

Esther

Translation note: *Most of the language below is from Brenton's translation, though with minor changes. The several portions identified in the footnotes as "not in M" are from the Authorized Version. (This version of Esther dates from May 2003.)*

Mardocheaus' dream

1^{1a} In the second year of the reign of Artaxerxes the great, in the first day of the month Nisan, Mardocheaus the son of Jairus, the son of Semei, the son of Cisai, of the tribe of Benjamin, had a dream;^a ^{1b} who was a Jew, and dwelt in the city of Susa, a great man, being a servitor in the king's court. ^{1c} He was also one of the captives, which Nabuchodonosor the king of Babylon carried from Jerusalem with Jechonias king of Judea.

And this was his dream: ^{1d} Behold a noise of a tumult, with thunder, and earthquakes, and uproar in the land: ^{1e} and, behold, two great dragons came forth ready to fight, and their cry was great. ^{1f} And at their cry all nations were prepared to battle, that they might fight against the righteous people. ^{1g} And lo a day of darkness and obscurity, tribulation and anguish, affliction and great uproar, upon earth. ^{1h} And the whole righteous nation was troubled, fearing their own evils, and were ready to perish. ¹ⁱ Then they cried unto God, and upon their cry, as it were from a little fountain, was made a great flood, even much water. ^{1k} The light and the sun rose up, and the lowly were exalted, and devoured the glorious.

^{1l} Now when Mardocheaus, who had seen this dream, and what God had determined to do, was awake, he bare this dream in mind, and until night by all means was desirous to know it.

Mardocheaus' rise in the king's favor

^{1m} And Mardocheaus took his rest in

the court with Gabatha and Tharra, the two eunuchs of the king, and keepers of the palace. ¹ⁿ And he heard their devices, and searched out their purposes, and learned that they were about to lay hands upon Artaxerxes the king; and so he certified the king of them. ^{1o} Then the king examined the two eunuchs, and after that they had confessed it, they were strangled. ^{1p} And the king made a record of these things, and Mardocheaus also wrote thereof. ^{1q} So the king commanded Mardocheaus to serve in the court, and for this he rewarded him. ^{1r} Howbeit Aman the son of Amadathus the Agagite, who was in great honour with the king, sought to molest Mardocheaus and his people because of the two eunuchs of the king.

Artaxerxes' feast

^{1s} And it came to pass after these things in the days of Artaxerxes,^b--(this Artaxerxes ruled over an 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.

⁴ And after this, after he had shewn to them the wealth of his kingdom, and the abundant glory of his wealth during an 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

^a 1.1a through 1r are not in M.

^b 1.1s – **Artaxerxes** I who reigned 465-425 BC. The Hebrew reads Ahasuerus, whom modern scholars believe to have been Xerxes I (486-465).

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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*.

¹⁰ Now 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. ¹³ And he said unto his friends, “Thus hast Astin spoken: pronounce therefore upon this *case* law and judgment.”

¹⁴ So Arkesaeus, and Sarsathaeus, 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. ¹⁶ And Muchaeus said unto the king and to the princes, “Queen Astin hath not wronged the king only, but also all the king’s rulers and princes: ¹⁷ for he hath 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 unto 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.”

²¹ And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did as Muchaeus 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.

Esther becomes queen

2 And 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.

⁵ Now there was a Jew in the city Susa, and his name was Mardocheus, the *son* of Jairus, *the son* of Semeias, *the son* of Cisaeus, 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

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for himself: and the damsel was beautiful.

⁸ And 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. ¹¹ But 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 into 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. ¹⁵ And 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 them that were under his dominion. ¹⁹ But Mardocheus served in the palace.

²⁰ Now Esther had not discovered her kindred; for so Mardocheus commanded her, to fear God, and perform his commandments, as when she was with him: and Esther changed not her manner of life.

²¹ And two chamberlains of the king, the chiefs of the body-guard, were grieved, because Mardocheus was promoted; and they sought to kill king Artaxerxes. ²² And the matter was discovered to Mardocheus, 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 Mardocheus, as a commendation.

Aman's plan to destroy the Jews

3 And after this king Artaxerxes highly honoured Aman *son* of Amadathes, the Bugaeon, 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 Mardocheus did not do him obeisance. ³ And they in the king's palace said unto Mardocheus, "Mardocheus, why dost thou transgress the commands of the king?"

⁴ *Thus* they spake daily to him, but he hearkened not unto them; so they represented to Aman that Mardocheus resisted the commands of the king: and Mardocheus had shewn to them that he was a Jew. ⁵ And when Aman understood that Mardocheus 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.

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⁷ And 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 Mardocheaus: and the lot fell on the fourteenth *day* of the month which is Adar. ⁸ And he spake unto 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 unto Aman, “Keep the silver, and treat the nation as thou wilt.”

¹² So 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 an 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} The^a copy of the letters was this:

“The great king Artaxerxes writeth these things to the princes and governors that are under him from India unto Ethiopia in an hundred and seven and twenty provinces. ^{13b} After I became lord over many nations and had dominion over the whole world, not lifted up with presumption of my authority, but carrying myself always with equity and mildness, I purposed to settle my subjects continually in a quiet life, and making my kingdom peaceable,

and open for passage to the utmost coasts, to renew peace, which is desired of all men.

^{13c} “Now when I asked my counsellors how this might be brought to pass, Aman, that excelled in wisdom among us, and was approved for his constant good will and steadfast fidelity, and had the honour of the second place in the kingdom, ^{13d} declared unto us, that in all nations throughout the world there was scattered a certain malicious people, that had laws contrary to all nations, and continually despised the commandments of kings, so as the uniting of our kingdoms, honourably intended by us cannot go forward.

^{13e} “Seeing then we understand that this people alone is continually in opposition unto all men, differing in the strange manner of their laws, and evil affected to our state, working all the mischief they can that our kingdom may not be firmly established: ^{13f} Therefore have we commanded, that all they that are signified in writing unto you by Aman, who is ordained over the affairs, and is next unto us, shall all, with their wives and children, be utterly destroyed by the sword of their enemies, without all mercy and pity, the fourteenth day of the twelfth month Adar of this present year: ^{13g} That they, who of old and now also are malicious, may in one day with violence go into Hades, and so ever hereafter cause our affairs to be well settled, and without trouble.”

¹⁴ And 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.

Esther learns of the threat to the Jews

4 But Mardocheaus 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

^a 3.13a through 13g are not in M.

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cried with a loud voice, “A nation that hath 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.

⁴ And 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 Achrathaeus, 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 hath spoken against us for death. Do thou call upon the Lord, and speak unto the king concerning us, to deliver us from death.”

⁹ So Achrathaeus went in and told her all these words.¹⁰ And Esther said unto Achrathaeus, “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 into the king, for these thirty days.’ ”¹² And Achrathaeus reported to Mardocheus all the words of Esther.

¹³ Then Mardocheus said unto Achrathaeus, “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} Then^a Mardocheus thought upon all the works of the Lord, and made his prayer unto him,^{17b} saying,

Mardocheus’ supplication

“O Lord, Lord, the King Almighty: for the whole world is in thy power, and if thou hast appointed to save Israel, there is no man that can gainsay thee:^{17c} For thou hast made heaven and earth, and all the wondrous things under the heaven. Thou art Lord of all things, and there is no man that can resist thee, which art the Lord.^{17d} Thou knowest all things, and thou knowest, Lord, that it was neither in contempt nor pride, nor for any desire of glory, that I did not bow down to proud Aman. For I could have been content with good will for the salvation of Israel to kiss the soles of his feet.^{17e} But I did this, that I might not prefer the glory of man above the glory of God: neither will I worship any but thee, O God, neither will I do it in pride.

^{17f} “And now, O Lord God and King, God of Abraham, spare thy people: for their eyes are upon us to bring us to nought; yea, they desire to

^a 4.17a-5.2b are not in M.

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destroy the inheritance, that hath been thine from the beginning. ^{17g} Despise not the portion, which thou hast delivered out of Egypt for thine own self. ^{17h} Hear my prayer, and be merciful unto thine inheritance: turn our sorrow into joy, that we may live, O Lord, and praise thy name: and destroy not the mouths of them that praise thee, O Lord.” ¹⁷ⁱ All Israel in like manner cried most earnestly unto the Lord, because their death was before their eyes.

Esther’s supplication

^{17k} Queen Esther also, being in fear of death, resorted unto the Lord: and laid away her glorious apparel, and put on the garments of anguish and mourning: and instead of precious ointments, she covered her head with ashes and dung, and she humbled her body greatly, and all the places of her joy she filled with her torn hair. And she prayed unto the Lord God of Israel, saying,

^{17l} “O my Lord, thou only art our King: help me, desolate woman, which have no helper but thee: for my danger is in mine hand. ^{17m} From my youth up I have heard in the tribe of my family that thou, O Lord, tookest Israel from among all people, and our fathers from all their predecessors, for a perpetual inheritance, and thou hast performed whatsoever thou didst promise them. ¹⁷ⁿ And now we have sinned before thee: therefore hast thou given us into the hands of our enemies, because we worshipped their gods. “O Lord, thou art righteous.

^{17o} “Nevertheless it satisfieth them not, that we are in bitter captivity: but they have stricken hands with their idols, that they will abolish the thing that thou with thy mouth hast ordained, and destroy thine inheritance, and stop the mouth of them that praise thee, and quench the glory of thy house, and of thine altar, ^{17p} and open the mouths of the heathen to set forth the praises of the idols, and to magnify a fleshly king for

ever. ^{17q} O Lord, give not thy sceptre unto them that be nothing, and let them not laugh at our fall; but turn their device upon themselves, and make him an example, that hath begun this against us.

^{17r} “Remember, O Lord, make thyself known in time of our affliction, and give me boldness, O King of the nations, and Lord of all power. ^{17s} Give me eloquent speech in my mouth before the lion: turn his heart to hate him that fighteth against us, that there may be an end of him, and of all that are likeminded to him: ^{17t} but deliver us with thine hand, and help me that am desolate, and which have no other help but thee.

^{17u} “Thou knowest all things, O Lord; thou knowest that I hate the glory of the unrighteous, and abhor the bed of the uncircumcised, and of all the heathen. ^{17w} Thou knowest my necessity: for I abhor the sign of my high estate, which is upon mine head in the days wherein I shew myself, and that I abhor it as a menstruous rag, and that I wear it not when I am private by myself. ^{17x} And that thine handmaid hath not eaten at Aman's table, and that I have not greatly esteemed the king's feast, nor drunk the wine of the drink offerings. ^{17y} Neither had thine handmaid any joy since the day that I was brought hither to this present, but in thee, O Lord God of Abraham. ^{17z} O thou mighty God above all, hear the voice of the forlorn and deliver us out of the hands of the mischievous, and deliver me out of my fear.”

Esther invites the king to a feast

5 And 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

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her train. ^{1b} And she *was* blooming in the perfection of her beauty; and her face *was* cheerful, and *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 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 unto 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.” ² And having raised the golden sceptre he laid it upon her neck, and embraced her, and said, “Speak unto me.”

^{2a} And she said unto 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, “Today 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. ⁶ And at the banquet the king said unto 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 tomorrow to the feast which I shall prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do the same.” ⁹ So 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 hath called no one to the feast with the king but me, and I am invited tomorrow. 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 unto him, “Let there be a gallows made for thee of fifty cubits, and in the morning do thou speak unto 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.

The king honours Mardocheus

6 But 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. ³ And 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

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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 unto 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.” ⁶ And the king said unto 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 unto 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 unto 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.”

¹¹ So 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.”

¹² And 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 unto 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.

Aman is hanged on the gallows

7 So the king and Aman went in to drink with the queen. ² And the king said unto 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 hath 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.

⁷ And 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. ⁸ And 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 unto the king, “Behold, Aman hath also prepared a gallows for Mardocheus, who spake concerning the king, and a gallows of fifty cubits high hath 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.

Artaxerxes letter supporting the Jews

8 And in that day king Artaxerxes gave to Esther all that belonged to Aman the slanderer: and Mardocheus

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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.

³ And she spake 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?"

⁷ And the king said unto 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."

⁹ So 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, an hundred and twenty-seven satraps, according to the several provinces, according to their dialects.¹⁰ And 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 them that 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.

^{12a} The^a following is a copy of this letter:

^{12b} "The great king Artaxerxes unto the princes and governors of an hundred and seven and twenty provinces from India unto Ethiopia, and unto all our faithful subjects, greeting.

^{12c} "Many, the more often they are honoured with the great bounty of their gracious princes, the more proud they are waxen,³ And endeavour to hurt not our subjects only, but not being able to bear abundance, do take in hand to practise also against those that do them good:^{12d} and take not only thankfulness away from among men, but also lifted up with the glorious words of lewd persons, that were never good, they think to escape the justice of God, that seeth all things and hateth evil.^{12e} Oftentimes also fair speech of those, that are put in trust to manage their friends' affairs, hath caused many that are in authority to be partakers of innocent blood, and hath enwrapped them in remediless calamities:^{12f} beguiling with the falsehood and deceit of their lewd disposition the innocency and goodness of princes.

^{12g} "Now ye may see this, as we have declared, not so much by ancient histories, as ye may, if ye search what hath been wickedly done of late through the pestilent behaviour of them that are unworthily placed in authority.^{12h} And we must take care for the time to come, that our kingdom may be quiet and peaceable for all men,¹²ⁱ both by changing our purposes, and always judging things that are evident with more equal proceeding.^{12k} For Aman, a Macedonian, the son of Amadatha, being indeed a stranger from the Persian blood, and far distant from our goodness, and as a stranger received of

^a 8.12a - the section from this point through verse 8.12x is not in M.

us, ¹²ⁱ had so far forth obtained the favour that we shew toward every nation, as that he was called our father, and was continually honoured of all the next person unto the king. ^{12m} But he, not bearing his great dignity, went about to deprive us of our kingdom and life: ¹²ⁿ having by manifold and cunning deceits sought of us the destruction, as well of Mardocheaus, who saved our life, and continually procured our good, as also of blameless Esther, partaker of our kingdom, with their whole nation. ^{12o} For by these means he thought, finding us destitute of friends to have translated the kingdom of the Persians to the Macedonians.

^{12p} “But we find that the Jews, whom this wicked wretch hath delivered to utter destruction, are no evildoers, but live by most just laws: ^{12q} and that they be children of the most high and most mighty, living God, who hath ordered the kingdom both unto us and to our progenitors in the most excellent manner. ^{12r} Wherefore ye shall do well not to put in execution the letters sent unto you by Aman the son of Amadatha. For he that was the worker of these things, is hanged at the gates of Susa with all his family: God, who ruleth all things, speedily rendering vengeance to him according to his deserts.

^{12s} “Therefore ye shall publish the copy of this letter in all places, that the Jews may freely live after their own laws. And ye shall aid them, that even the same day, being the thirteenth day of the twelfth month Adar, they may be avenged on them, who in the time of their affliction shall set upon them. ^{12t} For Almighty God hath turned to joy unto them the day, wherein the chosen people should have perished. ^{12u} Ye shall therefore among your solemn feasts keep it an high day with all feasting: that both now and hereafter there may be safety to us and the well affected Persians; but to those which do conspire against us a memorial of destruction. ^{12x} Therefore every city and

country whatsoever, which shall not do according to these things, shall be destroyed without mercy with fire and sword, and shall be made not only unpassable for men, but also most hateful to wild beasts and fowls 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. ¹⁴ So the horsemen went forth with haste to perform the king’s commands; and the ordinance was also published in Susa.

¹⁵ And Mardocheaus 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.

The feast of Purim established

9 For 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 Mardocheaus 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 Ruphaeus, and Arsaeus, and Zabuthaeus, ¹⁰ the ten sons of Aman the son of Amadathes the Bugaeian, the enemy of the Jews, and they plundered *their property* on the same day: ¹¹ and the number of them

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that perished in Susa was rendered to the king.

¹² And the king said unto 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?"

¹³ And Esther said unto the king, "Let it be granted to the Jews so to treat them tomorrow as to hand 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. ¹⁶ And 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* an holy day with joy, sending portions each to his neighbour.

²⁰ And 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.

²³ And 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 Phrurae,^a because of the lots; (for in their language they are called Phrurae;) 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 Phrurae, *said they*, shall be kept for ever, and their memorial shall not fail in any generation.

²⁹ And queen Esther, the daughter of Aminadab, and Mardocheus the Jew, wrote all that they had done, and the confirmation of the letter of Phrurae. 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.

Mardocheus recalls his dream

10 And 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

^a 9.26 - In M, *pur*, for lot. This is the origin of the feast of Purim.

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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} Then^a Mardocheus said, “God hath done these things. ^{3b} For I remember a dream which I saw concerning these matters, and nothing thereof hath failed. ^{3c} A little fountain became a river, and there was light, and the sun, and much water: this river is Esther, whom the king married, and made queen: ^{3d} and the two dragons are I and Aman. ^{3e} And the nations were those that were assembled to destroy the name of the Jews: ^{3f} and my nation is this Israel, which cried to God, and were saved: for the Lord hath saved his people, and the Lord hath delivered us from all those evils, and God hath wrought signs and great wonders, which have not been done among the Gentiles. ^{3g} Therefore hath he made two lots, one for the people of God, and another for all the Gentiles. ^{3h} And these two lots came at the hour, and time, and day of judgment, before God among all nations. ³ⁱ So God remembered his people, and justified his inheritance. ^{3k} Therefore those days shall be unto them in the month Adar, the fourteenth and fifteenth day of the same month, with an assembly, and joy, and with gladness before God, according to the generations for ever among his people.”

³¹ In the fourth year of the reign of Ptolemeus and Cleopatra, Dositheus, who said he was a priest and Levite, and Ptolemeus his son, brought this epistle of Phurim, which they said was the same, and that Lysimachus the son of Ptolemeus, that was in Jerusalem, had interpreted it.

^a 10.3a - The passage from here to the end is absent from M.