

Esther, Queen of Persia

Esther Becomes Queen

Esther 1:15,19; 2:4,5,7-11,15b,16-17

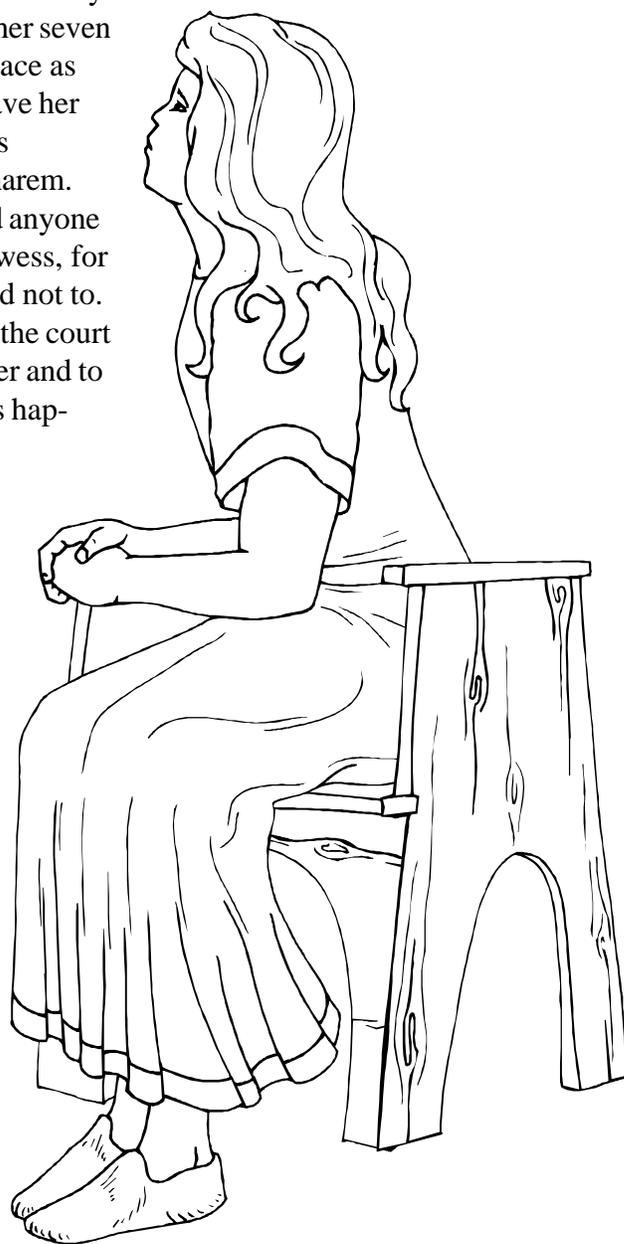
At a feast of King Ahasuerus, his Queen, Vashti, refused to come to him when ordered. “What penalty does the law provide for a queen who refuses to obey the king’s orders, properly sent through his aides?” the King asked. His advisors replied, “We suggest that, subject to your agreement, you issue a royal edict that Queen Vashti be forever banished from your presence and that you choose another queen more worthy than she. The girl who pleases you most shall be the queen instead of Vashti.” This suggestion naturally pleased the king very much, and he put the plan into immediate effect.

Now there was a certain Jew at the palace named Mordecai (son of Jair, son of Shimei, son of Kish, a Benjamite). This man had a beautiful and lovely young cousin, Hadassah (also called Esther), whose father and mother were dead, and whom he had adopted into his family and raised as his own daughter. As a result of the king’s decree, Esther was brought to the king’s harem at Shushan Palace along with many other young girls.

Hegai, who was responsible for them, was very much impressed with her and did his best to make her happy; he ordered a special menu for her, favored her for the beauty treatments, gave her seven girls from the palace as her maids, and gave her the most luxurious apartment in the harem. Esther hadn’t told anyone that she was a Jewess, for Mordecai had said not to. He came daily to the court to ask about Esther and to find out what was happening to her.

So Esther was taken to the palace of the king in January of the seventh year of his reign. Well, the king loved Esther more than any of the other girls. He was so delighted with her that he set the royal crown on her head and

declared her queen instead of Vashti. ■



Haman Plots against the Jews

Esther 3:1-2,8,9a,11,13

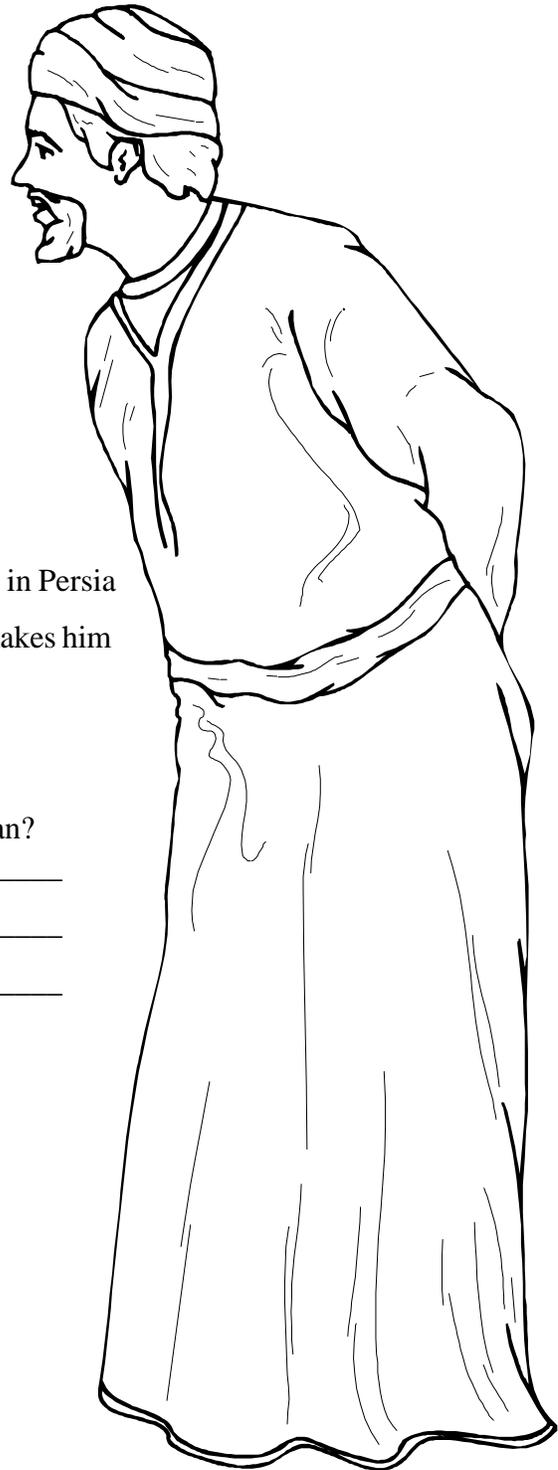
Soon afterwards King Ahasuerus appointed Haman (son of Hammedatha the Agagite) as prime minister. He was the most powerful official in the empire next to the king himself. Now all the king's officials bowed before him in deep reverence whenever he passed by, for so the king had commanded. But Mordecai refused to bow.

Haman approached the king about the matter. "There is a certain race of people scattered through all the provinces of your kingdom," he began, "and their laws are different from those of any other nation, and they refuse to obey the king's laws; therefore, it is not in the king's interest to let them live.

If it please the king, issue a decree that they be destroyed, and I will pay \$20,000,000 into the royal treasury for the expenses involved in this purge."

"Keep the money," said King Ahasuerus, "but go ahead and do as you like with these people-whatever you think best."

Haman sent messengers into all the provinces of the empire, decreeing that the Jews-young and old, women and children-must all be killed on the 28th day of February of the following year and their property given to those who killed them. ■



Haman

Second highest official in Persia

His anger at one man makes him angry at an entire race

What are some of the characteristics of Haman?

Mordecai challenges Esther to Help

Esther 4:1,4,5,7,8,10-17

When Mordecai learned what had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, crying with a loud and bitter wail.



When Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her about Mordecai, she was deeply distressed and sent clothing to him to replace the sackcloth, but he refused it. Then Esther sent for Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs who had been appointed as her attendant, and told him to go out to Mordecai and find out what the trouble was and why he was acting like that.

Hathach heard the whole story from him, and about the \$20,000,000 Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasury for the destruction of

the Jews. Mordecai also gave Hathach a copy of the king's decree dooming all Jews, and told him to show it to Esther and to tell her what was happening and that she should go to the king to plead for her people.

Esther told Hathach to go back and say to Mordecai, "All the world knows that anyone, whether man or woman, who goes into the king's inner court without his summons is doomed to die unless the king holds out his gold scepter; and the king has not called for me to come to him in more than a month."

This was Mordecai's reply to Esther: "Do you think you will escape there in the palace when all other Jews are killed? If you keep quiet at a time like this, God will deliver the Jews from some other source, but you and your relatives will die; what's more, who can say but that God has brought you into the palace for just such a time as this?"

Then Esther sent to Mordecai: "Go and gather together all the Jews of Shushan and fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day; and I and my maids will do the same; and then, though it is strictly forbidden, I will go in to see the king; and if I perish, I perish."

So Mordecai did as Esther told him to. ■

Mordecai

Raised Esther as his own.

Refused to bow to anyone but God.

Saved the King's life.

Was rewarded for his faithfulness.

Trusted God to deliver the Jews, but saw his family's role in that deliverance.

Esther Approaches the King

Esther 5:1-8

Three days later Esther put on her royal robes and entered the inner court just beyond the royal hall of the palace, where the king was sitting upon his royal throne. And when he saw Queen Esther standing there in the inner court, he welcomed her, holding out the golden scepter to her. So Esther approached and touched its tip.

Then the king asked her, “What do you wish, Queen Esther? What is your request? I will give it to you, even if it is half

the kingdom!” And Esther replied, “If it please Your Majesty, I want you and Haman to come to a banquet I have prepared for you today.”

The king turned to his aides. “Tell Haman to hurry!” he said. So the king and Haman came to Esther’s banquet. During the wine course the king said to Esther, “Now tell me what you really want, and I will give it to

you, even if it is half of the kingdom!”

Esther replied, “My request, my deepest wish, is that if Your Majesty loves me and wants to grant my request, that you come again with Haman tomorrow to the banquet I shall prepare for you. And tomorrow I will explain what this is all about.”■



Wednesday

Haman Plots More Evil, but is Humiliated

Esther 5:9,14; 6:1-3,6-12

What a happy man was Haman as he left the banquet! But when he saw Mordecai there at the gate, not standing up or trembling before him, he was furious.

“Well,” suggested Zeresh, his wife, and all his friends, “get ready a 75-foot-high gallows, and in the morning ask the king to let you hang Mordecai on it; and when this is done you can go on your merry way with the king to the banquet.” This pleased Haman immensely, and he ordered the gallows built.

That night the king had trouble sleeping and decided to read awhile. He ordered the historical records of his kingdom from the library, and in them he came across an item telling how Mordecai had exposed the plot of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s eunuchs, watchmen at the palace gates, who had plotted to assassinate him.

“What reward did we ever give Mordecai for this?” the king asked. “None”, answered his servant.

Haman came in right at this time, and the king said to him, “What should I do to honor a man who truly pleases me?”

Haman thought to himself, “Whom would he want to honor more than me?” So he replied, “Bring out some of the royal

robes the king himself has worn, and the king’s own horse, and the royal crown, and instruct one of the king’s most noble princes to robe the man and to lead him through the streets on the king’s own horse, shouting before him, “This is the way the king honors those who truly please him!”

“Excellent!” the king said to Haman. “Hurry and take these robes and my horse, and do just as you have said-to Mordecai the Jew, who works at the Chancellery. Follow every detail you have suggested.”

So Haman took the robes and put them on Mordecai, and mounted him on the king’s own steed, and led him through the streets of the city, shouting, “This is the way the king honors those he delights in.”

Afterwards Mordecai returned to his job, but Haman hurried home utterly humiliated. ■

Wednesday

Esther's Request, Haman's Defeat

Esther 7:1,2b-6,7a,9,10a; 8:1,5,6,8,11

So the king and Haman came to Esther's banquet. Again, during the wine course, the king asked her, "What is your petition, Queen Esther? What do you wish? Whatever it is, I will give it to you, even if it is half of my kingdom!"

And at last Queen Esther replied, "If I have won your favor, O king, and if it please Your Majesty, save my life and the lives of my people. For I and my people have been sold to those who will destroy us. We are doomed to destruction and slaughter. If we were only to be sold as slaves, perhaps I could remain quiet, though even then there would be incalculable damage to the king that no amount of money could begin to cover."

"What are you talking about?" King Ahasuerus demanded. "Who would dare touch you?"

Esther replied, "This wicked Haman is our enemy."

Then Haman grew pale with fright before the king and queen. The king jumped to his feet and went out into the palace garden.

Then Harbona, one of the king's aides, said, "Sir, Haman has just

ordered a 75-foot gallows constructed, to hang Mordecai, the man who saved the king from assassination! It stands in Haman's courtyard."

"Hang Haman on it," the king ordered. So they did, and the king's wrath was pacified.

On that same day King Ahasuerus gave the estate of Haman, the Jews' enemy, to Queen Esther. Then Mordecai was brought before the king, for Esther had told the king that he was her cousin and foster father.

Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and Mordecai the Jew, "I have given Esther the palace of Haman, and he has been hanged upon the gallows because he tried to destroy you. Now go ahead and send a message to the Jews, telling them whatever you want in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring so that it can never be reversed."

This decree gave the Jews everywhere permission to unite in the defense of their lives and their families, to destroy all the forces opposed to them, and to take their property. ■

Purim

Esther 9:27,28

All the Jews throughout the realm agreed to inaugurate this tradition and to pass it on to their descendants and to all who became Jews; they declared they would never fail to celebrate these two days at the appointed time each year.

It would be an annual event from generation to generation, celebrated by every family throughout the countryside and cities of the empire, so that the memory of what had happened would never perish from the Jewish race. ■

Wednesday