

the women's ornaments, and to deliver to her her part, and seven of the most beautiful maidens of the king's house, and to adorn and deck out both her and her waiting maids.

10 And she would not tell him her people nor her country. For Mardochai had charged her to say nothing at all of that:

11 And he walked every day before the court of the house, in which the chosen virgins were kept, having a care for Esther's welfare, and desiring to know what would befall her.

12 Now when every virgin's turn came to go in to the king, after all had been done for setting them off to advantage, it was the twelfth month: so that for six months they were anointed with oil of myrrh, and for other six months they used certain perfumes and sweet spices.

13 And when they were going in to the king, whatsoever they asked to adorn themselves they received: and being decked out, as it pleased them, they passed from the chamber of the women to the king's chamber.

14 And she that went in at evening, came out in the morning, and from thence she was conducted to the second house, that was under the hand of Susagaz the eunuch, who had the charge over the king's concubines: neither could she return any more to the king, unless the king desired it, and had ordered her by name to come.

15 And as the time came orderly about, the day was at hand, when Esther, the daughter of Abihail the brother of Mardochai, whom he had adopted for his daughter, was to go in to the king. But she sought not women's ornaments, but whatsoever Egeus the eunuch the keeper of the virgins had a mind, he gave her to adorn her. For she was exceeding fair, and her incredible beauty made her appear agreeable and amiable in the eyes of all.

16 So she was brought to the chamber of

king Assuerus the tenth month, which is called Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

17 And the king loved her more than all the women, and she had favour and kindness before him above all the women, and he set the royal crown on her head, and made her queen instead of Vasthi.

18 And he commanded a magnificent feast to be prepared for all the princes, and for his servants, for the marriage and wedding of Esther, And he gave rest to all the provinces, and bestowed gifts according to princely magnificence.

19 And when the virgins were sought the second time, and gathered together, Mardochai stayed at the king's gate,

20 Neither had Esther as yet declared her country and people, according to his commandment. For whatsoever he commanded, Esther observed: and she did all things in the same manner as she was wont at that time when he brought her up a little one.

21 At that time, therefore, when Mardochai abode at the king's gate, Bagathan and Thares, two of the king's eunuchs, who were porters, and presided in the first entry of the palace, were angry: and they designed to rise up against the king, and to kill him.

22 And Mardochai had notice of it, and immediately he told it to queen Esther: and she to the king in Mardochai's name, who had reported the thing unto her.

23 It was inquired into, and found out: and they were both hanged on a gibbet. And it was put in the histories, and recorded in the chronicles before the king.

Chapter 3

After these things, king Assuerus advanced Aman, the son of Amadathi, who was of the race of Agag: and he set his throne above all the princes that were with him.

2 And all the king's servants, that were at the doors of the palace, bent their knees, and worshipped Aman: for so the emperor had commanded them, only Mardochai did not bend his knee, nor worship him.

3 And the king's servants that were chief at the doors of the palace, said to him: Why dost thou alone not observe the king's commandment?

4 And when they were saying this often, and he would not hearken to them, they told Aman, desirous to know whether he would continue in his resolution: for he had told them that he was a Jew.

5 Now when Aman had heard this, and had proved by experience that Mardochai did not bend his knee to him, nor worship him, he was exceeding angry.

6 And he counted it nothing to lay his hands upon Mardochai alone: for he had heard that he was of the nation of the Jews, and he chose rather to destroy all the nation of the Jews that were in the kingdom of Assuerus.

7 In the first month (which is called Nisan) in the twelfth year of the reign of Assuerus, the lot was cast into an urn, which in Hebrew is called Phur, before Aman, on what day and what month the nation of the Jews should be destroyed: and there came out the twelfth month, which is called Adar.

8 And Aman said to king Assuerus: There is a people scattered through all the provinces of thy kingdom, and separated one from another, that use new laws and ceremonies, and moreover despise the king's ordinances: and thou knowest

very well that it is not expedient for thy kingdom that they should grow insolent by impunity.

9 If it please thee, decree that they may be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents to thy treasurers.

10 And the king took the ring that he used, from his own hand, and gave it to Aman, the son of Amadathi of the race of Agag, the enemy of the Jews,

11 And he said to him: As to the money which thou promisest, keep it for thyself: and as to the people, do with them as seemeth good to thee.

12 And the king's scribes were called in the first month Nisan, on the thirteenth day of the same month: and they wrote, as Aman had commanded, to all the king's lieutenants, and to the judges of the provinces, and of divers nations, as every nation could read, and hear according to their different languages, in the name of king Assuerus: and the letters, sealed with his ring,

13 Were sent by the king's messengers to all provinces, to kill and destroy all the Jews, both young and old, little children, and women, in one day, that is, on the thirteenth of the twelfth month, which is called Adar, and to make a spoil of their goods.

14 And the contents of the letters were to this effect, that all provinces might know and be ready against that day.

15 The couriers that were sent made haste to fulfil the king's commandment. And immediately the edict was hung up in Susan, the king and Aman feasting together, and all the Jews that were in the city weeping.

Chapter 4

Now when Mardochai had heard these things, he rent his garments, and put on sackcloth, strewing

ashes on his head and he cried with a loud voice in the street in the midst of the city, shewing the anguish of his mind.

2 And he came lamenting in this manner even to the gate of the palace: for no one clothed with sackcloth might enter the king's court.

3 And in all provinces, towns, and places, to which the king's cruel edict was come, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, wailing, and weeping, many using sackcloth and ashes for their bed.

4 Then Esther's maids and her eunuchs went in, and told her. And when she heard it she was in a consternation and she sent a garment, to clothe him, and to take away the sackcloth: but he would not receive it.

5 And she called for Athach the eunuch, whom the king had appointed to attend upon her, and she commanded him to go to Mardochai, and learn of him why he did this.

6 And Athach going out went to Mardochai, who was standing in the street of the city, before the palace gate:

7 And Mardochai told him all that had happened, how Aman had promised to pay money into the king's treasures, to have the Jews destroyed.

8 He gave him also a copy of the edict which was hanging up in Susan, that he should shew it to the queen, and admonish her to go in to the king, and to entreat him for her people.

9 And Athach went back and told Esther all that Mardochai had said.

10 She answered him, and bade him say to Mardochai:

11 All the king's servants, and all the provinces that are under his dominion, know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, cometh into the king's inner court, who is not called for, is immediately to be put to death without any

delay: except the king shall hold out the golden sceptre to him, in token of clemency, that so he may live. How then can I go in to the king, who for these thirty days now have not been called unto him?

12 And when Mardochai had heard this,

13 He sent word to Esther again, saying: Think not that thou mayst save thy life only, because thou art in the king's house, more than all the Jews:

14 For if thou wilt now hold thy peace, the Jews shall be delivered by some other occasion: and thou, and thy father's house shall perish. And who knoweth whether thou art not therefore come to the kingdom, that thou mightest be ready in such a time as this?

15 And again Esther sent to Mardochai in these words:

16 Go, and gather together all the Jews whom thou shalt find in Susan, and pray ye for me. Neither eat nor drink for three days and three nights: and I with my handmaids will fast in like manner, and then I will go in to the king, against the law, not being called, and expose myself to death and to danger.

17 So Mardochai went, and did all that Esther had commanded him.

Chapter 5

And on the third day Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's hall: now he sat upon his throne in the hall of the palace, over against the door of the house.

2 And when he saw Esther the queen standing, she pleased his eyes, and he held out toward her the golden sceptre, which he held in his hand and she drew near, and kissed the top of his sceptre.