

ESTHER

WITH ADDITIONS



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Addition A

Mordecai's Dream

11²In the second year of the reign of Artaxerxes the Great, on the first day of Nisan, Mordecai son of Jair son of Shimei son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, had a dream. ³He was a Jew living in the city of Susa, a great man, serving in the court of the king. ⁴He was one of the captives whom King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had brought from Jerusalem with King Jeconiah of Judea. And this was his dream: ⁵Noises and confusion, thunders and earthquake, tumult on the earth! ⁶Then two great dragons came forward, both ready to fight, and they roared terribly. ⁷At their roaring every nation prepared for war, to fight against the righteous nation. ⁸It was a day of darkness and gloom, of tribulation and distress, affliction and great tumult on the earth! ⁹And the whole righteous nation was troubled; they feared the evils that threatened them, and were ready to perish. ¹⁰Then they cried out to God; and at their outcry, as though from a tiny spring, there came a great river, with abundant water; ¹¹light came, and the sun rose, and the lowly were exalted and devoured those held in honour.¹

¹²Mordecai saw in this dream what God had determined to do, and after he

awoke he had it on his mind, seeking all day to understand it in every detail.

A Plot against the King

12¹Now Mordecai took his rest in the courtyard with Gabatha and Tharra, the two eunuchs of the king who kept watch in the courtyard. ²He overheard their conversation and inquired into their purposes, and learned that they were preparing to lay hands on King Artaxerxes; and he informed the king concerning them. ³Then the king examined the two eunuchs, and after they had confessed it, they were led away to execution. ⁴The king made a permanent record of these things, and Mordecai wrote an account of them. ⁵And the king ordered Mordecai to serve in the court, and rewarded him for these things. ⁶But Haman son of Hammedatha, a Bougean, who was held in great honour by the king, determined to injure Mordecai and his people because of the two eunuchs of the king.

Original Text

Artaxerxes' Banquet

1¹It was after this that the following things happened in the days of Artaxerxes, the same Artaxerxes who ruled over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces from India to Ethiopia. ²In those days, when King Artaxerxes was enthroned in the city of Susa, ³in the third year of his reign, he gave a banquet for

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his Friends and other persons of various nations, the Persians and Median nobles, and the governors of the provinces. ⁴After this, when he had displayed to them the riches of his kingdom and the splendour of his bountiful celebration during the course of one hundred and eighty days, ⁵at the end of the festivity the king gave a drinking-party for the people of various nations who lived in the city. This was held for six days in the courtyard of the royal palace, ⁶which was adorned with curtains of fine linen and cotton, held by cords of purple linen attached to gold and silver blocks on pillars of marble and other stones. Gold and silver couches were placed on a mosaic floor of emerald, mother-of-pearl, and marble. There were coverings of gauze, embroidered in various colours, with roses arranged around them. ⁷The cups were of gold and silver, and a miniature cup was displayed, made of ruby, worth thirty thousand talents. There was abundant sweet wine, such as the king himself drank. ⁸The drinking was not according to a fixed rule; but the king wished to have it so, and he commanded his stewards to comply with his pleasure and with that of the guests.

⁹Meanwhile, Queen Vashti gave a drinking-party for the women in the palace where King Artaxerxes was.

Dismissal of Queen Vashti

¹⁰On the seventh day, when the king was in good humour, he told Haman, Bazan, Tharra, Boraze, Zatholtha, Abataza, and Tharaba, the seven eunuchs who served King Artaxerxes, ¹¹to escort the queen to him in order to proclaim her as queen and to place the diadem on her head, and to have her display her beauty to all the governors and the people of various

nations, for she was indeed a beautiful woman. ¹²But Queen Vashti refused to obey him and would not come with the eunuchs. This offended the king and he became furious. ¹³He said to his Friends, 'This is how Vashti has answered me. Give therefore your ruling and judgement on this matter.' ¹⁴Arkesaeus, Sarsathaeus, and Malesear, then the governors of the Persians and Medes who were closest to the king—Arkesaeus, Sarsathaeus, and Malesear, who sat beside him in the chief seats—came to him ¹⁵and told him what must be done to Queen Vashti for not obeying the order that the king had sent her by the eunuchs. ¹⁶Then Muchaeus said to the king and the governors, 'Queen Vashti has insulted not only the king but also all the king's governors and officials' ¹⁷(for he had reported to them what the queen had said and how she had defied the king). 'And just as she defied King Artaxerxes, ¹⁸so now the other ladies who are wives of the Persian and Median governors, on hearing what she has said to the king, will likewise dare to insult their husbands. ¹⁹If therefore it pleases the king, let him issue a royal decree, inscribed in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians so that it may not be altered, that the queen may no longer come into his presence; but let the king give her royal rank to a woman better than she. ²⁰Let whatever law the king enacts be proclaimed in his kingdom, and thus all women will give honour to their husbands, rich and poor alike.' ²¹This speech pleased the king and the governors, and the king did as Muchaeus had recommended. ²²The king sent the decree into all his kingdom, to every province in its own language, so

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that in every house respect would be shown to every husband.

Esther Becomes Queen

2¹After these things, the king's anger abated, and he no longer was concerned about Vashti or remembered what he had said and how he had condemned her. ²Then the king's servants said, 'Let beautiful and virtuous girls be sought out for the king. ³The king shall appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, and they shall select beautiful young virgins to be brought to the harem in Susa, the capital. Let them be entrusted to the king's eunuch who is in charge of the women, and let ointments and whatever else they need be given them. ⁴And the woman who pleases the king shall be queen instead of Vashti.' This pleased the king, and he did so.

⁵Now there was a Jew in Susa the capital whose name was Mordecai son of Jair son of Shimei son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin; ⁶he had been taken captive from Jerusalem among those whom King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had captured. ⁷And he had a foster child, the daughter of his father's brother Aminadab, and her name was Esther. When her parents died, he brought her up to womanhood as his own child. The girl was beautiful in appearance. ⁸So, when the decree of the king was proclaimed, and many girls were gathered in Susa the capital in the custody of Gai, Esther also was brought to Gai, who had custody of the women. ⁹The girl pleased him and won his favour, and he quickly provided her with ointments and her portion of food, as well as seven maids chosen from the palace; he treated her and her maids

with special favour in the harem. ¹⁰Now Esther had not disclosed her people or country, for Mordecai had commanded her not to make it known. ¹¹And every day Mordecai walked in the courtyard of the harem, to see what would happen to Esther.

¹²Now the period after which a girl was to go to the king was twelve months. During this time the days of beautification are completed—six months while they are anointing themselves with oil of myrrh, and six months with spices and ointments for women. ¹³Then she goes in to the king; she is handed to the person appointed, and goes with him from the harem to the king's palace. ¹⁴In the evening she enters and in the morning she departs to the second harem, where Gai the king's eunuch is in charge of the women; and she does not go in to the king again unless she is summoned by name.

¹⁵When the time was fulfilled for Esther daughter of Aminadab, the brother of Mordecai's father, to go in to the king, she neglected none of the things that Gai, the eunuch in charge of the women, had commanded. Now Esther found favour in the eyes of all who saw 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 the other virgins, so he put on her the queen's diadem. ¹⁸Then the king gave a banquet lasting seven days for all his Friends and the officers, to celebrate his marriage to Esther; and he granted

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a remission of taxes to those who were under his rule.

The Plot Discovered

¹⁹Meanwhile, Mordecai was serving in the courtyard. ²⁰Esther had not disclosed her country—such were the instructions of Mordecai; but she was to fear God and keep his laws, just as she had done when she was with him. So Esther did not change her mode of life.

²¹Now the king's eunuchs, who were chief bodyguards, were angry because of Mordecai's advancement, and they plotted to kill King Artaxerxes. ²²The matter became known to Mordecai, and he warned Esther, who in turn revealed the plot to the king. ²³He investigated the two eunuchs and hanged them. Then the king ordered a memorandum to be deposited in the royal library in praise of the goodwill shown by Mordecai.

Mordecai Refuses to Do Obeisance

3¹After these events King Artaxerxes promoted Haman son of Hammedatha, a Bougean, advancing him and granting him precedence over all the king's Friends. ²So all who were at court used to do obeisance to Haman, for so the king had commanded to be done. Mordecai, however, did not do obeisance. ³Then the king's courtiers said to Mordecai, 'Mordecai, why do you disobey the king's command?' ⁴Day after day they spoke to him, but he would not listen to them. Then they informed Haman that Mordecai was resisting the king's command. Mordecai had told them that he was a Jew. ⁵So when Haman learned that Mordecai was not doing obeisance to him, he became

furiously angry, and plotted to destroy all the Jews under Artaxerxes' rule.

⁷In the twelfth year of King Artaxerxes Haman came to a decision by casting lots, taking the days and the months one by one, to fix on one day to destroy the whole race of Mordecai. The lot fell on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar.

Decree against the Jews

⁸Then Haman said to King Artaxerxes, 'There is a certain nation scattered among the other nations in all your kingdom; their laws are different from those of every other nation, and they do not keep the laws of the king. It is not expedient for the king to tolerate them. ⁹If it pleases the king, let it be decreed that they are to be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the king's treasury.' ¹⁰So the king took off his signet ring and gave it to Haman to seal the decree that was to be written against the Jews. ¹¹The king told Haman, 'Keep the money, and do whatever you want with that nation.'

¹²So on the thirteenth day of the first month the king's secretaries were summoned, and in accordance with Haman's instructions they wrote in the name of King Artaxerxes to the magistrates and the governors in every province from India to Ethiopia. There were one hundred and twenty-seven provinces in all, and the governors were addressed each in his own language. ¹³Instructions were sent by couriers throughout all the empire of Artaxerxes to destroy the Jewish people on a given

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day of the twelfth month, which is Adar, and to plunder their goods.

Addition B

The King's Letter

13 ¹This is a copy of the letter: 'The Great King, Artaxerxes, writes the following to the governors of the hundred and twenty-seven provinces from India to Ethiopia and to the officials under them:

²Having become ruler of many nations and master of the whole world (not elated with presumption of authority but always acting reasonably and with kindness), I have determined to settle the lives of my subjects in lasting tranquillity and, in order to make my kingdom peaceable and open to travel throughout all its extent, to restore the peace desired by all people.

³When I asked my counsellors how this might be accomplished, Haman—who excels among us in sound judgement, and is distinguished for his unchanging goodwill and steadfast fidelity, and has attained the second place in the kingdom—⁴pointed out to us that among all the nations in the world there is scattered a certain hostile people, who have laws contrary to those of every nation and continually disregard the ordinances of kings, so that the unifying of the kingdom that we honourably intend cannot be brought about. ⁵We understand that this people, and it alone, stands constantly in opposition to every nation, perversely following a strange manner of life and laws, and is ill-disposed to our government, doing all

the harm they can so that our kingdom may not attain stability.

⁶Therefore we have decreed that those indicated to you in the letters written by Haman, who is in charge of affairs and is our second father, shall all—wives and children included—be utterly destroyed by the swords of their enemies, without pity or restraint, on the fourteenth day of the twelfth month, Adar, of this present year, ⁷so that those who have long been hostile and remain so may in a single day go down in violence to Hades, and leave our government completely secure and untroubled hereafter.'

Original Text

3 ¹⁴Copies of the document were posted in every province, and all the nations were ordered to be prepared for that day. ¹⁵The matter was expedited also in Susa. And while the king and Haman caroused together, the city of Susa was thrown into confusion.

Mordecai Seeks Esther's Aid

4 ¹When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, and sprinkled himself with ashes; then he rushed through the street of the city, shouting loudly: 'An innocent nation is being destroyed!' ²He got as far as the king's gate, and there he stopped, because no one was allowed to enter the courtyard clothed in sackcloth and ashes. ³And in every province where the king's proclamation had been posted there was a loud cry of mourning and lamentation among the Jews, and they put on sackcloth and ashes. ⁴When the queen's maids and eunuchs came

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and told her, she was deeply troubled by what she heard had happened, and sent some clothes to Mordecai to put on instead of sackcloth; but he would not consent. ⁵Then Esther summoned Hachratheus, the eunuch who attended her, and ordered him to get accurate information for her from Mordecai.

⁷So Mordecai told him what had happened and how Haman had promised to pay ten thousand talents into the royal treasury to bring about the destruction of the Jews. ⁸He also gave him a copy of what had been posted in Susa for their destruction, to show to Esther; and he told him to charge her to go in to the king and plead for his favour on behalf of the people. 'Remember', he said, 'the days when you were an ordinary person, being brought up under my care—for Haman, who stands next to the king, has spoken against us and demands our death. Call upon the Lord; then speak to the king on our behalf, and save us from death.'

⁹Hachratheus went in and told Esther all these things. ¹⁰And she said to him, 'Go to Mordecai and say, ¹¹"All nations of the empire know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is no escape for that person. Only the one to whom the king stretches out the golden sceptre is safe—and it is now thirty days since I was called to go to the king."'

¹²When Hachratheus delivered her entire message to Mordecai, ¹³Mordecai told him to go back and say to her, 'Esther, do not say to yourself that you alone among all the Jews will escape alive. ¹⁴For if you keep quiet at such a time as this, help and protection will come to the Jews from another quarter, but you

and your father's family will perish. Yet, who knows whether it was not for such a time as this that you were made queen?' ¹⁵Then Esther gave the messenger this answer to take back to Mordecai: ¹⁶'Go and gather all the Jews who are in Susa and fast on my behalf; for three days and nights do not eat or drink, and my maids and I will also go without food. After that I will go to the king, contrary to the law, even if I must die.' ¹⁷So Mordecai went away and did what Esther had told him to do.

Addition C

Mordecai's Prayer

13 ⁸Then Mordecai prayed to the Lord, calling to remembrance all the works of the Lord.

⁹He said, 'O Lord, Lord, you rule as King over all things, for the universe is in your power and there is no one who can oppose you when it is your will to save Israel, ¹⁰for you have made heaven and earth and every wonderful thing under heaven. ¹¹You are Lord of all, and there is no one who can resist you, the Lord. ¹²You know all things; you know, O Lord, that it was not in insolence or pride or for any love of glory that I did this, and refused to bow down to this proud Haman; ¹³for I would have been willing to kiss the soles of his feet to save Israel! ¹⁴But I did this so that I might not set human glory above the glory of God, and I will not bow down to anyone but you, who are my Lord; and I will not do these things in pride. ¹⁵And now, O Lord God and King, God of Abraham, spare your people; for the eyes of our foes are upon us to annihilate us, and they desire to destroy

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the inheritance that has been yours from the beginning. ¹⁶Do not neglect your portion, which you redeemed for yourself out of the land of Egypt. ¹⁷Hear my prayer, and have mercy upon your inheritance; turn our mourning into feasting, that we may live and sing praise to your name, O Lord; do not destroy the lips of those who praise you.'

¹⁸And all Israel cried out mightily, for their death was before their eyes.

Esther's Prayer

14 ¹Then Queen Esther, seized with deadly anxiety, fled to the Lord. ²She took off her splendid apparel and put on the garments of distress and mourning, and instead of costly perfumes she covered her head with ashes and dung, and she utterly humbled her body; every part that she loved to adorn she covered with her tangled hair. ³She prayed to the Lord God of Israel, and said: 'O my Lord, you only are our king; help me, who am alone and have no helper but you, ⁴for my danger is in my hand. ⁵Ever since I was born I have heard in the tribe of my family that you, O Lord, took Israel out of all the nations, and our ancestors from among all their forebears, for an everlasting inheritance, and that you did for them all that you promised. ⁶And now we have sinned before you, and you have handed us over to our enemies ⁷because we glorified their gods. You are righteous, O Lord! ⁸And now they are not satisfied that we are in bitter slavery, but they have covenanted with their idols ⁹to abolish what your mouth has ordained, and to destroy your inheritance, to stop the mouths of those who praise you and to quench your altar and the glory of your house, ¹⁰to open the mouths of the

nations for the praise of vain idols, and to magnify for ever a mortal king.

¹¹'O Lord, do not surrender your sceptre to what has no being; and do not let them laugh at our downfall; but turn their plan against them, and make an example of him who began this against us. ¹²Remember, O Lord; make yourself known in this time of our affliction, and give me courage, O King of the gods and Master of all dominion! ¹³Put eloquent speech in my mouth before the lion, and turn his heart to hate the man who is fighting against us, so that there may be an end of him and those who agree with him. ¹⁴But save us by your hand, and help me, who am alone and have no helper but you, O Lord. ¹⁵You have knowledge of all things, and you know that I hate the splendour of the wicked and abhor the bed of the uncircumcised and of any alien. ¹⁶You know my necessity—that I abhor the sign of my proud position, which is upon my head on days when I appear in public. I abhor it like a filthy rag, and I do not wear it on the days when I am at leisure. ¹⁷And your servant has not eaten at Haman's table, and I have not honoured the king's feast or drunk the wine of libations. ¹⁸Your servant has had no joy since the day that I was brought here until now, except in you, O Lord God of Abraham. ¹⁹O God, whose might is over all, hear the voice of the

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despairing, and save us from the hands of evildoers. And save me from my fear!

Addition D

Esther Is Received by the King

15¹on the third day, when she ended her prayer, she took off the garments in which she had worshipped, and arrayed herself in splendid attire.

²Then, majestically adorned, after invoking the aid of the all-seeing God and Saviour, she took two maids with her;

³on one she leaned gently for support, ⁴while the other followed, carrying her train. ⁵She was radiant with perfect beauty, and she looked happy, as if beloved, but her heart was frozen with fear. ⁶When she had gone through all the doors, she stood before the king. He was seated on his royal throne, clothed in the full array of his majesty, all covered with gold and precious stones. He was most terrifying.

⁷Lifting his face, flushed with splendour, he looked at her in fierce anger. The queen faltered, and turned pale and faint, and collapsed on the head of the maid who went in front of her. ⁸Then God changed the spirit of the king to gentleness, and in alarm he sprang from his throne and took her in his arms until she came to herself. He comforted her with soothing words, and said to her, ⁹'What is it, Esther? I am your husband. Take courage; ¹⁰You shall not die, for our law applies only to our subjects. Come near.'

¹¹Then he raised the golden sceptre and touched her neck with it; ¹²he embraced

her, and said, 'Speak to me.' ¹³She said to him, 'I saw you, my lord, like an angel of God, and my heart was shaken with fear at your glory. ¹⁴For you are wonderful, my lord, and your countenance is full of grace.' ¹⁵And while she was speaking, she fainted and fell. ¹⁶Then the king was agitated, and all his servants tried to comfort her.

Original Text

5³The king said to her, 'What do you wish, Esther? What is your request? It shall be given you, even to half of my kingdom.' ⁴And Esther said, 'Today is a special day for me. If it pleases the king, let him and Haman come to the dinner that I shall prepare today.' ⁵Then the king said, 'Bring Haman quickly, so that we may do as Esther desires.' So they both came to the dinner that Esther had spoken about. ⁶While they were drinking wine, the king said to Esther, 'What is it, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you.' ⁷She said, 'My petition and request is: ⁸if I have found favour in the sight of the king, let the king and Haman come to the dinner that I shall prepare them, and tomorrow I will do as I have done today.'

Haman's Plot against Mordecai

⁹So Haman went out from the king joyful and glad of heart. But when he saw Mordecai the Jew in the courtyard, he was filled with anger. ¹⁰Nevertheless, he went home and summoned his friends and his wife Zosara. ¹¹And he told them about his riches and the honour that the king had bestowed on him, and how he had advanced him to be the first in the

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kingdom. ¹²And Haman said, 'The queen did not invite anyone to the dinner with the king except me; and I am invited again tomorrow. ¹³But these things give me no pleasure as long as I see Mordecai the Jew in the courtyard.' ¹⁴His wife Zosara and his friends said to him, 'Let a gallows be made, fifty cubits high, and in the morning tell the king to have Mordecai hanged on it. Then, go merrily with the king to the dinner.' This advice pleased Haman, and so the gallows was prepared.

Mordecai's Reward from the King

6 ¹That night the Lord took sleep from the king, so he gave orders to his secretary to bring the book of daily records, and to read to him. ²He found the words written about Mordecai, how he had told the king about the two royal eunuchs who were on guard and sought to lay hands on King Artaxerxes. ³The king said, 'What honour or dignity did we bestow on Mordecai?' The king's servants said, 'You have not done anything for him.' ⁴While the king was inquiring about the goodwill shown by Mordecai, Haman was in the courtyard. The king asked, 'Who is in the courtyard?' Now Haman had come to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared. ⁵The servants of the king answered, 'Haman is standing in the courtyard.' And the king said, 'Summon him.' ⁶Then the king said to Haman, 'What shall I do for the person whom I wish to honour?' And Haman said to himself, 'Whom would the king wish to honour more than me?' ⁷So he said to the king, 'For a person whom the king wishes to honour, ⁸let the king's servants bring out the fine linen robe

that the king has worn, and the horse on which the king rides, ⁹and let both be given to one of the king's honoured Friends, and let him robe the person whom the king loves and mount him on the horse, and let it be proclaimed through the open square of the city, saying, "Thus shall it be done to everyone whom the king honours." ¹⁰Then the king said to Haman, 'You have made an excellent suggestion! Do just as you have said for Mordecai the Jew, who is on duty in the courtyard. And let nothing be omitted from what you have proposed.' ¹¹So Haman got the robe and the horse; he put the robe on Mordecai and made him ride through the open square of the city, proclaiming, 'Thus shall it be done to everyone whom the king wishes to honour.' ¹²Then Mordecai returned to the courtyard, and Haman hurried back to his house, mourning and with his head covered. ¹³Haman told his wife Zosara and his friends what had befallen him. His friends and his wife said to him, 'If Mordecai is of the Jewish people, and you have begun to be humiliated before him, you will surely fall. You will not be able to defend yourself, because the living God is with him.'

Haman at Esther's Banquet

¹⁴While they were still talking, the eunuchs arrived and hurriedly brought Haman to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

7 ¹So the king and Haman went in to drink with the queen. ²And on the second day, as they were drinking wine, the king said, 'What is it, Queen Esther? What is your petition and what is your request? It shall be granted to you, even to half of my kingdom.' ³She answered and said, 'If I have found favour with the

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king, let my life be granted me at my petition, and my people at my request. ⁴For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, plundered, and made slaves—we and our children—male and female slaves. This has come to my knowledge. Our antagonist brings shame on the king's court.' ⁵Then the king said, 'Who is the person that would dare to do this thing?' ⁶Esther said, 'Our enemy is this evil man Haman!' At this, Haman was terrified in the presence of the king and queen.

Punishment of Haman

⁷The king rose from the banquet and went into the garden, and Haman began to beg for his life from the queen, for he saw that he was in serious trouble. ⁸When the king returned from the garden, Haman had thrown himself on the couch, pleading with the queen. The king said, 'Will he dare even assault my wife in my own house?' Haman, when he heard, turned away his face. ⁹Then Bugathan, one of the eunuchs, said to the king, 'Look, Haman has even prepared a gallows for Mordecai, who gave information of concern to the king; it is standing at Haman's house, a gallows fifty cubits high.' So the king said, 'Let Haman be hanged on that.' ¹⁰So Haman was hanged on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. With that the anger of the king abated.

Royal Favour Shown to the Jews

8 ¹On that very day King Artaxerxes granted to Esther all the property of the persecutor Haman. Mordecai was summoned by the king, for Esther had told the king that he was related to her. ²The king took the ring that had

been taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai; and Esther set Mordecai over everything that had been Haman's.

³Then she spoke once again to the king and, falling at his feet, she asked him to avert all the evil that Haman had planned against the Jews. ⁴The king extended his golden sceptre to Esther, and she rose and stood before the king. ⁵Esther said, 'If it pleases you, and if I have found favour, let an order be sent rescinding the letters that Haman wrote and sent to destroy the Jews in your kingdom. ⁶How can I look on the ruin of my people? How can I be safe if my ancestral nation is destroyed?' ⁷The king said to Esther, 'Now that I have granted all of Haman's property to you and have hanged him on a tree because he acted against the Jews, what else do you request? ⁸Write in my name what you think best and seal it with my ring; for whatever is written at the king's command and sealed with my ring cannot be contravened.'

⁹The secretaries were summoned on the twenty-third day of the first month, that is, Nisan, in the same year; and all that he commanded with respect to the Jews was given in writing to the administrators and governors of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, to each province in its own language. ¹⁰The edict was written with the king's authority and sealed with his ring, and sent out by couriers. ¹¹He ordered the Jews in every city to observe their own laws, to defend themselves, and to act as they wished against their opponents and enemies ¹²on a certain day, the thirteenth of the

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twelfth month, which is Adar, throughout all the kingdom of Artaxerxes.

Addition E

The Decree of Artaxerxes

16¹ The following is a copy of this letter:

¹The Great King, Artaxerxes, to the governors of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, and to those who are loyal to our government, greetings.

²Many people, the more they are honoured with the most generous kindness of their benefactors, the more proud do they become, ³and not only seek to injure our subjects, but in their inability to stand prosperity, they even undertake to scheme against their own benefactors. ⁴They not only take away thankfulness from others, but, carried away by the boasts of those who know nothing of goodness, they even assume that they will escape the evil-hating justice of God, who always sees everything. ⁵And often many of those who are set in places of authority have been made in part responsible for the shedding of innocent blood, and have been involved in irremediable calamities, by the persuasion of friends who have been entrusted with the administration of public affairs, ⁶when these persons by the false trickery of their evil natures beguile the sincere goodwill of their sovereigns.

⁷What has been wickedly accomplished through the pestilent behaviour of those who exercise authority unworthily can

be seen, not so much from the more ancient records that we hand on, as from investigation of matters close at hand. ⁸In the future we will take care to render our kingdom quiet and peaceable for all, ⁹by changing our methods and always judging what comes before our eyes with more equitable consideration. ¹⁰For Haman son of Hammedatha, a Macedonian (really an alien to the Persian blood, and quite devoid of our kindness), having become our guest, ¹¹enjoyed so fully the goodwill that we have for every nation that he was called our father and was continually bowed down to by all as the person second to the royal throne. ¹²But, unable to restrain his arrogance, he undertook to deprive us of our kingdom and our life, ¹³and with intricate craft and deceit asked for the destruction of Mordecai, our saviour and perpetual benefactor, and of Esther, the blameless partner of our kingdom, together with their whole nation. ¹⁴He thought that by these methods he would catch us undefended and would transfer the kingdom of the Persians to the Macedonians.

¹⁵But we find that the Jews, who were consigned to annihilation by this thrice-accursed man, are not evildoers, but are governed by most righteous laws ¹⁶and are children of the living God, most high, most mighty, who has directed the kingdom both for us and for our ancestors in the most excellent order.

¹⁷You will therefore do well not to put in execution the letters sent by Haman son of Hammedatha, ¹⁸since he, the one who did these things, has been hanged at the gate of Susa with all his household—for God, who rules over all things, has

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speedily inflicted on him the punishment that he deserved.

¹⁹Therefore post a copy of this letter publicly in every place, and permit the Jews to live under their own laws. ²⁰And give them reinforcements, so that on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, Adar, on that very day, they may defend themselves against those who attack them at the time of oppression. ²¹For God, who rules over all things, has made this day to be a joy for his chosen people instead of a day of destruction for them.

²²Therefore you shall observe this with all good cheer as a notable day among your commemorative festivals, ²³so that both now and hereafter it may represent deliverance for you and the loyal Persians, but that it may be a reminder of destruction for those who plot against us.

²⁴Every city and country, without exception, that does not act accordingly shall be destroyed in wrath with spear and fire. It shall be made not only impassable for human beings, but also most hateful to wild animals and birds for all time.

Original Text

8 ¹³Let copies of the decree be posted conspicuously in all the kingdom, and let all the Jews be ready on that day to fight against their enemies.'

¹⁴So the messengers on horseback set out with all speed to perform what the king had commanded; and the decree was published also in Susa. ¹⁵Mordecai went out dressed in the royal robe and wearing a gold crown and a turban of

purple linen. The people in Susa rejoiced on seeing him. ¹⁶And the Jews had light and gladness ¹⁷in every city and province wherever the decree was published; wherever the proclamation was made, the Jews had joy and gladness, a banquet and a holiday. And many of the Gentiles were circumcised and became Jews out of fear of the Jews.

Victory of the Jews

9 ¹Now on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is Adar, the decree written by the king arrived. ²On that same day the enemies of the Jews perished; no one resisted, because they feared them. ³The chief provincial governors, the princes, and the royal secretaries were paying honour to the Jews, because fear of Mordecai weighed upon them. ⁴The king's decree required that Mordecai's name be held in honour throughout the kingdom. ⁶Now in the city of Susa the Jews killed five hundred people, ⁷including Pharsannestain, Delphon, Phasga, ⁸Pharadatha, Barea, Sarbacha, ⁹Marmasima, Aruphaeus, Arsaeus, Zabutheus, ¹⁰the ten sons of Haman son of Hammedatha, the Bougean, the enemy of the Jews—and they indulged themselves in plunder.

¹¹That very day the number of those killed in Susa was reported to the king. ¹²The king said to Esther, 'In Susa, the capital, the Jews have destroyed five hundred people. What do you suppose they have done in the surrounding countryside? Whatever more you ask will be done for you.' ¹³And Esther said to the king, 'Let the Jews be allowed to do the same tomorrow. Also, hang up the bodies of Haman's ten sons.' ¹⁴So he permitted this to be done, and handed over to the Jews of the city the bodies of Haman's

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sons to hang up. ¹⁵The Jews who were in Susa gathered on the fourteenth and killed three hundred people, but took no plunder.

¹⁶Now the other Jews in the kingdom gathered to defend themselves, and got relief from their enemies. They destroyed fifteen thousand of them, but did not engage in plunder. ¹⁷On the fourteenth day they rested and made that same day a day of rest, celebrating it with joy and gladness. ¹⁸The Jews who were in Susa, the capital, came together also on the fourteenth, but did not rest. They celebrated the fifteenth with joy and gladness. ¹⁹On this account, then, the Jews who are scattered around the country outside Susa keep the fourteenth of Adar as a joyful holiday, and send presents of food to one another, while those who live in the large cities keep the fifteenth day of Adar as their joyful holiday, also sending presents to one another.

The Festival of Purim

²⁰Mordecai recorded these things in a book, and sent it to the Jews in the kingdom of Artaxerxes both near and far, ²¹telling them that they should keep the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar, ²²for on these days the Jews got relief from their enemies. The whole month (namely, Adar), in which their condition had been changed from sorrow into gladness and from a time of distress to a holiday, was to be celebrated as a time for feasting and gladness and for sending presents of food to their friends and to the poor.

²³So the Jews accepted what Mordecai had written to them—²⁴how Haman son of Hammedatha, the Macedonian,

fought against them, how he made a decree and cast lots to destroy them, ²⁵and how he went in to the king, telling him to hang Mordecai; but the wicked plot he had devised against the Jews came back upon himself, and he and his sons were hanged. ²⁶Therefore these days were called 'Purim', because of the lots (for in their language this is the word that means 'lots'). And so, because of what was written in this letter, and because of what they had experienced in this affair and what had befallen them, Mordecai established this festival, ²⁷and the Jews took upon themselves, upon their descendants, and upon all who would join them, to observe it without fail. These days of Purim should be a memorial and kept from generation to generation, in every city, family, and country. ²⁸These days of Purim were to be observed for all time, and the commemoration of them was never to cease among their descendants.

²⁹Then Queen Esther daughter of Aminadab along with Mordecai the Jew wrote down what they had done, and gave full authority to the letter about Purim. ³¹And Mordecai and Queen Esther established this decision on their own responsibility, pledging their own well-being to the plan. ³²Esther established it by a decree for ever, and it was written for a memorial.

10 ¹The king levied a tax upon his kingdom both by land and sea. ²And as for his power and bravery, and the wealth and glory of his kingdom, they were recorded in the annals of the kings of the Persians and the Medes. ³Mordecai acted with authority on behalf of King Artaxerxes and was great in the kingdom, as well as honoured by the

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Jews. His way of life was such as to make him beloved by his whole nation.

Purim, which they said was authentic and had been translated by Lysimachus son of Ptolemy, one of the residents of Jerusalem.

Addition F

10⁴And Mordecai said, 'These things have come from God;⁵for I remember the dream that I had concerning these matters, and none of them has failed to be fulfilled.⁶There was the little spring that became a river, and there was light and sun and abundant water—the river is Esther, whom the king married and made queen.⁷The two dragons are Haman and myself.⁸The nations are those that gathered to destroy the name of the Jews.⁹And my nation, this is Israel, who cried out to God and was saved. The Lord has saved his people; the Lord has rescued us from all these evils; God has done great signs and wonders, wonders that have never happened among the nations.¹⁰For this purpose he made two lots, one for the people of God and one for all the nations,¹¹and these two lots came to the hour and moment and day of decision before God and among all the nations.¹²And God remembered his people and vindicated his inheritance.¹³So they will observe these days in the month of Adar, on the fourteenth and fifteenth of that month, with an assembly and joy and gladness before God, from generation to generation for ever among his people Israel.'

Postscript

11¹In the fourth year of the reign of Ptolemy and Cleopatra, Dositheus, who said that he was a priest and a Levite, and his son Ptolemy brought to Egypt the foregoing Letter about