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Esther

Queen Vashti Disobeys the King

1 This is what happened during the time that Xerxes was king. Xerxes ruled over the 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia. **2** King Xerxes ruled from his throne* in the capital city of Susa.

3 In the third year of Xerxes' rule, he gave a party for his officers and leaders. The army leaders and important leaders from all of Persia and Media were there. **4** The party continued for 180 days. All during that time, King Xerxes was showing the great wealth of his kingdom. And he was showing everyone the majestic beauty and wealth of his palace.* **5** And when those 180 days were over, King Xerxes gave another party that continued for seven days. That party was held in the inside garden of the palace. All the people that were in the capital city of Susa were invited, from the most important to the least important person. **6** That inside garden had white and blue linen* hangings around the room. Those hangings were held in place with cords of white linen and purple material on silver rings and marble pillars. There were couches made of gold and silver. Those couches were setting on mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl, and other expensive stones. **7** Wine was served in golden cups. And every cup was different! And there was plenty of the king's wine, because the king was very generous. **8** The king had given a command to his servants. He told them that each guest must be given as much wine as he wanted. And the wine server obeyed the king.

9 Queen Vashti also gave a party for the women in the king's palace.

10-11 On the seventh day of the party, King Xerxes was in high spirits from drinking the wine. He gave a command to the seven eunuchs* that served him. Those eunuchs were: Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas. He commanded those seven eunuchs to bring Queen Vashti to him wearing her royal crown. She was to come so she could show her beauty to the leaders and important people. She was very beautiful.

12 But when those servants told Queen Vashti about the king's command, she refused to come. Then the king became very angry. **13-14** It was the custom for the king to ask the advice of the experts about the law and punishments. So King Xerxes spoke with the wise men that understood the laws. Those wise men were very close to the king. Their names were: Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan. They were the seven most important officials of Persia and Media. They had special privileges to see the king. They were the highest officials in the kingdom. **15** The king asked those men, "What does the law say must be done to Queen Vashti? She has not obeyed the command of King Xerxes that the eunuchs have taken to her."

16 Then Memucan answered the king with the other officials listening, "Queen Vashti has done wrong. She has done wrong against the king and also against all the leaders and people of all the provinces of King Xerxes. **17** I say that, because all the other women will hear

throne The chair of a king or queen.

palace A large house for the king and his family.

linen Thread or cloth made from the fibers of the flax plant.

eunuchs Men whose testicles have been removed. Rulers often gave such men important positions.

about what Queen Vashti did. And then other women will stop obeying their husbands. They will say to their husbands, ‘King Xerxes commanded Queen Vashti to be brought to him, but she refused to come.’

¹⁸“Today the wives of the Persian and Median leaders have heard what the queen did. And those women will be influenced by the thing she did. Those women will do the same thing to the king’s important leaders. And there will be plenty of disrespect and anger.

¹⁹“So, if it pleased the king, here is a suggestion: Let the king give a royal command and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media. The laws of Persia and Media can’t be changed. The royal command should be that Vashti is never again to enter the presence of King Xerxes. Also let the king give her royal position to someone else that is better than she. ²⁰Then when the king’s command is announced in all parts of his large kingdom, all the women will respect their husbands. From the most important to the least important, all the women will respect their husbands.”

²¹The king and his important officials were happy with this advice. So King Xerxes did as Memucan suggested. ²²King Xerxes sent letters to all parts of the kingdom. He sent those letters to each province, written in its own language. He sent those letters to each nation in its own language. Those letters announced in every person’s language that every man was to be ruler over his own family.

Esther Made Queen

2 Later, King Xerxes stopped being angry. Then he remembered Vashti and what she had done. He remembered his commands about her. ²Then the king’s personal servants had a suggestion. They said, “Search for beautiful young virgins* for the king. ³Let the king choose leaders in every province of his kingdom. Then let those leaders bring every beautiful young virgin to the capital city of Susa. Those girls will be put with the group of the king’s women. And they will be under the

care of Hegai, the king’s eunuch, that is in charge of the women. Then give beauty treatments to all of them. ⁴Then let the girl that is pleasing to the king become the new queen in Vashti’s place.” The king liked this suggestion, so he accepted it.

⁵Now there was a Jew from the family group of Benjamin named Mordecai. Mordecai was the son of Jair, and Jair was the son of Shimei, and Shimei was the son of Kish. Mordecai was in the capital city, Susa. ⁶Mordecai had been carried into captivity from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. He was with the group that was taken into captivity with Jehoiachin, king of Judah. ⁷Mordecai had a girl cousin named Hadassah. She didn’t have a father or a mother, so Mordecai took care of her. Mordecai had adopted her as his own daughter when her father and mother died. Hadassah was also called Esther. Esther had a very pretty face and a good figure.

⁸When the king’s command had been heard, many girls were brought to the capital city of Susa. Those girls were put under the care of Hegai. Esther was one of these women. Esther was taken to the king’s palace* and put into Hegai’s care. Hegai was in charge of the king’s women. ⁹Hegai liked Esther. She became his favorite. So Hegai quickly gave Esther beauty treatments and special food. Hegai chose seven women servants from the king’s palace and gave them to Esther. Then Hegai moved Esther and her seven girl servants into the best place where the king’s women lived. ¹⁰Esther didn’t tell anyone that she was a Jew. She didn’t tell anyone about her family background, because Mordecai had told her not to. ¹¹Every day Mordecai walked back and forth near the area where the king’s women lived. He did that because he wanted to find out how Esther was, and what was happening to her.

¹²Before a girl could take her turn to go in before King Xerxes, this is what she had to do: She had to complete twelve months of beauty treatments. That was six months with oil of myrrh and six months with perfumes

virgins A pure woman that has not had sexual relations with anyone.

palace A large house for the king and his family.

and different kinds of makeup. ¹³And this is the way a girl would go to the king: They gave her anything she wanted from the house of the king's women. ¹⁴In the evening, the girl would go to the king's palace.* And in the morning, she would return to another area where the king's women lived. Then she would be placed under the care of a man named Shaashgaz. Shaashgaz was the king's eunuch* in charge of the concubines.* The girl would not go back to the king again unless he was pleased with her. Then he would call her by name to come back to him.

¹⁵When the time came for Esther to go to the king, she didn't ask for anything. She only wanted Hegai, the king's eunuch* that was in charge of the king's women, to suggest what she should take. (Esther is the girl Mordecai had adopted, the daughter of his uncle Abihail). Everyone that looked at Esther liked her. ¹⁶So Esther was taken to King Xerxes in the palace.* This happened in the tenth month, the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his rule.

¹⁷The king loved Esther more than any of the other girls. And she became his favorite. He approved of her more than any of the other girls. So King Xerxes put a crown on Esther's head and made her the new queen in Vashti's place. ¹⁸And the king gave a big party for Esther. It was for all his important people and leaders. He announced a holiday in all the provinces. And he sent out gifts to people, because he was a generous king.

Mordecai Learns about an Evil Plan

¹⁹Mordecai was sitting next to the king's gate at the time the girls were gathered together the second time. ²⁰Esther had still kept it a secret that she was a Jew. She had not told anyone about her family background. That is what Mordecai had told her to do. She still obeyed Mordecai just as she had done when he was taking care of her.

palace A large house for the king and his family.

eunuch A man whose testicles have been removed. Rulers often gave such men important positions.

concubines Women that were like wives to a man.

²¹During the time Mordecai was sitting next to the king's gate, this happened: Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's officers that guarded the doorway, became angry at the king. They began to make plans to kill King Xerxes. ²²But Mordecai learned about those plans and told Queen Esther. Then Queen Esther told the king. She also told the king that Mordecai was the one that had learned about that evil plan. ²³Then the report was checked out. It was learned that Mordecai's report was true. The two guards that had planned to kill the king were hanged on a post. All these things were written down in a book of the king's histories in front of the king.

Haman's Plan to Destroy the Jews

3 After these things happened, King Xerxes honored Haman. Haman was the son of a man named Hammedatha, the Agagite. The king promoted Haman and gave him a place of honor more important than any of the other leaders. ²All of the king's leaders at the king's gate would bow down and give honor to Haman. That is what the king commanded those men to do. But Mordecai refused to bow down or give honor to Haman. ³Then the king's leaders at the gate asked Mordecai, "Why don't you obey the king's command to bow down to Haman?"

⁴Day after day, those king's leaders spoke to Mordecai. But he refused to obey the command to bow down to Haman. So those leaders told Haman about it. They wanted to see what Haman would do about Mordecai. Mordecai had told those leaders that he was a Jew. ⁵When Haman saw that Mordecai refused to bow down to him or give him honor, he was very angry. ⁶Haman had learned that Mordecai was a Jew. But he was not satisfied with killing only Mordecai. Haman also wanted to find a way to destroy all of Mordecai's people, the Jews, in all of Xerxes' kingdom.

⁷In the twelfth year of King Xerxes' rule, in the first month, the month of Nisan, Haman threw lots* to choose a special day and

lots Sticks, stones, or pieces of bone used like dice for making decisions. See Proverbs 16:33.

month. And the twelfth month, the month of Adar was chosen. (At that time, the lot was called “pur.”) ⁸Then Haman came to King Xerxes. He said, “King Xerxes, there is a certain group of people scattered among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom. Those people keep themselves separate from other people. Their customs are different from those of all other people. And those people don’t obey the king’s laws. It is not best for the king to allow those people to continue to live in your kingdom.

⁹“If it pleases the king, I have a suggestion: Give a command to destroy those people. And I will put 10,000 silver coins into the king’s treasury. That money could be used to pay the men that do these things.”

¹⁰So the king took the official ring off his finger and gave it to Haman. Haman was the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite. Haman was the enemy of the Jews. ¹¹Then the king said to Haman, “Keep the money. Do what you want with those people.”

¹²Then on the 13th day of the first month the king’s secretaries were called. They wrote out all of Haman’s commands in the language of each province. And they wrote them in the language of each group of people. They wrote to the king’s satraps (*leaders*), the governors of the different provinces, and the leaders of the different groups of people. They wrote with the authority of King Xerxes himself, and sealed the commands with the king’s own ring.

¹³Messengers carried the letters to all the king’s provinces. The letters were the king’s command to ruin, kill, and completely destroy all the Jews. That meant young people and old people, women, and little children, too. The command was to kill all the Jews on a single day. That day was to be the 13th day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar. And the command was to take all of the things that belonged to the Jews.

¹⁴A copy of the letters with that command was to be given as a law. It was to be a law in every province and announced to the people of every nation living in the kingdom. Then all those people would be ready for that day. ¹⁵At the king’s command the messengers hurried off. The command was given in the capital city

of Susa. The king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Susa was confused.

Mordecai Persuades Esther to Help

4 Mordecai heard about all that had been done. When he heard about the king’s commands against the Jews, he tore his clothes. Then he put on clothes of sadness and put ashes on his head. Then he went out into the city crying loudly. ²But Mordecai went only as far as the king’s gate. No one was allowed to enter that gate dressed in clothes of sadness. ³In every province where the king’s command had come, there was much crying and sadness among the Jews. They were fasting* and crying loudly. Many Jews were lying on the ground dressed in clothes of sadness with ashes on their heads.

⁴Esther’s women servants and eunuchs* came to her and told her about Mordecai. That made Queen Esther very sad and upset. She sent clothes for Mordecai to put on instead of the clothes of sadness. But he would not accept those clothes. ⁵Then Esther called Hathach. Hathach was one of the king’s eunuchs that had been chosen to serve her. Esther commanded him to find out what was bothering Mordecai, and why. ⁶So Hathach went out to where Mordecai was in the open place of the city in front of the king’s gate. ⁷Then Mordecai told Hathach everything that had happened to him. Mordecai told him about the exact amount of money Haman had promised to put into the king’s treasury for killing Jews. ⁸Mordecai also gave Hathach a copy of the king’s command to kill the Jews. That command had been sent out all over the city of Susa. He wanted Hathach to show it to Esther and tell her everything. And he told him to encourage Esther to go to the king and beg him for mercy for Mordecai and her people.

⁹Hathach went back and told Esther everything Mordecai had said.

¹⁰Then Esther told Hathach to say this to Mordecai: ¹¹“Mordecai, all the king’s leaders

fast(ing) To live without food for a special time of prayer and worship to God.

eunuchs Men whose testicles have been removed. Rulers often gave such men important positions.

and all the people of the king's provinces know this: The king has one law for any man or woman that goes to the king without being called. He must be put to death. The only way this law is not carried out is if the king puts out his gold scepter* to the person. If the king does that, then that person's life will be saved. And I have not been called to go see the king for 30 days."

¹²⁻¹³Then Esther's message was given to Mordecai. When Mordecai got her message, he sent his answer back: "Esther, don't think that just because you live in the king's house you will be the only Jew to escape. ¹⁴If you keep quiet now, help and freedom for the Jews will come from another place. But you and your father's family will all die. And who knows, maybe you have been chosen to be the queen for such a time as this?"

¹⁵⁻¹⁶Then Esther sent this answer to Mordecai: "Mordecai, go and get all the Jews in Susa together, and fast* for me. Don't eat or drink for three days and nights. I will fast like you, and my girl servants will fast, too. After we fast, I will go to the king. I know it is against the law to go to the king if he didn't call me, but I will do it anyway. If I die, I die."

¹⁷So Mordecai went away. He did everything Esther told him to do.

Esther Speaks to the King

5 On the third day, Esther put on her special robes. Then she stood in the inside area of the king's palace.* That area was in front of the king's hall. The king was sitting on his throne* in the hall. He was sitting facing the place where people enter the throne room. ²Then the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court. When he saw her, he was very pleased. He held out to her the gold scepter* that was in his hand. So Esther went in to the room and went near the king. Then she touched the end of the king's gold scepter.

scepter A special stick that a king holds in his hand.

fast To live without food for a special time of prayer and worship to God.

palace A large house for the king and his family.

throne The chair of a king or queen.

³Then the king asked, "What is bothering you Queen Esther? What do you want to ask me? I will give you anything you ask for, even half my kingdom."

⁴Esther said, "I have prepared a party for you and Haman. Will you and Haman please come to the party today?"

⁵Then the king said, "Bring Haman quickly so that we may do what Esther asks."

So the king and Haman went to the party Esther had prepared for them. ⁶While they were drinking wine, the king asked Esther again, "Now Esther, what do you want to ask for? Ask for anything, I will give it to you. So, what is it you want? I will give you anything you want, up to half my kingdom."

⁷Esther answered, "This is what I want to ask for: ⁸If the king approves of me, and if it pleases the king to give me what I ask for, let the king and Haman come tomorrow. I will prepare another party for the king and Haman tomorrow. Then I will tell what I really want."

Haman's Anger at Mordecai

⁹Haman left the king's house that day very happy and in a good mood. But when he saw Mordecai at the king's gate, he became very angry at Mordecai. Haman was very mad at Mordecai because Mordecai didn't show any respect when Haman walked by. Mordecai was not afraid of Haman, and that made Haman mad. ¹⁰But, Haman controlled his anger and went home. Then Haman called his friends and his wife, Zeresh, together. ¹¹Haman started bragging about how rich he was. He was bragging to his friends about his many sons, and about all the ways the king had honored him. And he was bragging about how the king had promoted him higher than all the other leaders. ¹²"And that's not all," Haman added. "I'm the only person Queen Esther invited to be with the king at the party she gave. And the Queen has also invited me to be with the king again tomorrow. ¹³But all those things don't really make me happy. I'm not really happy as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the king's gate."

¹⁴Then Haman's wife Zeresh and all his friends had a suggestion. They said, "Tell someone to build a post to hang him on! Make

it 75 feet* tall! Then in the morning, ask the king to hang Mordecai on it. Then just go to the party with the king and you can be happy.”

Haman liked that suggestion, so he ordered someone to build the hanging post.

Mordecai Is Honored

6 That same night, the king could not sleep. So he told a servant to bring the history book and read it to him. (The Book of History of the Kings lists everything that happens during a king’s rule.) ²The servant read the book to the king. He read about the evil plan to kill King Xerxes. That was when Mordecai had learned about Bigthana and Teresh. Those two men were the king’s officers that guarded the doorway. They had planned to kill the king, but Mordecai learned about the plan and told someone about it.

³Then the king asked, “What honor and good things have been given to Mordecai for this?”

The servants answered the king, “Nothing has been done for Mordecai.”

⁴Haman had just entered the outer area of the king’s palace.* He had come to ask the king to hang Mordecai on the hanging post Haman had commanded to be built. [The king heard him.] The king said, “Who just came into the courtyard?” ⁵The king’s servants said, “Haman is standing in the courtyard.”

So the king said, “Bring him in.”

⁶When Haman came in, the king asked him a question. He said, “Haman, what should be done for a man the king wants to honor?”

Haman thought to himself, “Who is there that the king would want to honor more than me? The king is talking about honoring me, I’m sure.”

⁷So Haman answered the king, “Do this for the man the king loves to honor: ⁸Have the servants bring a special robe the king himself has worn. And also bring a horse the king himself has ridden. Have the servants put the king’s special mark on that horse’s head. ⁹Then put one of the king’s most important leaders in charge of the robe and the horse. And let that leader put the robe on the man the

king wants to honor. And then let him lead him on the horse through the city streets. As he leads him, let him announce, “This is done for the man the king wants to honor!””

¹⁰“Go quickly,” the king commanded Haman. “Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew. Mordecai is sitting near the king’s gate. Do everything that you suggested.”

¹¹So Haman got the robe and the horse. Then he put the robe on Mordecai and led him on horseback through the city streets. Haman announced ahead of Mordecai, “This is done for the man the king wants to honor!”

¹²After that, Mordecai went back to the king’s gate. But Haman hurried home. He covered his head because he was embarrassed and ashamed. ¹³Then Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him. Haman’s wife and the men that gave him advice said, “If Mordecai is a Jew, then you can’t win. You have already started to fall. Surely you will be ruined!”

¹⁴While those people were still talking to Haman, the king’s eunuchs* came to Haman’s house. They made Haman hurry to the party that Esther had prepared.

Haman Is Hanged

7 So the king and Haman went to eat with Queen Esther. ²Then as they were drinking wine on the second day of the party, the king again asked Esther a question, “Queen Esther, what is it you want to ask for? Ask anything and it will be given to you. What do you want? I will give you anything, even half my kingdom.”

³Then Queen Esther answered, “King, if you like me and it pleases you, please let me live! And I ask you to let my people live, too! That is what I ask for. ⁴Why? Because I and my people have been sold to be ruined, killed, and completely destroyed. If we had just been sold as slaves, I would have kept quiet, because that would not be enough of a problem to bother the king.”

75 feet Literally, “50 cubits.”
palace A large house for the king and his family.

eunuchs Men whose testicles have been removed. Rulers often gave such men important positions.

⁵Then King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, “Who did this to you? Where is the man that dared to do such a thing to your people?”

⁶Esther said, “The man against us, our enemy, is this wicked Haman.”

Then Haman was filled with terror before the king and queen. ⁷The king was very angry. He got up, left his wine, and went out into the garden. But Haman stayed inside to beg Queen Esther to save his life. Haman begged for his life because he knew that the king had already decided to kill him. ⁸Just as the king was coming back in from the garden to the party room, he saw Haman falling on the couch where Esther was lying. The king said with anger in his voice, “Will you attack the queen even while I am in the house?”

As soon as the king had said that, servants came in and killed Haman.* ⁹One of the eunuchs* that served the king was named Harbona. Harbona said, “A hanging post 75 feet* tall has been built near Haman’s house. Haman had it made so he could hang Mordecai on it. Mordecai is the man that helped you when he told about the evil plans to kill you.”

The king said, “Hang Haman on that post!”

¹⁰So they hanged Haman on the hanging post he had built for Mordecai. Then the king stopped being angry.

The King’s Order To Help the Jews

8 That same day King Xerxes gave Queen Esther all the things that belonged to Haman, the enemy of the Jews. Esther told the king that Mordecai was her cousin. Then Mordecai came to see the king. ²The king had gotten his ring back from Haman. The king took that ring off his finger and gave it to Mordecai. Then Esther put Mordecai in charge of all of the things that belonged to Haman.

³Then Esther spoke to the king again. She fell at the king’s feet and began crying. She begged the king to cancel the evil plan of

Haman the Agagite. Haman had thought up that plan to hurt the Jews.

⁴Then the king held out the gold scepter* to Esther. Esther got up and stood in front of the king. ⁵Then Esther said, “King, if you like me and if it pleases you, please do this for me. Please do this if you think it is a good idea. If the king is happy with me, please write a command that would stop the command that Haman sent out. Haman the Agagite thought of a plan to destroy the Jews in all the king’s provinces, and he sent out commands for that to happen. ⁶I am begging the king because I could not bear to see those terrible things happen to my people. I could not bear to see my family killed.”

⁷King Xerxes answered Queen Esther and Mordecai the Jew. This is what the king said, “Because Haman was against the Jews, I have given his property to Esther. And my soldiers have hanged him on the hanging post. ⁸Now write another command by the authority of the king. Write it to help the Jews in a way that seems best to you. Then seal that order with the king’s special ring. No official letter written by the authority of the king and sealed with the king’s ring can be cancelled.”

⁹Very quickly the king’s secretaries were called. This was done on the 23rd day of the third month, the month of Sivan. Those secretaries wrote out all of Mordecai’s commands to the Jews, and to the satraps (*leaders*), the governors, and officials of the 127 provinces. Those provinces reached from India to Ethiopia. Those commands were written in the language of each province. And they were translated into the language of each group of people. And those commands were written to the Jews in their own language and their own alphabet. ¹⁰Mordecai wrote commands by the authority of King Xerxes. Then he sealed the letters with the king’s ring. And he sent those letters by messengers on horses. Those messengers rode fast horses which were raised especially for the king.

killed Haman Literally, “covered Haman’s face.”

eunuchs Men whose testicles have been removed. Rulers often gave such men important positions.

75 feet Literally, “50 cubits.”

scepter A special stick that a king holds in his hand.

¹¹The king's commands in those letters said this:

The Jews in every city have the right to gather together to protect themselves. They have the right to ruin, kill, and completely destroy any army from any group of people that might attack them and their women and children. And the Jews have the right to take and destroy the property of their enemies.

¹²The day that was set for the Jews to do this was the 13th day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar. The Jews were permitted to do this in all King Xerxes' provinces. ¹³A copy of the letter with the king's command was to be sent out. It became a law. It became a law in every province. They announced it to all the people of every nation living in the kingdom. They did this so the Jews would be ready for that special day. The Jews would be allowed to pay their enemies back. ¹⁴The messengers hurried out, riding on the king's horses. The king commanded those messengers to hurry. And that command was also put in the capital city of Susa.

¹⁵Mordecai left the king. Mordecai was wearing special clothes from the king. His clothes were blue and white, and he had on a large gold crown. He also had a purple robe made of the best linen.* There was a special celebration in Susa. The people were very happy. ¹⁶It was an especially happy day for the Jews. It was a day of great joy and happiness.

¹⁷Wherever the king's command went in every province and every city, there was joy and gladness among the Jews. The Jews were having parties and celebrating. And many of the common people from other groups became Jews. They did that because they were very afraid of the Jews.

Victory for the Jews

9 On the 13th day of the twelfth month (Adar), the people were supposed to obey the king's command. That was the day the

enemies of the Jews hoped to defeat them. But now, things had changed. Now, the Jews were stronger than their enemies who hated them. ²The Jews met together in their cities in all the provinces of King Xerxes. They met together so they would be strong enough to attack the people that wanted to destroy them. So no one was strong enough to stand against them. Those people were afraid of the Jews. ³And all the officials of the provinces, the satraps (*leaders*), the governors, and the king's administrators helped the Jews. All those leaders helped the Jews because they were afraid of Mordecai. ⁴Mordecai had become a very important man in the king's palace.* Everyone in the provinces knew his name and knew how important he was. And Mordecai became more and more powerful.

⁵The Jews defeated all their enemies. They used swords to kill and destroy their enemies. And the Jews did what they wanted to with those people that hated them. ⁶The Jews killed and destroyed 500 men in the capital city of Susa. ⁷The Jews also killed these men: Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, ⁸Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, ⁹Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vaizatha. ¹⁰These men were the ten sons of Haman. Haman son of Hammedatha was the enemy of the Jews. The Jews killed all those men, but they didn't take any of the things that belonged to them.

¹¹That day the king heard how many men had been killed in the capital city of Susa. ¹²So the king said to Queen Esther, "The Jews have killed 500 men in Susa, including Haman's ten sons. Now, what do you want done in the other provinces of the king? Tell me, and I will have it done. Ask, and I will do it."

¹³Esther said, "If it pleases the king, please let the Jews in Susa do the same thing again tomorrow. Also, hang the bodies of Haman's ten sons on posts."

¹⁴So the king gave the command. That law continued another day in Susa. And they hanged Haman's ten sons. ¹⁵The Jews in

linen Thread or cloth made from the fibers of the flax plant.

palace A large house for the king and his family.

Susa met together on the 14th day of the month of Adar. They killed 300 men in Susa, but they didn't take the things that belonged to those men.

¹⁶At the same time, the Jews living in the other provinces also met together. They met together so they would be strong enough to protect themselves. And so they got rid of their enemies. The Jews killed 75,000 of their enemies. But the Jews didn't take any of the things that belonged to those people. ¹⁷This happened on the 13th day of the month Adar. And on the 14th day the Jews rested. The Jews made that day a happy holiday.

The Festival of Purim

¹⁸The Jews in Susa had met together on the 13th and 14th days of the month of Adar. And then on the 15th day they rested. So they made the 15th day a happy holiday. ¹⁹So, the Jews that live in the country and small villages celebrate Purim on the 14th day Adar. They keep the 14th day as a happy holiday. On that day they have parties and give presents to each other.

²⁰Mordecai wrote everything down that had happened. And then he sent letters to all the Jews in all of King Xerxes' provinces. He sent letters far and near. ²¹Mordecai did that to tell the Jews to celebrate Purim every year on the 14th and 15th days of the month of Adar. ²²The Jews were to celebrate those days because on those days the Jews got rid of their enemies. And they were also to celebrate that month as the month when their sadness was turned into joy. And it was a month when their crying was changed into a day of celebration. Mordecai wrote letters to all the Jews. He told them to celebrate those days as a happy holiday. They should have parties and give gifts to each other and give presents to poor people.

²³So the Jews agreed to do what Mordecai had written to them. And they agreed to continue the celebration they had begun.

²⁴Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite was the enemy of all the Jews. He had made an evil plan against the Jews to destroy them.

And Haman had thrown the lot* to choose a day to ruin and to destroy the Jews. At that time, the lot was called a "pur,"¹ so the holiday is called "Purim."²⁵ Haman did those things, but Esther went to talk to the king. So he sent out new commands. These commands not only ruined Haman's plans, but these commands caused those bad things to happen to Haman and his family! So Haman and his sons were hung on the posts.

²⁶⁻²⁷At this time, lots* were called "purim". So this holiday is called "Purim." Mordecai wrote a letter and told the Jews to celebrate this holiday. And so the Jews started the custom of celebrating these two days every year. ²⁸They do this to help them remember what they had seen happen to them. The Jews and all the people that join them celebrate these two days every year at the right time in just the right way. Every generation and every family remembers these two days. They celebrate this holiday in each and every province and in each and every town. And the Jews will never stop celebrating the days of Purim. The descendants* of those Jews will always remember this holiday.

²⁹So Queen Esther the daughter of Abihail and Mordecai the Jew wrote an official letter about Purim. They wrote with full authority of the king to prove that the second letter was true. ³⁰So Mordecai sent letters to all the Jews in the 127 provinces of King Xerxes' kingdom. Mordecai told the people that the holiday should bring peace and make people trust* each other. ³¹Mordecai wrote these letters to tell the people to start celebrating Purim. And he told them when to celebrate this new holiday. Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had sent out the command for the Jews. They did this to establish this two-day holiday for themselves and their descendants.* They will remember this

lots Sticks, stones, or pieces of bone used like dice for making decisions. See Proverbs 16:33.

descendants A person's children and all of their future families.

peace ... trust Or "fellowship and truth." Zech. 8:19 teaches that this is how people should celebrate the holidays and why God gave them.

holiday just like they remember the other holidays when they fast* and cry about the bad things that had happened. ³²Esther's letter made the rules for Purim official. And these things were written down in a book.

Mordecai Honored

10 King Xerxes made people pay taxes. All the people in the kingdom, even the faraway cities on the sea coast, had to pay taxes. ²And all the great things that Xerxes did

are written in the Book of History of the Kings of Media and Persia. And also written in those history books are all the things that Mordecai did. The king made Mordecai a great man. ³Mordecai the Jew was second in importance to King Xerxes. Mordecai was the most important man among the Jews. And his fellow Jews respected him very much. They respected Mordecai because he worked hard for the good of his people. And Mordecai brought peace for all of the Jews.

fast To live without food for a special time of prayer and worship to God.