

ESTHER

CHAPTER 1

^{1a}In the second year of the reign of Artaxerxes the great king, on the first day of Nisan, Mordecai the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, ^{1ba}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 Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried captive from Jerusalem, with Jechoniah the king of Judah. ^{1d}And 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: ¹ⁱand from their cry there came as it were a great river from a little fountain, even much water. ^{1j}And light and the sun arose, and the lowly were exalted, and devoured the honourable. ^{1k}And Mordecai, who had seen this vision and what God designed to do, having arisen, kept it in his heart, and desired by all means to interpret it, even till night. ^{1l}And Mordecai rested quiet in the palace with Gabatha and Tharra the king's two eunuchs, eunuchs who guarded the palace. ^{1m}And he heard their reasonings, and searched out their plans, and learned that they were preparing to lay hands on king Artaxerxes: and he informed the king concerning them. ¹ⁿAnd the king examined the two eunuchs, and they confessed, and were led away *to execution*. ^{1o}And the king wrote these things for a memorial; also Mordecai wrote concerning these matters. ^{1p}And the king commanded Mordecai to attend in the palace, and gave him gifts for this service. ^{1r}And Haman the son of Hamadatha the Agagthite was honourable in the sight of the king, and he endeavoured to hurt Mordecai and his people, because of the two eunuchs of the king.

¹Now it came to pass after these things in the days of Artaxerxes, (this Artaxerxes ruled over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces from India:) ²in those days, when king Artaxerxes was on the throne in the city of Susa, ³in the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto his friends, and the other nations, and unto the nobles of the Persians and Medes, and the chief of the satraps. ⁴And after this, after he had shewed unto them the riches of his kingdom, and the abundant glory of his riches during an hundred and fourscore days; ⁵when the days of the marriage feast were ended, the king made a banquet to the nations which were present in the city six days, in the court of the king's house; ⁶which was adorned with hangings of fine linen and flax, on cords of fine linen and purple, fastened to gold 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

openworked coverings variously flowered, having roses worked round about; ⁷gold 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 did drink. ⁸And 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. ⁹Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women in the palace where king Artaxerxes dwelt. ¹⁰Now on the seventh day the king, being merry, did tell Mehuman, and Biztha, and Harbona, and Bigtha, and Abagtha, and Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains, servants of king Artaxerxes, ¹¹to bring in the queen to him, to make her queen, and crown her with the diadem, and to shew her to the princes, and her beauty to the nations: for she was beautiful. ¹²But queen Vashti hearkened not to come to him with the eunuchs: so the king was grieved and angered. ¹³And he said unto his friends, Thus hath queen Vashti spoken: pronounce therefore upon this law and judgment. ¹⁴So Arkesaios, and Sarsathaios, and Memucan, the princes of the Persians and the Medes, which were near the king, which sat chief in rank by the king, drew near to him, ¹⁵and reported to him according to the laws how it was proper to do to queen Vashti, because she had not done the things commanded of the king by the chamberlains. ¹⁶And Memucan said unto the king and the princes, Queen Vashti hath not wronged the king only, but also all the king's rulers and princes: ¹⁷for 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, ¹⁸so this day shall the other ladies of the chiefs of the Medes and Persians, having heard what she said unto the king, dare in the same way to dishonour their husbands. ¹⁹If then it seem good unto 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 into him any more; and let the king give her royalty unto a woman better than she. ²⁰And 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 unto their husbands, from the poor even to the rich. ²¹And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did as Memucan had said, ²²and sent into all his kingdom through the several provinces according to their language, that men might be feared in their own houses.

CHAPTER 2

And after these things the wrath of the king was appeased, and he no more mentioned Vashti, bearing in mind what she had said, and how he had condemned her. ²Then said the servants of the king, Let there be chaste and fair young virgins sought for the king. ³And let the king appoint local governors in all the provinces of his kingdom, and let them choose fair and chaste young maidens, and bring them unto the city of Susa, into the chamber of the women; and let them be delivered unto the king's eunuch, the keeper of the women; and let things for purification be given them. ⁴And let

the woman which shall please the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king; and he did so. ⁵Now in the city of Susa there was a Jew, and his name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin; ⁶who had been brought captive from Jerusalem, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried into captivity. ⁷And he had a child that he brought up, the 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 unto himself: and the maiden was beautiful. ⁸And because the king's ordinance was published, many maidens were gathered to the city of Susa under the hand of Hegai; and Esther was brought to Hegai the keeper of the women. ⁹And the maiden 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 maid appointed her out of the palace: and he treated her and her maidens well in the house of the women. ¹⁰But Esther shewed not her family nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her not to shew it. ¹¹But Mordecai used to walk every day by the court of the women, to see what would become of Esther. ¹²Now 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 purification. ¹³And then the maiden goeth in to the king; and to whomsoever he giveth the command, he shall bring her to come in with him from the house of the women to the king's chamber. ¹⁴She entereth in the evening, and in the morning departeth to the second house of the women, where Shaashgaz the king's eunuch is the keeper of the women: and she goeth not in to the king again, unless she be called by name. ¹⁵And when the time was fulfilled for Esther the daughter of Aminadab, the brother of Mordecai's father, to go in to the king, she neglected nothing which the chamberlain the keeper of the women commanded; for Esther found grace in the sight of all that looked upon her. ¹⁶So Esther went in to king Artaxerxes in the twelfth month, which is Adar, in the seventh year of his reign. ¹⁷And the king loved Esther, and she found favour beyond all other virgins: and he set the queen's crown upon her. ¹⁸Then the king made feast unto all his friends and great men for seven days, and highly celebrated the marriage of Esther; and he made a release unto them that were under his dominion. ¹⁹But Mordecai served in the palace. ²⁰Now Esther had not shewed her country; for so Mordecai 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 eunuchs of the king, the chiefs of the bodyguard, were grieved, because Mordecai was promoted; and they sought to kill king Artaxerxes. ²²And the matter was discovered to Mordecai, and he made it known unto Esther; and she declared unto the king the matter of the conspiracy. ²³And the king examined the two chamberlains, and hanged them: and the king gave command to make a note for a memorial in the royal library of the good offices of Mordecai, as a commendation.

CHAPTER 3

And after these things did king Artaxerxes highly honour Haman the son of Hamadatha, the Agagite, and exalted him, and set his seat above all his friends. ²And all that were in the palace did him obeisance, for the king had so commanded: but Mordecai did not do him obeisance. ³And they that were in the king's palace said unto Mordecai, Mordecai, why transgressest thou the king's commandments? ⁴Accordingly they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them; and they shewed unto Haman that Mordecai rebelled against the king's commandment; and that Mordecai had shewed unto them that he was a Jew. ⁵And when Haman understood that Mordecai did him not obeisance, he was greatly enraged, ⁶and took counsel utterly to destroy all the Jews that were under the rule of Artaxerxes. ⁷And he cast lots in the twelfth year of the reign of Artaxerxes, and cast lots day by day, and month by month, to kill in one day the race of Mordecai: and the lot fell on the fourteenth day of the month which is Adar. ⁸And he spake unto king Artaxerxes, saying, There is a nation scattered abroad among the nations in all thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all the nations; and they disobey the king's laws; and it is not expedient to suffer them. ⁹If it seem good unto the king, let him make a decree to destroy them: and I will remit into the king's treasury ten thousand talents of silver. ¹⁰And the king took off his ring, and gave it into Haman's hands, to seal the decrees against the Jews. ¹¹And the king said unto Haman, As for the silver, thou hast it; and for the nation, treat it as thou wilt. ¹²Then were the king's scribes called in the first month, on the thirteenth day, and they wrote as Haman commanded unto the captains and governors in every province, from India even to Ethiopia, unto an hundred seven and twenty provinces; and unto the rulers of the nations according to their languages, in the name of king Artaxerxes. ¹³And the letters were sent by posts throughout the kingdom of Artaxerxes, utterly to destroy the race of the Jews on the first day of the twelfth month, which is Adar, and to plunder their substance.

^{13a}And the following is the copy of the letter: The great king Artaxerxes writeth thus unto the rulers and inferior governors of an hundred seven and twenty provinces, from India even to Ethiopia, which 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 *to be* continually tranquil; desiring both to maintain the kingdom quietly and orderly unto the uttermost limits thereof, and to restore the peace that is desired by all men. ^{13c}But when I had enquired of my counsellors how this should be brought to pass, Haman, who excelleth in soundness of judgment among us, and hath been manifestly well inclined, without wavering, and with unshaken faithfulness, and hath obtained the second post in the kingdom ^{13d}informed us that a certain ill disposed people is mixed with all the tribes throughout the world, opposed in their laws to every other nation, and continually neglecting the commandments of the

kings, so that the united government that is blamelessly administered by us is not quietly established. ^{13e}Having therefore conceived that this nation alone is continually set in opposition to every man, introducing as a change a strange code of laws, and injuriously plotting to accomplish to worst of evils against our interests, and against the happy establishment of the kingship; ^{13f}we have accordingly appointed those which are signified unto you in the letters written by Haman, who is set over 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 a command was given unto all the nations to be ready against that day. ¹⁵And the business was hastened, even in Susa: and the king and Haman began to drink; but the city was troubled.

CHAPTER 4

But Mordecai having perceived what was done, rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth, and strawed ashes upon himself; and rushing through the open street of the city, he cried with a loud voice, A nation that hath done no wrong is to be destroyed. ²And he came even unto the king's gate, and stood: for it was not lawful for him to enter into the palace wearing sackcloth and ashes. ³And in every province where the letters were published, there was crying and lamentation and great mourning on the part of the Jews: they spread them sackcloth and ashes. ⁴And the queen's maids and her eunuchs went in and told her: and when she had heard what was done, she was disturbed; and she sent to clothe Mordecai, and take away his sackcloth: but he consented not. ⁵So Esther called for her eunuch Hathach, which waited upon her; and she sent to learn the truth of Mordecai. *(no verse 6)* ⁷And Mordecai shewed him what was done, and the promise which Haman had made the king, of ten thousand talents to be paid into the treasury, that he might destroy the Jews. ⁸And he gave him a copy of the writing that was published in Susa concerning their destruction, to shew it unto 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 wast nursed by mine hand: because Haman, which holdeth the next place unto 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. ⁹So Hathach went in, and told her all these words. ¹⁰And Esther said unto Hathach, Go unto Mordecai, and say, ¹¹that all the nations of the empire do know, that whosoever, 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 unto

the king these thirty days. ¹²And Hathach reported unto Mordecai all Esther's words. ¹³Then Mordecai said unto Hathach, Go, and say unto her, Esther, say not to thyself that thou alone shalt escape in the kingdom more than all the Jews. ¹⁴For if thou refuse to hearken on this occasion, there shall be help and protection unto the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house will perish: and who knoweth, if thou hast been made queen for this occasion? ¹⁵And Esther sent the one that came to her unto Mordecai, saying, ¹⁶Go, and gather together all the Jews that are in Susa, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night and day: and I also and my maidens will fast; and then will I go in unto the king contrary to the law, even if I must die.

¹⁷So Mordecai 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}O Lord, Lord, King ruling over all, for all things are in Thy power, and there is none that shall oppose Thee in Thy purpose to save Israel: ^{17c}for Thou hast made the heaven and the earth, and every wondrous thing in *the world* under the heaven: and Thou art Lord of all, and there is none that shall resist Thee, the Lord. ^{17d}Thou knowest all things: Thou knowest, Lord, that it is neither in insolence, nor haughtiness, nor love of glory, that I have done this, to refuse obeisance to the haughty Haman; 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 but Thee, my Lord; and I will not do these things in haughtiness. ^{17f}And now, O Lord God, the King, the God of Abraham, spare Thy people, for our enemies look upon us to our destruction, and have desired to destroy Thine ancient inheritance. ^{17g}Overlook not Thy portion, which thou hast redeemed out of the land of Egypt for Thine own self. ^{17h}Hear my prayer, and be propitious unto Thine inheritance, and turn our mourning into gladness, that we may live and sing praise unto Thy name, O Lord: and destroy not utterly the mouth of them that praise Thee, O Lord. ¹⁷ⁱAnd all Israel cried with all their might, because their death was before their eyes.

^{17j}Queen Esther also betook herself for refuge unto the Lord, being taken as it were in the agony of death; and having taken off her glorious apparel, she put on garments of anguish and mourning: and instead of grand perfumes, she filled her head with ashes and dung, and humbled her body greatly, and every place of her glad adorning she filled with the torn curls of her hair: and she besought the Lord God of Israel, and said, ^{17k}O my Lord, Thou only art our King: help me which am destitute, and have no helper but Thee; for my danger is in mine hand. ^{17l}From my birth I have heard in the tribe of my family, that Thou, O Lord, tookest Israel out of all the nations, and our fathers out of all their kindred, for a perpetual inheritance, and Thou hast wrought for them all that Thou hast said. ^{17m}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. ¹⁷ⁿNevertheless they have not been contented with the bitterness of our slavery, but have laid their hands on the hands of their idols, 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 quench the glory of Thine house and Thine altar, ^{17o}and to open the mouth of the nations to set forth the virtues of vanities, and *in order* that a mortal king should be admired for ever. ^{17p}O Lord, resign not Thy sceptre unto them that are not, and let them not laugh at our fall; but turn their counsel against themselves, and make an example of him that hath begun *this* against us. ^{17q}Remember us, O Lord, make Thyself known in the time of our affliction, and encourage me, O king of gods, and ruler of all dominion. ^{17r}Put harmonious speech into my mouth before the lion, and turn his heart to hate him that fighteth against us, to the utter destruction of him, and of them that consent with him. ^{17s}But deliver us by Thine hand, and help me, who am destitute, and have none but Thee, O Lord. ^{17t}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. ^{17u}Thou knowest my necessity, for I abhor the symbol of my proud station, which is upon mine head in the days of my being seen: I abhor it as a menstruous cloth, and I wear it not in the days of my tranquillity. ^{17v}And Thine handmaid hath not eaten at Haman's table, and I have not honoured the king's feast, nor drunk the wine of libations. ^{17w}Neither hath Thine handmaid rejoiced since the day of my promotion until now, except in Thee, O Lord God of Abraham. ^{17x}O God, who hast power over all, hearken to the voice of the desperate, and deliver us from the hand of them that imagine mischief; and deliver me out of my fear.

CHAPTER 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, which is the Overseer and Preserver of all things, she took her two maids, and upon one she leaned, as a delicate female; and the other followed bearing her train. ^{1b}And she was blooming in the perfection of her beauty; and her countenance was cheerful, as it were benevolent; but her heart was straitened for fear. ^{1c}Then 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 he was very terrible. ^{1d}Then lifting up his countenance resplendent with glory, he looked with intense anger: and the queen fell down, and changed her colour as she fainted, and bowed herself upon the head of the maid that went before her. ^{1e}Then God changed the spirit of the king to gentleness, and in intense feeling he sprang from his throne, and took her into his arms, till she recovered, and comforted her with peaceable words, and said unto her, ^{1f}Esther, What is the matter? I am thy brother; be of good cheer, thou shalt not die, for our command is openly declared unto thee, Draw nigh. ²And lifting up the golden sceptre, he laid it upon her neck, and embraced her, and said unto her, ^{2a}Then

said she 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 countenance is full of grace. ^{2b}And as she was speaking, she fainted, and fell: then the king was troubled, and all his servants comforted her. ³And 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. ⁴And Esther said, Today is my great day: if then it seem good unto the king, let both him and Haman come unto the banquet which I will prepare this day. ⁵Then the king said, Hasten Haman hither, that we may perform the word of Esther. So they both come to the banquet whereof Esther had spoken. ⁶And the king said unto Esther at the banquet, What is thy request, Queen Esther? speak, and thou shalt have all that thou requirest. ⁷And she said, My request and my petition is: ⁸if I have found favour in the sight of the king, let the king and Haman come again to morrow to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and to morrow I will do the same.

⁹So went Haman forth from the king very glad and merry: but when Haman saw Mordecai the Jew in the court, he was greatly enraged. ¹⁰And going into his own house, he called his friends, and Zeresh his wife. ¹¹And he shewed them his riches, and the glory wherewith the king had invested him, and how he had caused him to take precedence and bear chief rule in the kingdom. ¹²And Haman said, The queen hath called no one to the feast with the king but me, and I am invited tomorrow. ¹³But these things please me not, while I see Mordecai the Jew in the court. ¹⁴Then said Zeresh his wife and his friends unto him, Let a gallows be made for thee of fifty cubits, and in the morning speak thou unto the king, and let Mordecai be hanged on the gallows: but do thou go in with the king unto the banquet, and be merry. And the saying pleased Haman; and the gallows was prepared.

CHAPTER 6

But that night the Lord took away sleep from the king, and he told his servant to bring in the books, the registers of daily events, to read to him. ²And he found the records concerning Mordecai, how he had told the king concerning the king's chamberlains, when they kept guard, and sought to lay hands on Artaxerxes. ³And the king said, What honour or favour have we done to Mordecai? Then said the king's servants, Thou hast not done any thing to him. ⁴And while the king enquired about the kindness of Mordecai, behold, Haman was in the court. And the king said, Who is in the court? Now Haman was come in, to speak unto the king that he should hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared. ⁵And the king's servants said, Behold, Haman standeth in the court. And the king said, Call him. ⁶And the king said unto Haman, What shall I do to the man whom I wish to honour? And Haman said within himself, Whom would the king honour but myself? ⁷and he said unto the king, As for the man whom the king desireth to honour, ⁸let the king's servants bring the robe of fine linen which the king putteth on,

and the horses that the king rideth upon, ⁹and let him give it to one of the king's noble friends, and let him array the man whom the king loveth; and let him mount him on the horse, and proclaim through the street of the city, saying, Thus shall it be done unto every man whom the king honoureth. ¹⁰Then the king said to Haman, Thou hast well said: even so do to Mordecai the Jew, that waiteth in the palace: and let not a word of what thou hast spoken be neglected. ¹¹So Haman took the robe and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and mounted him on the horse, and went through the street of the city, and proclaimed, saying, Thus shall it be unto every man whom the king desireth to honour. ¹²And Mordecai came again to the palace: but Haman went home mourning, and having his head covered. ¹³And Haman told Zeresh his wife and his friends the events that had befallen him: then said his friends and his wife unto him, If Mordecai be of the race of the Jews, and thou hast begun to be humbled before him, thou shalt surely fall, and thou shalt not be able to withstand him; for the living God is with him. ¹⁴While they were yet talking, the chamberlains arrived, to hasten Haman to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

CHAPTER 7

So the king and Haman went in to drink with the queen. ²And the king said unto Esther on the second day at the banquet, What is it, queen Esther? and what is thy request? and what is thy petition? and it shall be performed for thee, even to the half of my kingdom. ³And she answered and said, If I have found favour in the sight of the king, let my life be granted at my petition, and my people at my request. ⁴For both I, and my people, are sold for destruction, and pillage, and slavery; 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. ⁵And the king said, Who is this that hath dared to do this thing? ⁶And Esther said, The adversary is Haman, this wicked man. Then Haman was troubled before the king and the queen. ⁷And the king rose up from the banquet to go into the garden: and Haman began to intreat the queen; for he saw that he was in an evil case. ⁸Then the king returned from the garden; and Haman had fallen upon the bed, intreating the queen. And the king said, Wilt thou even force my wife in my house? And when Haman heard it, he changed his countenance. ⁹And Harbona, one of the chamberlains, said unto the king, Behold, Haman hath also prepared a gallows for Mordecai, who had spoken concerning the king, and a gallows of fifty cubits high hath been set up in the premises of Haman. Then the king said, Let him be hanged thereon. ¹⁰So Haman was hanged on the gallows that had been prepared for Mordecai: and the king's wrath was appeased.

CHAPTER 8

And on that day did king Artaxerxes give all that belonged to Haman the slanderer unto Esther: and Mordecai was called by the king; for Esther had shewed that he was related to her. ²And the king took the ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai: and Esther appointed Mordecai over all that had been Haman's. ³And she spake yet again unto the king, and fell at his feet, and besought him to put away the mischief of Haman, and all that he had done against the Jews. ⁴Then the king stretched out the golden sceptre to Esther; and Esther arose to stand before the king. ⁵And Esther said, If it seem good to thee, and I have found favour in thy sight, let an command be sent that the letters sent by Haman may be reversed, that were written for the destruction of the Jews which are in thy kingdom. ⁶For 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 unto Esther, If I have given and freely granted thee all that was Haman's, and hanged him upon a gallows, what dost thou yet further seek? ⁸Write ye also in my name, as it seemeth good to you, and seal it with my ring: for whatsoever orders are written at the command of the king, and sealed with my ring, it is not lawful to gainsay them. ⁹Then were 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 unto the Jews, whatsoever the king had commanded to the stewards and chiefs of the satraps from India even unto Ethiopia, an hundred twenty and seven satraps, according to the several provinces, according to their languages. ¹⁰And they were written by order of the king, and sealed with his ring; and they sent the letters by the posts: ¹¹wherein he charged them to use their own laws in every city, and to help each other, and to use their adversaries, and them that attacked them, as they pleased, ¹²on one day in all the kingdom of Artaxerxes, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is Adar. ^{12a}And the following is the copy of the letter of the orders. ^{12b}The great king Artaxerxes sendeth greeting unto the rulers of provinces in an hundred twenty and seven satrapies from India unto Ethiopia, even to them that are faithful to our interests. ^{12c}Many that have been greatly honoured with the most abundant kindness of their benefactors have conceived ambitious designs, and endeavour to hurt not our subjects only; but moreover, not being able to bear prosperity, they also do endeavour to practise against their own benefactors. ^{12d}And they would take not only thankfulness away from among men, but also, lifted up with the glorious words of men that are strangers unto good, they think to escape the sin-hating vengeance of the everseeing God. ^{12e}And oftentimes evil exhortation hath made partakers of the guilt of shedding innocent blood, and hath involved in remediless calamities, many of them that were appointed to offices of authority, which had been entrusted with their friends' affairs; ^{12f}while men, by the false sophistry of 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 traditionary accounts, as it is at once within 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, ¹²ⁱadopting needful changes, and ever judging those cases which come under our notice, with truly equitable decision. ^{12j}For seeing Haman, a Macedonian, the son of Hammedatha, being indeed a stranger from the blood of the Persians, and differing widely from our mild course of government, having been hospitably entertained by us, ^{12k}obtained so large a share of our universal kindness, as to be called our father, and to continue the next person to the royal throne, revered of all: ^{12l}he, however, overcome by the pride of his station, endeavoured to deprive us of our dominion, and our life; ^{12m}having by various and subtle devices demanded for destruction both Mordecai our deliverer and principal benefactor, and Esther the blameless consort of our kingdom, with their whole nation. ¹²ⁿFor by these methods he thought, having surprised us in a defenceless state, to translate the dominion of the Persians to the Macedonians. ^{12o}But we find that the Jews, who have been consigned unto destruction by the thrice guilty man, are not malefactors, but living according to the most just laws: ^{12p}and being sons of the living God, the Most High and Mighty, who maintaineth the kingdom both unto us as well to our progenitors, in the most excellent order. ^{12q}Wherefore ye shall do well in refusing to obey the letters sent by Haman the son of Hammedatha, for he that hath done these things hath been hanged at the gates of Susa with his whole family, Almighty God having speedily returned to him a worthy recompence. ^{12r}We enjoin you then, having openly published a copy of this letter in every place, to give the Jews leave to use their own lawful customs, and to strengthen them, that on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month Adar, on the selfsame day, they may defend themselves against them that attacked them in a time of affliction. ^{12s}For in the place of the destruction of the holy race, Almighty God hath granted them this gladness. ^{12t}Do ye therefore also, among your feasts, keep a distinct day with all festivity, that both now and hereafter it may be a day of deliverance unto us, and unto those that are well disposed toward the Persians; but unto those that conspired against us a memorial of destruction. ^{12u}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 unpassable by men, but also most hateful to wild beasts and birds together. ¹³And 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 commandment; and the ordinance was also published in Susa. ¹⁵And Mordecai 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. ¹⁶And the Jews had light and gladness, ¹⁷in every city and province wheresoever the ordinance was published; wheresoever the proclamation happened, the Jews had joy and gladness, feasting and mirth: and many of the nations were circumcised, and became Jews, for fear of the Jews.

CHAPTER 9

For in the twelfth month, on the thirteenth day of the month, which is Adar, came the letters written by the king. ²In that day the adversaries of the Jews perished: for none resisted, through fear of them. ³For the chiefs of the satraps, and the princes, and the royal scribes, honoured the Jews; for the fear of Mordecai lay upon them. ⁴For the king's commandment was in force, that he should be celebrated in all the kingdom. ⁵And the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter, and destruction, and did what they would unto those that hated them. ⁶And in the city Susa the Jews slew five hundred men: ⁷both Parshandatha, and Dalphon, and Aspatha, ⁸and Poratha, and Adalia, and Aridatha, ⁹and Parmashta, and Arisai, and Aridai, and Vajezatha, ¹⁰the ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews, and they spoiled on the same day: ¹¹and the number of them that perished in Susa was rendered unto the king. ¹²And 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? ¹³And Esther said unto the king, Let it be granted unto the Jews so to use them to morrow as to hang the ten sons of Haman. ¹⁴And he permitted it to be so done; and he gave up to the Jews the bodies of the sons of Haman to hang. ¹⁵And the Jews gathered themselves together in Susa on the fourteenth day of Adar, and slew three hundred men, but spoiled no property. ¹⁶And the rest of the Jews that were in the kingdom gathered themselves together, and helped one another, and obtained rest from their foes: for they destroyed fifteen thousand of them on the fourteenth day of Adar, but took no spoil. ¹⁷And they rested on the fourteenth day of the same month, and kept it as a day of rest with joy and gladness. ¹⁸And the Jews in the city Susa gathered themselves together also on the fourteenth day, and rested; and they kept also the fifteenth. ¹⁹Because of this then it is that the Jews *that are* dispersed in every strange land keep the fourteenth of Adar as an holy day, sending portions each to his neighbour.

²⁰And Mordecai 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; ²¹to establish these days as joyful days, and to keep the fourteenth and fifteenth of Adar; ²²for on these day the Jews obtained rest from their enemies: and the month which was Adar, wherein a change was made for them, from mourning into joy, and from sorrow to a good day: to pass the whole of it in good days of feasting and gladness, sending portions unto their friends, and to the poor. ²³And the Jews favourably received it according as Mordecai wrote unto them, ²⁴shewing how Haman the son of Hammedatha the Macedonian fought against them, how he made a decree, and cast lots utterly to destroy them; ²⁵also how he went in to the king, telling him to hang Mordecai: but all the calamities he tried to bring upon the Jews came upon himself, and he was hanged, and his children. ²⁶Therefore these days were called Purim, because of the lots; (for in their

tongue they are called Purim;) because of the words of this letter, and because of all they suffered on account of it, and all that happened unto them. ²⁷And Mordecai established it, and the Jews took upon themselves, and upon their seed, and upon those that were joined unto them, to observe it; neither would they by any means behave differently: but these days were to be a memorial kept in every generation, and city, and family, and province. ²⁸And these days of the Purim shall be kept for ever, and their memorial shall not fail in any generation. ²⁹And queen Esther, the daughter of Aminadab, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote all that they had done, and the confirmation of the letter of Purim. ³¹And Mordecai and Esther the queen established these things unto themselves for themselves, then also establishing them according to their well being, and their counsel. ³²And Esther established the matter by a command for ever; and it was written for a memorial.

CHAPTER 10

And the king laid a tribute upon the kingdom both by land and by sea. ²And his strength and valour, and the riches and glory of his kingdom, behold, they are written in the books of the Persians and Medes for a memorial. ³And Mordecai came into the place of king Artaxerxes, and was great in the kingdom, and honoured by the Jews, and passed his life beloved of all his nation.

^{3a}And Mordecai said, These things are done of God. ^{3b}For I remember concerning the dream that I had concerning these things: for not even one word of them hath failed. ^{3c}There was the little fountain, that became a river, and there was light, and much sun, and water. The river is Esther, whom the king married, and made queen. ^{3d}The two serpents are I myself and Haman. ^{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 unto the Lord, 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. ³ⁱAnd God remembered His people, and gave vindication unto His own inheritance. ^{3j}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.

^{3k}In the fourth year of the reign of Ptolemy and Cleopatra, Dositheus, who said that he was a priest and a Levite, brought in the published letter of Purim, which they said existed, and which Lysimachus the son of Ptolemy, who was in Jerusalem, had interpreted.