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v92

Esther

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Esther

1 This *is the story of something that* happened during the time that *a king named* Ahasuerus ruled *the land of Persia*. The empire of this King Ahasuerus had 127 provinces and included all of the territory between India *in the east* and Ethiopia *in the west*. 2 At that time King Ahasuerus was ruling his empire from Susa, the capital city *of Persia*. 3 During the third year that Ahasuerus ruled his empire, he hosted a feast for all of his officials and for every important person who worked for him. He also invited the officers who served in the *combined* army of *the kingdoms of* Persia and Media, the wealthy landowners, and the officials of the provinces. The king was present in person *to host the feast*. 4 Ahasuerus entertained his guests fabulously because he wanted to demonstrate that his empire was extremely wealthy and that he was a very rich and powerful king. *The feast lasted* for six months.

5 At the end of those six months, *after that feast was over,* the king hosted a *second* feast. This feast was for all of the people in the royal stronghold in Susa, including both rich and poor. He held this feast in the courtyard of his palace garden. It lasted for a whole week. 6 *In the courtyard,* white and blue curtains were hanging from white and purple cords attached to silver rings on marble pillars. The guests reclined on couches made of gold and silver. These were set on a mosaic floor that was made of red marble, white marble, and pearl bordered with black marble. 7 The attendants served wine in golden cups. *The king was so rich that he had a great many of these cups,* and no two of them were alike. The king had the attendants serve great amounts of his own royal wine to the guests. 8 Ahasuerus gave his guests a special privilege. He made the attendants who served the wine follow this rule: "No one has to drink if they do not want to." All the guests could drink as little or as much as they wanted. 9 *While the king was entertaining the men in the courtyard,* Queen Vashti, *his wife,* was hosting a feast for the women. She hosted it inside the royal palace where King Ahasuerus lived.

10 On the seventh day, when King Ahasuerus was feeling good from drinking wine, he called the seven *castrated* guardians who served him personally. (Their names were Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Karkas.) 11 Queen Vashti was a very beautiful woman. Ahasuerus wanted the people and officials who served in the royal court to see how beautiful she was. So the king told his seven personal servants to bring Queen Vashti to him. He told them to have her wear her royal crown. 12 But when the guardians came and told Queen Vashti what the king had commanded, she refused to come. *The guardians reported this to the king, and* the king became very enraged. 13 It was the habit of the king to consult with certain advisors who knew the law and could make good decisions. So he spoke to those advisors, who knew the right way to do things. 14 The advisors whom the king relied on most were Karshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memukan. These seven officials were from various places in *the kingdoms of* Persia and Media. They advised the king personally. They were the most powerful officials in the empire. 15 The king said to them, "I sent those guardians to Queen Vashti with a command, but she did not obey me. According to the law, what should we do with her?"

16 Then Memukan answered the king, *speaking loud enough that* both he and his officials could hear. He said, "Queen Vashti has done wrong, and not only against the king. She has also done wrong against all the officials and people groups in all the provinces that King Ahasuerus rules! 17 This is what will happen. Women all over the empire will hear about what the queen did. They will say, 'King Ahasuerus commanded his servants to bring Queen Vashti to him, but she did not come! *So if even the queen can disobey the king, why should I have to obey my husband?*' Then women will stop respecting their husbands. 18 Even today, the leading women of Persia and Media will hear what the queen did. They will start to disobey *their husbands, even though they are* officials of the king. They will treat them with disrespect, and this will make their husbands angry with them. That will be bad enough by itself, *even if the news does not spread any farther*. 19 If it pleases you *to do so*, O king, you should personally issue a royal decree and have scribes add it to the laws of Persia and Media, which no one can change. *This decree should say* that Vashti can never come into your presence again. Then you should choose a different woman to be your queen, one who will obey you. 20 That way, even though your empire is very large, everyone in it will hear about your decree *to punish Vashti for disobeying you*. Then all the women will respect and obey their husbands. This will be true of every husband in the empire."

21 This seemed like a good idea to the king and his officials. So King Ahasuerus followed the advice of Memukan. 22 The king sent letters to every province in his empire. He wrote to every province using its own alphabet and to each people group in its own language. The letters said that men should be the masters over their wives and children. They also said that a husband should be able to give orders to his wife in his own native language *and that she should understand and obey*.

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

5 At that time, there was a Jewish man named Mordecai living in the capital city of Susa. He was from the tribe of Benjamin. His father was named Jair, his grandfather was named Shimei, and his great-grandfather was named Kish. 6 Many years earlier, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had taken Kish away from Jerusalem and brought him to Babylon along with many other captives. Nebuchadnezzar took them away from Jerusalem at the same time that he took King

Jeconiah of Judah away from Jerusalem and brought him to Babylon. 7 Now Mordecai was taking care of his cousin, who was an orphan. Her *Hebrew* name was Hadassah, and her *Persian* name was Esther. When her father and mother died, Mordecai had adopted her as his own daughter. Esther was now a young woman, and she was exceptionally attractive.

8 And so this is what happened: Messengers went *throughout the empire* and proclaimed the new law that the king had spoken. At the same time, the officers *whom the king had appointed in each province* brought many *beautiful* young women to the capital city of Susa and put them under the custody of Hegai. He was the man who took care of the young women *who lived in the harem for virgins*. *Because Esther was exceptionally attractive,* the officers also brought her to the king's palace and put her under the custody of Hegai. 9 Hegai was very impressed with Esther, and he treated her favorably. He quickly arranged for Esther to receive her beauty treatments and her allotment of food. He also chose seven female servants from the king's palace and assigned them to be her personal attendants. He also moved Esther and her attendants to the best rooms in the harem for virgins. 10 Mordecai had warned Esther that she should not tell anyone what people group she was from. So she did not tell anyone that she was a Jew or who her relatives were. 11 Mordecai wanted to know how Esther was doing and what was happening to her. So each and every day, he would walk around in front of the courtyard of the harem for virgins. That way he could ask people who were going in and out of the harem how she was doing.

12 Each young woman in the harem, one at a time, was going to *have sexual relations with* King Ahasuerus *and become one of his concubines*. But before her turn came, each woman received a full year of beauty treatments, using techniques that had been developed for women *in Persia*. This is how the beauty treatments were completed: For the first six months, *a woman's attendants would rub her body every day* with olive oil mixed with myrrh. For the next six months, *her attendants would rub her body every day* with perfumes and lotions designed for women. 13 This is the way that they would prepare a young woman to go *and have sexual relations* with the king *and become one of his concubines*. She could take whatever clothing and jewelry she wanted from the harem for virgins and wear them when she went to the king's palace. 14 The king's servants would bring her *to the king's private rooms* in the evening. The next morning, they would bring her to the other harem, the one for concubines. There a man named Shaashgaz would take charge of her, because he was the *castrated* royal guardian who took care of the concubines. *The young woman would live there for the rest of her life.* She would not go and see the king again unless he asked for her by name because he had enjoyed being with her.

15 Eventually, *the evening came when* it was the turn for Esther, whom Mordecai had adopted as his daughter, to go to the king. She was the daughter of Abihail, Mordecai's uncle. When Esther went to the king, she only asked for what Hegai, the royal guardian in charge of the harem for virgins, recommended that she should wear. Everyone who saw Esther was very impressed with her. 16 The king's servants brought Esther to King Ahasuerus in his royal palace during the tenth month of the year (the month of Tebeth), in the seventh year of his reign *as king of Persia*. 17 The king loved Esther more than any of the other women. He treated her more kindly and more favorably than any of the other young women *who had become his concubines*. So King Ahasuerus put a royal crown on her head, and he made her the queen instead of Vashti. 18 Then the king hosted a great feast and invited all of his officials and servants. It was a feast to celebrate Esther *becoming the queen*. He proclaimed that this would be a time to celebrate for people in all of the provinces of his empire *when they would not have to pay taxes*, and he generously gave gifts *to people*.

19 *Later,* Ahasuerus had his officers bring more virgins *to Susa*. During this time, Mordecai *was working for the king, and he* sat at the king's gate. 20 Esther had still not told anyone what people group she was from, because Mordecai had warned her not to tell anyone. In fact, she continued to follow all of Mordecai's instructions, just as she had done when she was growing up in his house. 21 During that time, when Mordecai was *doing his work* at the king's gate, two of the king's guards who protected the doorway *to the king's private rooms* became angry *with the king*. They planned to assassinate King Ahasuerus. Their names were Bigthan and Teresh. 22 But Mordecai found out about what they were planning. He told Queen Esther about it, and she told the king. She explained that Mordecai had given her the information. 23 So the king's officials investigated Mordecai's report and discovered that it was true. So the king ordered his servants to hang those two men from wooden poles *until they died*. In the king's presence, the king's scribes recorded an account of this in the royal chronicles.

3 Some time later, King Ahasuerus promoted *one of his officials,* Haman, the son of Hammedatha, who was a descendant of Agag. The king gave Haman a very important position, more important than any of his other officials. 2 The king *wanted to show that he had given Haman an important position. So he* commanded all of his other servants who were at the king's gate to bow down all the way to the ground to honor Haman *whenever he walked by*. But Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman, *because as a Jew he would not worship anyone except Yahweh*. 3 The other servants at the king's gate *saw that Mordecai refused to bow down, and they* asked him, "Why are you disobeying the king's command?" 4 Mordecai told them that he was a Jew, *and that Jews only worship Yahweh*. The other servants warned Mordecai every day *that he would be punished severely if he kept disobeying the king and not honoring his most important official*. But Mordecai still refused to bow down. So they told Haman about it to see if he would allow Mordecai to keep refusing to bow down *because he was a Jew*. 5 When Haman saw that Mordecai would not bow down to him, he became furious. 6 The other servants told Haman that *Mordecai was not bowing down to him because* Mordecai was a Jew. So Haman decided it would not be enough just to kill Mordecai alone. Haman decided that he would try to kill all the Jews in the entire empire of Ahasuerus.

7 So Haman had his servants cast a Pur (that is, a lot) while he watched *to determine the best month and the best day of the month to kill the Jews*. They did that in the first month, the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year that Ahasuerus reigned *as king of Persia*. The lot selected the twelfth month of that year, the month of Adar, *as the time for Haman to carry out his plan*. 8 Then Haman went to King Ahasuerus and said, "Your Majesty, there is a certain group of people who live among the other peoples in your empire. They are in every province. They have their own set of laws, and so they do not obey your laws. It is not good for you to allow them to

live in your empire. 9 If you approve of this plan, O king,
then write a decree saying that all of the Jews must die.
When they are dead, we can take all of their goods, and from
that I will give 300 tons of silver to your administrators for
them to put into your royal treasuries." 10 The king *liked what*
Haman said. So he gave Haman the ring that he wore that
had his official seal on it. *With that, Haman could make laws*
as if he were the king himself. Haman, the son of Hammedatha,
the Agagite, had become the enemy of the Jews. 11 The king
told Haman, "You can keep the money for yourself, and you
can do whatever you want to do with those people."

12 On the thirteenth day of the first month of that same
year, Haman called in the royal scribes, and he dictated a
letter to them. He told them to send copies to the royal
officials, the governors of each province, and the leaders
of each people group. The scribes translated the letter so it
could be sent to each province using its own alphabet and to
each people group in its own language. To show that he was
sending the letter under the king's own authority, Haman
sealed each copy of the letter with the ring that had the
king's official seal on it. 13 Couriers delivered the letters to
the officials in every province in the empire. The letters said
to completely destroy all the Jews, including the children and
women, on a single day. That was to be the thirteenth day
of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, *in that same year*.
The letters also said that those who killed the Jews could
take everything that belonged to them. 14 The letter told the
officials to post copies where everyone could see them. That
way all the people in every single province would know that
the king had commanded this, and they would get ready *to*
do what the letter said to do when the day came. 15 As the
king had commanded, couriers rushed *with the letters to every*
province in the empire. A herald also proclaimed what the
letter said in the capital city of Susa. The king and Haman
relaxed and drank together. But everyone who lived in Susa
was very upset *about what was going to happen*.

4 When Mordecai found out about Haman's plan *to kill*
all the Jews, as signs of grief he tore his clothes and
put on rough sackcloth and threw ashes over himself. Then
he started walking towards the city center, *towards the*
king's palace, crying out in anguish. 2 But no one who was
wearing sackcloth was allowed inside the king's gate. So
when Mordecai reached the gate, he had to stay just outside
of it. 3 In every province of the empire, the letter that said
to destroy the Jews *was announced in public. When* the Jews
heard about it, they mourned greatly. They went without food
and wailed loudly. Many of them also put on sackcloth and
threw ashes on themselves and lay on the ground. 4 Esther's
female attendants came with her guardians and told her *that*
Mordecai was sitting outside the gate wearing sackcloth. When
she heard about this, Queen Esther herself became very afraid.
She sent Mordecai some good clothes to wear instead of the
sackcloth, but he refused to put them on.

5 The king had assigned some of the royal guardians to
Esther personally. So Esther called for one of them, a man
named Hathak. She told him to go out and speak with
Mordecai and find out why he was so distressed *that he was*
sitting at the king's gate wearing sackcloth. 6 So Hathak went
out to *speak with* Mordecai, who was in the plaza in front
of the king's gate. 7 Mordecai told Hathak everything that
Haman was planning to do *to the Jews*. He even told him
how much money Haman said the king would get for his
treasuries *if the king commanded people* to kill all of the Jews.
8 Mordecai also gave Hathak a copy of the letter that the
heralds had read out loud in Susa and that said that people
must kill all of the Jews. He told Hathak to show the letter
to Esther so that she would know exactly what it said. He
also told him to urge her to go to the king personally and
to beg him desperately to save her people from destruction.
9 So Hathak returned to Esther and told her what Mordecai
had said.

10 Then Esther told Hathak to go back to Mordecai with
this message: 11 "There is a law *about going to the king* that
applies to *everyone in the kingdom*, both men and women. If
anyone goes into the inner courtyard of the palace, *where*
the king can see them, and the king has not summoned them,
that person will die. Only if the king holds out his golden
scepter to them, then they will live. Everyone in the whole
empire knows this law. *So I cannot go and speak to the king*
as you have requested. The king has not called for me in over
a month, *and if I go without being summoned, I could be put*
to death." 12 So *Hathak* went back to Mordecai and told him
what Esther had said.

13 Mordecai told *Hathak* to tell this to Esther: "Do not
imagine that just because you live there in the king's palace
that you will be safe when they kill all the other Jews. 14 If
you say nothing at all now, someone from some other place
will rescue the Jews, but you and your relatives will not
survive. Who knows, perhaps it was for just such a time
as this that you became queen." 15 *After Hathak told this to*
Esther, she told him to go back to Mordecai and say this to
him: 16 "Gather together all the Jews who live here in Susa
and tell them to fast for my sake. Tell them to not eat or
drink anything for three days and three nights. My female
attendants and I will also fast in the same way. At the end
of the three days, I will go to *talk to* the king, even though
doing that is against the law. I will do that even if it costs me
my life." 17 So *after Hathach told this to* Mordecai, he went
and did everything that Esther had told him to do.

5 After *fasting for* three days, Esther put on her royal robes,
and she *went and* stood in the inner courtyard of the
palace, across from the king's house. He was in the royal
palace, sitting on the royal throne and facing the entrance
of the room. 2 As soon as the king noticed Queen Esther
standing there in the courtyard, he was very pleased to see
her. So he held out his golden scepter to her, *to show that she*
could safely approach him. So Esther came up *to the throne*
and touched the top of the scepter.

3 Then the king asked her, "Why have you come here,
Queen Esther? What do you want? *Tell me, and* I will give
you anything you ask for, no matter how great it is." 4 Esther
replied, "If it pleases you, O king, please come with Haman
today to the banquet that I have prepared for you." 5 The
king said to his servants, "*Go and* get Haman and bring him
quickly so that we can do what Esther has asked us to do!"
So the king and Haman went to the banquet that Esther *and*
her servants had prepared *for them*.

6 While they were drinking wine, the king said to Esther,
"Now please tell me what you *really* want. I will give you
anything *you ask for*, no matter how great it is. I truly mean
what I am saying." 7 Esther answered, "This is what I *really*
want: 8 if you are pleased with me, and if you are pleased,
O king, to give me what I want, please come with Haman to
another banquet that I will prepare for you tomorrow. I will
answer your question then."

9 Haman was feeling very happy as he left *the banquet that day*. But then he saw Mordecai sitting at the king's gate. Mordecai did not stand up to show respect for Haman or tremble fearfully in front of him. This made Haman furious with Mordecai. 10 But *even though* Haman *was so angry, he* kept himself from showing that he was angry. *Instead,* he went home and gathered together his friends with his wife Zeresh, 11 and he boasted to them about how rich he was and about how many sons he had. *He* also *boasted* about how the king had promoted him many times and given him a position above all of his important officials and other administrators. 12 Then Haman added, "And that is not all! I was the only one Queen Esther invited to come with the king to a banquet that she prepared *for us today*. And she has also invited only me *to attend another banquet* with the king tomorrow." 13 Then Haman said, "But I still cannot be happy as long as I keep seeing that Jew, Mordecai, sitting there at the king's gate *and refusing to honor me*." 14 So Haman's wife Zeresh and his friends who were there suggested, "Have your servants set up a pole 25 meters high. Then tomorrow morning speak to the king and tell him that you want to hang Mordecai on it. Then *once you have executed Mordecai,* you can go to the banquet with the king in a good mood." Haman thought that this was a good plan, so he *told his servants to* set up the pole.

6 That night the king was unable to sleep. So he told *the young men who attended him* to bring in the royal chronicles. One *of the young men got the chronicles and* began to read them out loud to the king. 2 The chronicles said that Bigthan and Teresh, two of the royal guardians who protected the doorway *to the king's private quarters*, had planned to assassinate King Ahasuerus. The chronicles also said that Mordecai *had discovered their plot and* had let the king know about it. *By doing that, Mordecai saved the king's life.*

3 Then the king asked, "In what great way did I honor Mordecai for saving my life?" The young men who attended him replied, "No one did anything for him." 4 At that moment, Haman entered the outer courtyard of the king's house. He had come to tell the king that he wanted to hang Mordecai on the pole that he had set up for Mordecai. The king *wanted to consult someone about the best way to honor Mordecai, so he* asked, "Who is out in the courtyard?" 5 The young men replied, "Our king, Haman is standing in the courtyard." The king said, "Bring him in."

6 When Haman came in, the king asked him, "What should I do for the man whom I would really like to honor?" Haman thought to himself, "Certainly I am the person whom the king would like to honor more than anyone else!" 7 Haman replied to the king, "If you really want to honor someone, 8 tell your servants to bring one of your own royal robes that you have already worn yourself. Have them also bring a horse that you have already ridden yourself and put a royal crown on its head *to show that it belongs to you*. 9 Then, *on your behalf,* have one of your most noble officials present the man with the robe and the horse. Have your servants clothe the man whom you really want to honor *with the robe*. Have them seat that man on the horse and then lead the horse through the public square of the city. Have them shout out *to everyone* in front of them, 'The king is doing this because he really wants to honor this man!'" 10 The king *liked this plan, so he* replied to Haman, "Go quickly! Take the robe and the horse and do what you have just described for Mordecai the Jew. He *is one of my servants who* sits by the gate to the palace. Make sure that you do absolutely everything that you have said."

11 So Haman *did what the king commanded. He* got the robe and the horse. He put the robe on Mordecai, seated him on the horse, and then led the horse through the public square of the city. As he did, he shouted out to everyone in front of him, "The king is doing this because he really wants to honor this man!" 12 Then Mordecai went back to *his place at* the king's gate. But Haman hurried to his house, covering *his* head *because he felt so* humiliated. 13 Haman *gathered* all his friends *together once again. He* told them and his wife Zeresh everything that had happened to him *that day. Some of his friends were also* his advisors*, and they* and his wife Zeresh told him, "Mordecai has begun to defeat you. Since he is one of the Jewish people, you will not win against him. Instead, he will certainly defeat you." 14 While they were still talking together, *some of* the royal guardians arrived to bring Haman quickly to the banquet that Esther *and her servants* had prepared.

7 So the king and Haman went to the *second* banquet that Queen Esther *had arranged for them*. 2 At that second banquet, while they were drinking wine, the king asked Esther again, "Now please tell me what you really want, Queen Esther. *Tell me,* and I will do it for you. *I will give you* anything you ask for, no matter how great it is." 3 Then Queen Esther replied, "If you are pleased with me, O king, I hope you will be willing to do what I ask. Please allow me to live, and please save my people. That is what I am asking for. 4 *I am appealing to you* because someone has turned my people and me over *to our enemies*, and they are going to destroy us completely. If someone had sold the men and *even* the women to be slaves, I would not have said anything about that to you, because that would not have been important enough to bother you, the king, with that."

5 Then King Ahasuerus responded to Queen Esther, "Who has done this? Where is the man who has dared to do such a thing?" 6 Esther responded, "The man who is our bitter enemy is this evil man Haman!" This made Haman terrified to be in the presence of the king and the queen. 7 The king became so angry that he got up and left the banquet of wine. He went *outside* into the palace garden *to decide what to do*. But Haman stayed *inside* to beg Queen Esther to save his life because he recognized that the king wanted to execute him. 8 *As he was pleading for his life,* Haman knelt down very close to Esther as she was *reclining* on a *banqueting* couch. When the king returned from the palace garden to the room where they had been drinking wine, *he saw this*. The king exclaimed, "He is even trying to rape the queen in my presence and in my own house!" As soon as the king said this, *some of his servants* covered Haman's face *as a sign that he would be executed*.

9 Then Harbona, who was one of the guardians who served the king personally, said, "O king! Haman has also set up a pole twenty-five meters high at his house because he wants to hang Mordecai on it. But Mordecai saved your life." The king said, "Hang Haman on it!" 10 So they hung Haman on the pole that he had set up for Mordecai. Then the king stopped being so angry.

8 That same day, King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther all the property that had belonged to Haman. He had been the enemy of the Jews. Esther told the king that Mordecai was *her cousin and that he had been like a father* to her. When

he learned that, *the king summoned* Mordecai to come to him.
2 *When the king sentenced Haman to death,* the king took back
from Haman the ring that had the king's official seal on it
and the king was wearing it again. The king now took the ring
off and gave it to Mordecai, *to show that Mordecai would
have the power to act with the king's authority.* Esther also put
Mordecai in charge of all the property that had belonged to
Haman.

3 Then Esther came to speak to the king again. *To show
him how desperately she was pleading,* Esther knelt down
and put her face right on top of his feet. She cried as she
begged him to stop the terrible plan of Haman the Agagite
to destroy the Jews. 4 The king held out his golden scepter
toward Esther, so she got up *off the floor* and stood facing
the king. 5 Then Esther said, "Your majesty, if you think that
it is the right thing to do, and if you are pleased with me,
please write a new letter revoking the letters that Haman
the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, sent out. His letters
said to destroy all the Jews everywhere in your empire. 6 *I
am asking this* because I cannot bear to see the terrible thing
that is about to happen to my people. They are my kindred.
I cannot bear to see people destroy them."

7 King Ahasuerus replied to Queen Esther and Mordecai
the Jew, "As you know, I have given to Esther all the property
that belonged to Haman, and I had my servants hang Haman
on a wooden pole because he wanted to kill all the Jews.
8 *You also know that* no one can revoke a letter that has my
name and my official seal on it, *such as the letter that Haman
wrote*. So this is what you should do. Write *a new letter* to
help the Jews, as you think best. *I give you permission to* put
my name on it and to seal *the letter* with the ring that has
my official seal on it."

9 So the king sent for his scribes. *They came and* they
wrote a letter saying everything that Mordecai told them
to write. *They wrote this letter* on the twenty-third day of
the third month, the month of Sivan, *in the twelfth year that
Ahasuerus reigned as king of Persia*. The letter addressed the
Jews *in the empire*, but they also sent *copies of the letter*
to the royal officials, and to the governors and leaders in
each province. The empire *of Ahasuerus* had 127 provinces,
extending all the way from India *in the east* to Ethiopia *in the
west*. The scribes wrote to *people in* every province using its
own alphabet and to each people group in its own language.
They wrote *especially* to the Jews, in their alphabet and in
their own language. 10 Mordecai signed *each copy of the letter*
with the name of King Ahasuerus, and he sealed *each one*
with the ring that had the king's official seal on it. Couriers
on horseback delivered the letters. They rode fast horses
that were only for the king's service. These horses were born
in the king's own stables. 11 *Each copy of the letter said* that
the king permits the Jews throughout the empire to join
together and to fight to protect themselves. *The king's letter*
also *permits them* to completely destroy any group of armed
men from any people or province who would attack them.
The letter also *permits them* to kill the women and children
of those who would attack them, and to take the possessions
of the people *whom they kill*. 12 *The letter permitted all the
Jews* in every province throughout the empire *to do this* on
a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the
month of Adar, *in that same year*. 13 *The letter told the officials*
in every single province to display copies of the letter where
everyone could see them so that people would know that
the king had commanded this, and so that the Jews would
be ready to fight back against their enemies when the day
came. 14 The king commanded the couriers to deliver the
letters as quickly as possible. *He sent them out* on his own
fast horses. The king's officials also proclaimed the new law
and displayed copies of the letter in the capital city of Susa.

15 The king gave Mordecai *special things to wear to show
that he was now his most important official. He gave him* a
blue and white royal garment, a large golden crown, and
a purple robe made of fine linen. Mordecai put these on
and left the palace. *When* the people of Susa *saw him, they*
shouted joyfully. 16 The Jews in Susa were very happy, and
other people honored them. 17 In every single province and
in every single city, wherever *the couriers* brought the letter
announcing the king's decree, the Jews rejoiced greatly and
had big celebrations. Many people from other groups in the
empire became very afraid of the Jews, so they became Jews
themselves.

9 On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month *of that year*,
the month of Adar, it was time for everyone to do what
the letters from the king said that he had decreed for them
to do. The enemies of the Jews had expected to destroy the
Jews on that day. But just the opposite happened. Instead,
it was the Jews who destroyed their enemies. 2 Throughout
the empire, the Jews joined together in their cities to defend
themselves against those who wanted to harm them. No
one was able to fight back against them because everyone
in the empire had become very afraid of them, *so no one
helped anyone who attacked the Jews*. 3 All the leaders in each
province, the royal officials, the governors, and everyone
who worked for the king helped the Jews because they
had become very afraid of Mordecai. 4 They were afraid of
Mordecai because he was a very important royal official.
Throughout the empire, everyone was hearing about how
great he was because Mordecai kept becoming more and
more powerful.

5 *On the day when they were allowed to defend themselves*,
the Jews took their weapons and fought against all of their
enemies. The Jews destroyed them completely. They were
able to do everything that they wanted to do against their
enemies. 6 In the capital city of Susa the Jews killed 500
men. 7 *The Jews* also *killed the ten sons of Haman. The names
of his sons were* Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, 8 Poratha,
Adalia, Aridatha, 9 Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vaizatha.
10 These were the ten sons of Haman son of Hammedatha,
the enemy of the Jews. The Jews killed them, but they did
not take the things that belonged to them. 11 At the end of
the day, someone came in and reported to the king how
many people the Jews had killed in the capital city of Susa.

12 So the king said to Queen Esther, "Here in the capital
city of Susa the Jews have killed 500 men, including the ten
sons of Haman. In the rest of my empire, they must have
killed many more than that! So, what else do you want?
Tell me, and I will do it for you. I will do whatever you
ask, so please tell me what you want." 13 Esther replied, "If
it seems like a good plan to you, O king, then please allow
the Jews who *live here* in Susa to do again tomorrow what
you allowed them to do today. Also, command *your servants*
to hang *the bodies of* Haman's ten sons on wooden poles."
14 The king did as *Esther* asked. He issued a decree *allowing
the Jews* in Susa *to fight against their enemies again the next
day*, and *he ordered his servants* to hang *the bodies of* Haman's
ten sons. 15 And so on the fourteenth day of the month of
Adar, the Jews who *lived* in Susa joined together again and

killed 300 *more* men in Susa. But *once again* they did not take the things that belonged to those men.

16 The Jews who *lived* in the other parts of the empire, who had joined together to fight for their lives *on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar*, had defeated their enemies and killed 75, 000 of them *on that day*. But they did not take the things that had belonged to their enemies. 17 *After defeating their enemies* on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar, they rested on the fourteenth day. They devoted the fourteenth day as a day to celebrate joyfully. 18 But the Jews who *lived* in Susa joined together *to fight against their enemies* on both the thirteenth and fourteenth days of the month *of Adar*. They rested on the fifteenth day. They devoted that day to celebrating joyfully. 19 That is why the Jews who live in rural villages observe this holiday on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar *rather than on the fifteenth day*. They do this by celebrating joyfully and by giving gifts to one another.

20 Mordecai wrote down everything that had happened. Then he sent letters to all the Jews throughout the empire, everywhere that they lived. 21 He established *a holiday on* the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar. He told the Jews to observe it every single year 22 because those were the days when the Jews rested and no longer had to fight their enemies. That was the month when everything had changed for them. They had been deeply distressed *because their enemies were going to destroy them*. But then they became very happy *after they were safe from all their enemies*. *So Mordecai told them* to observe those days with joyful celebration and by giving gifts to one another. *Mordecai* also *told them that* they should help the poor on those days. 23 The Jews were already celebrating those days that way. So they *readily* agreed to do what Mordecai had instructed them to do.

24 *They would celebrate those days to remember* how Haman, the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had tried to destroy them. He had thrown a Pur (that is, a lot) *to find out what would be the best day* to attack the Jews and destroy them completely. 25 *They would also remember how Esther dared to* come before the king *even though he did not summon her*. Then the king *allowed Mordecai to* send a letter *throughout the empire* saying that the king would make Haman's evil plan to destroy the Jews happen to Haman instead. The king also ordered his servants to hang Haman on a wooden pole. When the Jews in Susa killed his ten sons, the king had his servants hang their bodies, as well. 26 The *Persian* word *for "lot"* is "Pur." That is why *the Jews* gave the name Purim to this celebration. Because of all of the amazing things that they had just experienced and because *Mordecai then* wrote *to them to tell them to observe this holiday*, 27 the Jews agreed to establish those two days as holidays and to observe them in the way that *Mordecai* had told them, on those specific days. They agreed that they and their descendants and everyone who became part of the Jewish people *would celebrate this festival of Purim* every year, forever. 28 So that is why every Jewish family in every generation *since* has celebrated these days as holidays, everywhere they have lived. The Jewish community and its descendants will always faithfully observe this festival of Purim.

29 Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, with *help from* Mordecai the Jew, wrote a second letter about Purim. Because Esther was the queen, she was able to command the Jews to obey *what Mordecai had written* about Purim *in his letter*. 30 They sent *copies of this second* letter to all the Jews throughout the entire empire of Ahasuerus. It encouraged them that *their situation was now* peaceful and secure. 31 *In this second letter,* Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther confirmed that Purim should be celebrated on the *fourteenth and fifteenth* days *of the month of Adar*. *They also confirmed* that the Jews should continue the times of fasting and mourning that the Jews had established for themselves and their descendants. 32 Esther issued a decree establishing Purim *as a holiday for the Jews*, and the *royal scribes* wrote it down in the book *of laws*.

10 Then King Ahasuerus imposed a tax *on everyone* throughout his empire, even *on those living* on the islands of the sea. 2 *The king's scribes* made a record in the royal chronicles of Media and Persia of all the great things that King Ahasuerus accomplished because he was so powerful. *They* also *wrote* there in a complete way the great *things that* Mordecai *did* because the king had promoted him to a very important position. 3 Mordecai the Jew was able to do so much because he was the most powerful person in the empire after King Ahasuerus. He was also a leader among his own people. All of his fellow Jews respected him. He worked *hard* to make sure that the Jews would always prosper.