll be safe when they kill all the other Yehudim. 14 If you say nothing at all now, someone from some other place will rescue the Yehudim, but you and your relatives will not survive. Who knows, perhaps it was for a time just like this that God allowed you to become queen?"

15 Then Ester sent this reply to Mordekai: 16 "Go and assemble all the Yehudim who live here in Shushan (Susa), and tell them to fast and pray for my sake—tell them to not eat or drink anything for three days and three nights. My female attendants and I will also fast in the same way. At the end of the three days, I will go in to talk to the king even though it's against the law. I will do that even if it costs me my life."

17 So Mordekai went and did everything that Ester had told him to do.

Ester goes to the king without an invitation

5:1 Three days later, Queen Ester put on her royal robes and went and stood in the inner courtyard of the palace, across from the king's house. He was in the royal palace, sitting on the royal throne and facing the room's entrance. 2 As soon as the king noticed Ester standing there in the courtyard, he was very pleased to see her. So he held out his golden scepter to her and Ester came up to the throne and touched the top of the scepter. 3 "Why have you come here, Queen Ester?" the king asked. "What do you want? Tell me, and I'll give you anything you ask for—even half of the empire."

4 "If it pleases your majesty," Ester replied, "please come with Haman today to the banquet that I've prepared for you."

5 The king said to his servants, "Go and get Haman" the king told his servants, "and bring him quickly so that we can do what the queen has asked us." So the king and Haman went to the banquet that Ester had had prepared for them. 6 While they were drinking wine, the king said to Ester, "Now please tell me what you really want. I'll give you anything you ask for, no matter how much it is. I truly mean what I am saying."

7 "This is what I really want." Ester replied. 8 "Your majesty, if you're pleased with me and if you're happy to give me what I want, please come with Haman to another banquet that I'll prepare for you tomorrow and I'll answer your question then."

Haman's anger with Mordekai and his execution plan

9 Haman was feeling very happy as he left the banquet that day. But then he saw Mordekai sitting at the king's gate and noticed that Mordekai didn't stand up or show fearful reverence to him. This made Haman furious with Mordekai 10 but he restrained himself and went home. Then he sent for his friends and brought in his wife, Zeresh, 11 boasting to them about how rich he was and about how many sons he had, and how the king had promoted him many times and given him a position above all of the other officials and administrators. 12 "And that is not all," Haman added. "I was the only one that Queen Ester invited to go with the king to a banquet that she prepared for us today. And she's also invited only me to go with the king again tomorrow. 13 However, I still can't be happy as long as I keep seeing that Yehudi (Jew), Mordekai, sitting there at the king's gate."

14 Then Zeresh his wife and all his friends said to him, "Get them to install 25-metre high pole, and in the morning get permission from the king, and get them to impale Mordekai on it. Then you can go with the king to the banquet and enjoy yourself."

That idea sounded good to Haman, so he got

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the pole erected.

The king honours Mordekai

6:1 That night the king was unable to sleep so he ordered the royal records to be fetched and to be read to him. **2** The records mentioned that Bigtan and Teresh, two of the royal guardians who protected the doorway to the king's private quarters, had planned to assassinate the king, but that Mordekai had reported it.
3 "What honour or recognition did I give Mordekai for saving my life?" the king asked.

"Nothing was done for him," replied the young men who were attending him.

4 At that moment, Haman had entered the outer courtyard of the king's house. He had come to tell the king that he wanted to execute Mordekai on the pole that he'd had set up for him.

"Who's out in the courtyard?" the king asked.

5 "Haman's out there standing in the courtyard," replied the young men.

"Bring him in then," the king instructed.

6 When Haman came in, the king asked him, "What should I do for a man that I would really like to honour?"

Haman thought to himself, "Surely it must be me that the king would like to honour more than anyone else?" **7** so he replied to the king, "If you really want to honour someone, **8** tell your servants to bring one of your own royal robes that you have already worn yourself and also bring a horse that you have already ridden yourself and put a royal crown on its head.
9 Then have one of your most noble officials present the man with the robe and the horse. Have your servants put the robe on the man whom you really want to honour and have them seat that man on the horse and then lead the horse through the public square of the city while they shout out to everyone in front of them, 'The king is doing this because he really wants to honour this man!' "

10 The king agreed so he replied to Haman, "Go quickly and take the robe and the horse and do what you've just described for Mordekai the Yehudi (Jew) who sits by the gate to the palace. Make sure that you do absolutely everything that you've said."

11 So Haman got the robe and the horse and put the robe on Mordekai, seated him on the horse, and then led the horse through the public square of the city. As he did, he shouted out to everyone in front of him, "The king is doing this because he really wants to honour this man!"

12 Afterwards, Mordekai returned to the king's gate but Haman hurried to his house, covering his head like a mourner. **13** At home he explained to Zeresh his wife and to all his friends everything that had happened to him. Then his advisors and his wife said to him, "Mordekai has begun to defeat you and since he is one of the Jewish people, you won't win against him—instead, he'll certainly defeat you."

Haman's execution

14 While they were still talking together, some of the royal guardians arrived to bring Haman quickly to the banquet that Ester had had prepared.

7:1 So the king and Haman went to Queen Ester's banquet. **2** While they were drinking wine at that second banquet, the king asked Ester again, "Now please tell me what you really want, Queen Ester. Tell me, and I'll do it for you—I'll give you anything you ask for, no matter what it is."

3 "Your majesty," Queen Ester replied, "if you are pleased with me, I hope you'll be willing to do what I ask. Please allow me to live, and please save my people. That is what I am asking for **4** because someone has turned me and my people over to our enemies and they're going to completely destroy us. If someone had just sold the men and even the women to be slaves, I wouldn't have said anything, because that wouldn't have been important enough to bother your majesty with."

5 "Who has done this?" King Ahashverosh (Ahasuerus/Xerxes) asked her. "Where is the man who has dared to do such a thing?"

6 "The man who is our bitter enemy is this evil man Haman!" answered Ester.

By this time, Haman was terrified standing there in front of the king and the queen. **7** Now

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the king became so angry that he got up and abandoned his wine-drinking at the banquet and went outside into the palace garden. But Haman stayed inside to beg his life from Queen Ester because he recognized that the king wanted to execute him. **8** As he was pleading for his life, Haman knelt down very close to Ester as she was reclining on a couch. When the king returned from the palace garden to the room where they had been drinking wine, he saw this and exclaimed, "Now he's even trying to rape the queen in my presence and in my own house!"

As soon as the king said this, some of his servants covered Haman's face (as a sign that he would be executed). **9** Then Harvona, who was one of the guardians who served the king personally, said, "Your majesty, Haman has also set up a pole twenty-five metres high at his house because he wants to hang Mordekai on it. But Mordekai saved your life."

"Execute Haman on it!" the king commanded. **10** So they impaled Haman on the pole that he had set up for Mordekai, and then the king's anger dissipated.

The Yehudim are enabled to defend themselves

8:1 That same day, King Ahashverosh (Ahasuerus/Xerxes) gave Queen Ester all the property that had belonged to Haman, the enemy of the Yehudim (Jews). Ester told the king that Mordekai was her cousin and that he had been like a father to her, and so the king summoned Mordekai to come to him. **2** Then the king removed his signet ring which he had retrieved from Haman, and gave it to Mordekai. The queen also put Mordekai in charge of all the property that had belonged to Haman.

3 Then Ester came to speak to the king again, and she knelt down and put her face right on top of his feet. She cried as she begged him to stop Haman's terrible plan to destroy the Yehudim. **4** The king held out his golden scepter toward Ester, so she stood up and waited facing the king. **5** "Your majesty," she said, "if you think that it's the right thing to do, and if you're pleased with me, please write a new letter revoking the letters that Haman (the son of Hamedata, the Agagi) sent out instructing the people to destroy all the Yehudim throughout your empire. **6** I couldn't bear to see the terrible thing that is about to happen to my people. I certainly couldn't bear to see all my relatives destroyed!"

7 Then king Ahashverosh said to Queen Ester and to Mordekai the Yehudi (Jew), "Listen, I've given the house of Haman to Ester, and they've executed him on the pole because he attempted to destroy the Yehudim. **8** But as you both know, no one can revoke a letter that has my name and my official seal on it. So this is what you should do: write a new letter to help the Yehudim, as you think best and put my name on it and seal the letter with my signet ring."

9 It was now June, and the king sent for his scribes and they wrote a letter to the Yehudim containing everything that Mordekai dictated. It was also addressed to royal officials, and to the governors and leaders in each province. The empire had 127 provinces, extending all the way from Hodu in the east to Kush (Ethiopia) in the west. The scribes wrote to every province using its own alphabet and to each people group in its own language, and to the Yehudim in their language and using their alphabet. **10** The letters were written in King Ahashverosh' name, and each one was sealed with the king's signet ring. Then the letters were distributed by mounted couriers riding on swift horses bred from the royal mares.

11 The letters stated that the king permitted the Yehudim in each and every city to get together and defend themselves, and what's more to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the forces of any people or province hostile to them, including women and children, and then to plunder their possessions. **12** This was to take place on a certain day in every province throughout the empire: the 13th of March[5] (the same day on which Haman's law was to take ef-

5 RV 8:12 · Cross-ref. 3:7.

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fect). 13 A copy of the decree was to be included as law in every province and to be displayed to all the people so that the Yehudim could be prepared to fight back against their enemies on that day. 14 So the couriers on the royal horses rode out quickly under the king's orders to deliver the letters. The new law was also proclaimed throughout the capital city of Shushan (Susa).

15 The king gave Mordekai royal clothing that was blue and white, with a large gold crown, and a purple robe made from fine linen. The people of Shushan cheered happily when Mordekai exited the palace. 16 For the Yehudim, it was a time of light and happiness, and they were honoured by those around them. 17 In every single province and in every single city, wherever the letter announcing the king's decree was brought, the Yehudim were very cheerful and had big celebrations. Many people from other groups in the empire became afraid of the Yehudim, so they converted to Youdaismos themselves.

The Yehudim destroy their enemies

9:1 Finally when the 13th of March arrived, it was time for everyone to do what the letters from the king said that he had decreed for them to do. The enemies of the Yehudim (Jews) had expected to destroy the Yehudim on that day but just the opposite happened—instead, it was the Yehudim who destroyed their enemies. 2 Throughout the empire, the Yehudim joined together in their cities to defend themselves against those who wanted to harm them. No one was able to fight back against them because everyone else in the empire had become afraid of them. 3 All the leaders in each province, the royal officials, the governors, and everyone who worked for the king helped the Yehudim because they had become afraid of Mordekai 4 because he was now a very important royal official, and his fame spread throughout the provinces as he became more and more powerful. 5 So the Yehudim took their weapons and fought against all of their enemies and completely destroyed them. They were able to do everything that they wanted to do against their enemies.

6 In the capital city of Shushan (Susa), the Yehudim killed 500 men 7 including Haman's ten sons Parshandata, Dalfon, Aspata, 8 Porata, Adalya, Aridata, 9 Parmashta, Arisay, Ariday, and Vayzata. 10 Those were the ten sons of Haman (son of Hamedata), the enemy of the Yehudim, but the Yehudim didn't take their possessions.

11 At the end of the day, the king received a report about how many people the Yehudim had killed in the capital city of Shushan 12 and he told Queen Ester, "Here in the capital city of Shushan the Yehudim have killed 500 men, including Haman's ten sons. In the rest of my empire, they must have killed many more than that! So tell me what else you want and I'll do it for you. I'll do whatever you ask, so do tell me."

13 "If it seems like a good plan to you, your majesty," Ester replied, "then please allow the Yehudim who live here in Shushan to do again tomorrow what you allowed them to do today. Also, command that the bodies of Haman's ten sons be impaled on the wooden pole." 14 Then the king ordered for this to be done and a decree was made throughout in Shushan, and they publicly impaled the bodies ofHaman's ten sons. 15 So the next day on the 14th, the Yehudim in Shushan gathered together again and killed 300 more men in Shushan. But once again they did not take the things that belonged to those men.

16 The Yehudim in the other parts of the empire, who had gathered together to fight for their lives had defeated their enemies and killed 75,000 of them. But they too did not take the things that had belonged to their enemies. 17 That all happened on the 13th (as the law had said), and then they stopped on the 14th and made it a day of feasting and celebration. 18 But the Yehudim in Shushan had gathered together and fought their enemies on both the 13th and the 14th, so they stopped on the 15th and made it a day of feasting and celebration. 19 So that's why the Yehudim who live in the rural villages observe this holiday on the 14th rather than the 15th. They celebrate with feast-

ing and by giving gifts to each other.

The celebration named 'Purim'

20 Now Mordekai recorded everything that had happened and sent letters to all the Yehudim (Jews) throughout the empire, in both the near provinces and the far away ones. **21** That decree established an annual holiday on the 14th and 15th of March every year,[6] **22** because those were the days when the Yehudim no longer had to oppose their enemies and that was the month when their sorrow and mourning had changed into a good day. Now they were instructed to make them days of feasting and happiness, and sending of gifts—to each other but also to the needy. **23** The Yehudim had already celebrated those days that way, so they readily agreed to do what Mordekai had written.

24 Yes, Haman (the son of Hamedata, the Agagi), the enemy of all the Yehudim, had plotted to annihilate them, and he had thrown a 'Pur' (which is 'lot' or perhaps 'dice') choose the date to crush them and to destroy them. **25** But instead they would remember how Queen Ester stood in front of the king, and how he had said in the letter, "Let his evil plot that he plotted concerning the Yehudim return on his head, and let them execute him and his sons on the pole." **26** Therefore they called this celebration 'Purim'[7] because of what they had experienced and because of the contents of Mordekai's letter. **27** The Yehudim agreed to establish those two days as holidays and to observe them on those specific days as they'd been instructed. They agreed that they and their descendants and everyone who became part of the Jewish people would celebrate it every year. **28** So that's why every Jewish family in every generation since has celebrated these days as holidays, wherever they live. The Jewish community and its descendants will always faithfully observe this festival of 'Purim'.

29 Then Queen Ester (the daughter of Avihayil), with help from Mordekai the Yehudi (Jew), wrote a second letter about 'Purim'. **30** He sent this second letter to all the Yehudim throughout the empire of King Ahashverosh (Ahasuerus/Xerxes), with words of peace and truth **31** to set up the 'Purim' celebration on the given dates according to what Mordekai the Yehudi and Queen Ester had determined for them. They also confirmed that the Yehudim should continue the times of fasting and mourning that they had established for themselves and their future descendants. **32** So Ester's decree confirmed these regulations about 'Purim' and they were written into the official record.

The grandeur of King Ahashverosh and Mordekai

10:1 Then King Ahashverosh (Ahasuerus/Xerxes) imposed a tax on everyone throughout his empire, including those on the islands of the Mediterranean Sea. **2** Everything he accomplished through his power and strength is written down in the royal records of the kings of Maday (Media) and Paras (Persia), as well as the complete account of the high position to which the king promoted Mordekai. **3** Mordekai the Yehudi (Jew) was second-in-command to the king Ahashverosh, and a leader among the Yehudim (Jews). He was popular with most of his own people, seeking good for them and teaching all his descendants how to live in

6 RV 9:21 · Note The OET-RV gives an approximate time of the year in our calendars, but the Jewish calendar is largely a lunar calendar so the dates of the feast in our calendars moves around a little. In 2024 for example, 'Purim' begins on the evening of March 23 in Yisrael/Israel and concludes at sundown on March 24.

7 RV 9:26 · Note Plural of Hebrew 'Pur' meaning 'lot/dice'.

peace.

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