

ESTHER

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ESTHER

This book has its name from the person who is the principal subject of it; it is by Clemens of Alexandria^{f1} called the Book of Mordecai also; it is commonly called, in the Hebrew copies, “Megillah Esther”, the Volume of Esther; and sometimes in the Jewish writings only “Megillah”, by way of eminency, “the Volume”. It was written, according to the Talmudists^{f2}, by the men of the great synagogue, composed by Ezra; and some think it was written by Ezra himself^{f3}; but Aben Ezra is of opinion it was written by Mordecai, since he was concerned in, and had perfect knowledge of, all things related in it; which is rejected by Spinoza^{f4}, who conceits that this, and the books of Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, were written by one and the same historian long after the times of Judas Maccabaeus: as to the canonical authority of it, it has been generally received by Jews and Christians; our wise men, says Maimonides^{f5}, openly and plainly affirm of the book of Esther, that it was dictated by the Holy Spirit; so Aben Ezra on (אֶסְתֵּר 6:6) Esther 6:6), and he himself^{f6} affirms, that

“all the books of the prophets, and all the Hagiographa (or holy writings), shall cease in the days of the Messiah, except the volume of Esther; and, lo, that shall be as stable as the Pentateuch, and as the constitutions of the oral law, which shall never cease.”

Though the versions of other books of Scripture might not be read in the synagogues, versions of this book might to those who did not understand Hebrew^{f7}; and so Luther^{f8} says, the Jews more esteem the book of Esther than any of the prophets. Whence Mr. Baxter^{f9} had that notion, I can not devise, that the Jews used to cast to the ground the book of Esther before they read it, because the name of God was not in it: nor is that any objection to its authenticity, since the hand and providence of God may be most clearly seen in it; in raising Esther to such grandeur, and that for the deliverance of the people of the Jews, and in counter working and bringing to nought the plots of their enemies, and in saving them: nor that it is not

quoted in the New Testament; it is sufficient there is no disagreement between them, yea, an entire agreement, particularly in the account of the captivity of Jeconiah, which is expressed almost in the same words in (~~1706~~ Esther 2:6) as in (~~4011~~ Matthew 1:11,12). It stands in Origen's catalogue ^{f10} of the books of the Old Testament; nor is it any material objection that it appears not in the catalogue of Melito ^{f11}, since in that list is comprehended under Ezra not Nehemiah only, but Esther also, which Jerom ^{f12} mentions along with it. This book is not only of use to the Jews, as it shows the original and foundation of a feast of theirs, still kept up by them, the feast of Purim, and makes for the glory of their nation, and therefore it is no wonder it should be so highly esteemed by them; but serves to show the singular providence of God in taking care of his people in adversity, in humbling the proud, and exalting the lowly, and saving those that pray to him, and trust in him; it furnishes out various instructions in the conduct of the several persons herein mentioned; it is a history but of ten or eleven years at most, from the third of Ahasuerus, to the twelfth of his reign, (~~1706~~ Esther 1:3 3:7).

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO ESTHER 1

This chapter relates, how that Ahasuerus, a great king of Persia, made a feast, first for the grandees of his kingdom, and then for his people, as his queen did for the women, (^{<7000>}Esther 1:1-9), who being sent for by him, and she refusing to come, was, by the advice of one of his counsellors, divorced from him, and an order made and published throughout his dominions, that every man should bear rule in his own house, (^{<7000>}Esther 1:10-22).

Ver. 1. *Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus,* etc.] Who he was is not easy to say; almost all the kings of Persia are so named by one or another writer. He cannot be the Ahasuerus in (^{<2000>}Daniel 9:1), he was Astyages, the father of Cyaxares or Darius the Mede; but this must be one who had his royal palace in Shushan, which was never the royal city of the Medes, but of the Persians only; nor does he seem to be the Ahasuerus in (^{<1500>}Ezra 4:6), who is thought to be Cambyses, the son and successor of Cyrus; since, according to the canon of Ptolemy, he reigned but eight years, whereas this Ahasuerus at least reigned twelve, (^{<7000>}Esther 3:7), though indeed some account for it by his reigning in his father's lifetime; besides, Cambyses was always an enemy to the Jews, as this was not; and yet this way go many of the Jewish writers ^{f13} and so a very learned man, Nicolaus Abram ^{f14}; according to Bishop Usher ^{f15}, this was Darius Hystaspis, who certainly was a friend to the Jewish nation; but he is rather the Artaxerxes of Ezra and Nehemiah; and so says the Midrash ^{f16}. Dr. Prideaux ^{f17} thinks Ahasuerus was Artaxerxes Longimanus, which is the sense of Josephus ^{f18}, and who is thought by many to be the Artaxerxes in the foresaid books. Capellus ^{f19} is of opinion, that Darius Ochus is meant, to which Bishop Patrick inclines; but I rather think, with Vitringa ^{f20} and others ^{f21}, that Xerxes is the Ahasuerus that was the husband of Esther here spoken of; so the Arabic writers ^{f22}; and as he was the son and successor of Darius Hystaspis, if he is meant by Artaxerxes in the preceding books, the history of which is carried to the thirty second year of his reign, (^{<1500>}Nehemiah 13:6) and who reigned but four years more; this book of

Esther stands in right order of time to carry on the history of the Jewish affairs in the Persian monarchy; and Mr. Broughton^{f23} owns, that the name of Xerxes, in Greek, agrees with Ahasuerus in Hebrew; and in (<790>Esther 10:1) his name is Achashresh, which, with the Greeks, is Axeres or Xerxes^{f24}.

this is Ahasuerus, which reigned from India even unto Ethiopia; properly so called; the Ethiopians had been subdued by Cambyses the son and successor of Cyrus^{f25}, and the Indians by Darius Hystaspis the father of Xerxes^{f26}; and both, with other great nations, were retained in subjection to him^{f27}; and many of both, as well as of other nations, were with him in his expedition into Greece^{f28}:

over an hundred and twenty and seven provinces; there were now seven provinces more under his jurisdiction than were in the times of Darius the Mede, (<790>Daniel 6:1).

Ver. 2. *That in those days, when the King Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom*, etc.] Not only was placed upon it, but settled in it; after Xerxes had subdued Egypt, in the second year of his reign^{f29}, and enjoyed great peace and tranquillity:

which was in Shushan the palace; that is, the throne of his kingdom was in Shushan, the royal city of the kings of Persia; of which (See Gill on <790>Nehemiah 1:1") (See Gill on <790>Daniel 8:2").

Ver. 3. *In the third year of his reign he made a feast unto all his princes, and his servants*, etc.] The nobles and officers in his court; on what account this was cannot be said with certainty, whether the first day of it was his birthday, or the day of his coming to the throne, on which day Xerxes used to make a feast annually, as Herodotus relates^{f30}:

the power of Persia and Media; the mighty men therein, the potentates thereof; or the "army", the principal officers of it:

the nobles and princes of the provinces being with him. The first word Aben Ezra declares his ignorance of, whether it is Hebrew or Persian; Jarchi interprets it governors; and the persons intended by both seem to be the deputy governors of the one hundred and twenty seven provinces who were present at this feast. Xerxes, having reduced Egypt, meditated a war with Greece, to which he was pressed by Mardonius, a relation of his; upon which he summoned the chief men of his kingdom, to have their advice

about it ^{f31}, which perhaps was taken at this time; for it was in the third year of his reign he resolved upon the war, and began to make preparations for it; and it was usual, at banquets and feasts, that the Persians debated their most important affairs ^{f32}.

Ver. 4. *When he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom*, etc.] Xerxes was the fourth king of the Persian monarchy, and was “far richer than all” that went before him, all their riches coming into his hands, (^{2710B}Daniel 11:2), and now that prophecy began to be fulfilled, “that by his strength, through his riches, he should stir up all against the realm of Grecia”; which he began to do in the third year of his reign, and for which these his nobles might be called together, as to have their advice, so to animate them to come in the more readily into the expedition, by showing them the riches he was possessed of; for to none of the kings of Persia does this largeness of riches better belong than to Xerxes:

and the honour of his excellent majesty; the grandeur he lived in, the pomp and splendour of his court; he was the most grand and magnificent of all the kings of the Medes and Persians ^{f33}:

and this he did many days, even an hundred and fourscore days; to which seven more being added, as in the following verse, it made one hundred and eighty seven, the space of full six months; though some think the feast did not last so long, only seven days, and that the one hundred and eighty days were spent in preparing for it; but the Persian feasts were very long, large, and sumptuous. Dr. Frye ^{f34} says, this custom of keeping an annual feast one hundred and eighty days still continues in Persia. Cheus ^{f35}, a Chinese emperor, used frequently to make a feast which lasted one hundred and twenty days; though it cannot be well thought that the same individual persons here were feasted so long, but, when one company was sufficiently treated, they removed and made way for another; and so it continued successively such a number of days as here related, which was six months, or half a year; a year then in use consisting of three hundred and sixty days, as was common with the Jews, and other nations, and so the Persians ^{f36}.

Ver. 5. *And when these days were ended*, etc.] The one hundred and eighty, in which the nobles, princes, and great men of the kingdom were feasted:

the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small; of every age, rank, state and condition of life; these were the common people, whether inhabitants of the city or country people there on business, whether natives or foreigners; according to the Targum, there were Israelites there, but not Mordecai and his family; yea, it is said in the Midrash ^{f37}, that they were all Jews, and that their number was 18,500; but this is not probable; it is very likely there were some Jews among them, as there were many in the army of Xerxes, when he made his expedition into Greece, according to the poet Choerilus ^{f38}; which is not to be wondered at, since there were so many of them in his dominions, and they men of valour and fidelity, and to whose nation he was so kind and favourable: and this feast was kept

seven days in the court of the garden of the king's palace; which no doubt was very large, and sufficient to hold such a number as was assembled together on this occasion, when there was not room enough for them in the palace. There is in history an account of a Persian king that supped with 15,000 men, and in the supper spent forty talents ^{f39}.

Ver. 6. *Where were white, green, and blue hangings*, etc.] Or curtains of fine linen, as the Targum, which were of these several colours; the first letter of the word for “white” is larger than usual, to denote the exceeding whiteness of them. The next word is “carpas”, which Ben Melech observes is a dyed colour, said to be green. Pausanias ^{f40} makes mention of Carpasian linen, and which may be here meant; the last word used signifies blue, sky coloured, or hyacinth:

fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings, and pillars of marble; these pillars are said, in the Targum, to be of divers colours, red, green, and shining yellow and white, on which the silver rings were fixed, and into them were put linen strings of purple colour, which fastened the hangings to them, and so made an enclosure, within which the guests sat at the feast:

the beds were of gold and silver; the couches on which they sat, or rather reclined at eating, as was the manner of the eastern nations; these, according to the Targum, were of lambs' wool, the finest, and the softest, and the posts of them were of gold, and their feet of silver. Such luxury obtained among the Romans in later times ^{f41}:

these were placed in a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black, marble; which, according to some, are the porphyrite, Parian, alabaster, and marble of various colours; the marble of the Persians is of four colours, white, black, red and black, and white and black ^{f42}; but others take them to be precious stones, as Jarchi and Aben Ezra; the first is by the Targum interpreted crystal, by others the emerald, one of which Theophrastus ^{f43} speaks of as four cubits long, and three broad, which might be laid in a pavement; the third is, by Bochart ^{f44}, supposed to be the pearl; and in the Talmud ^{f45} it is said to be of such a nature, that if placed in the middle of a dining room, will give light in it as at noonday, which seems to be what is called lychnites; to which Lucian ^{f46} ascribes a like property: nor need all this seem strange, since great was the luxury of the eastern nations. Philostratus ^{f47} speaks of a temple in India paved with pearls, and which he says all the Barbarians use in their temples; particularly it is said ^{f48}, that the roofs of the palaces of Shushan and Ecbatana, the palaces of the kings of Persia, shone with gold and silver, ivory, and amber; no wonder then that their pavements were of very valuable and precious stones: and from hence it appears, that the “lithostrata”, the word here used by the Septuagint, or tesserated pavements, were in use four hundred years before the times of Sylla, where the beginning of them is placed by Pliny ^{f49}; there was a “lithostraton” in the second temple at Jerusalem, by us rendered the pavement, (~~4813~~ John 19:13), perhaps the same with the room Gazith, so called from its being laid with hewn stone. Aristeeas ^{f50}, who lived in the times of Ptolemy Philadelphus, testifies that the whole floor of the temple was a “lithostraton”, or was paved with stone: it is most likely therefore that these had their original in the eastern country, and not in Greece, as Pliny ^{f51} supposed.

Ver. 7. *They gave them drink in vessels of gold, the vessels being divers one from another*, etc.] In the pattern and workmanship of them, though of the same metal, which diversity made the festival the more grand; earthen cups, with the Persians, were reckoned very mean; when a king would disgrace a man, he obliged him to use earthen cups ^{f52}. The Targum represents these vessels to be the golden vessels of the temple at Jerusalem Nebuchadnezzar carried away; which could not be, since they had been delivered by Cyrus to Zerubbabel, (~~4807~~ Ezra 1:7-10),

and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king; such as the king was able to give, the best he had, and that in great plenty; the wine the kings of Persia used to drink, as Strabo ^{f53} relates, was Chalybonian

wine, or wine of Helbon, as it is called, (³²⁷Ezekiel 27:18), but by the wine of the kingdom, as it may be rendered, is meant wine of the country; the wine of Schiras is reckoned the best in Persia ^{f54}.

Ver. 8. *And the drinking was according to the law, none did compel*, etc.] According to the law Ahasuerus gave to his officers next mentioned, which was not to oblige any man to drink more than he chose; the Targum is, ‘according to the custom of his body;’

that is, as a man is able to bear it, so they drank: some ^{f55} read it, “the drinking according to the law, let none exact”; or require it to be, according to the custom then in use in Persia; for they were degenerated from their former manners, and indulged to intemperance, as Xenophon ^{f56} suggests: the law formerly was, not to carry large vessels into feasts; but now, says he, they drink so much, that they themselves must be carried out, because they cannot go upright: and so it became a law with the Greeks, at their festivals, that either a man must drink or go out ^{f57}; so the master of a feast, at which Empedocles was, ordered either that he should drink, or the wine be poured on his head ^{f58}; but such force or compulsion Ahasuerus forbad: and thus with the Chinese now, they force none to drink, but modestly invite them ^{f59}:

for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should do according to every man’s pleasure; to let them have what wine they would, but not force them to drink more than was agreeable to them.

Ver. 9. *Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women* etc.] For it was not customary with the Persians, nor other eastern nations, to admit of women to their festivals ^{f60}, but they feasted by themselves. Who Vashti was is not known with any certainty. Bishop Usher, who takes Ahasuerus to be Darius Hystaspis, thinks Vashti was Atossa, the daughter of Cyrus, whom he married. The Targumist says, she was the daughter of Evilmerodach, the son of Nebuchadnezzar. Her name seems to be the same with Vesta, a deity worshipped by the Persians, as Xenophon ^{f61}, and signifies vehement fire, which was in great veneration with them; and therefore this queen is most likely to be of Persian original: she kept her feast

in the royal house which belonged to Ahasuerus; her guests not being so many, there was room enough in the king’s palace for them, and where it

was more decent for them to be than in the open air in the garden, and exposed to the sight of men.

Ver. 10. *On the seventh day*, etc.] Of the feast, the last day of it, which the Rabbins, as Jarchi observes, say was the sabbath day, and so the Targum:

when the heart of the king was merry with wine; when he was intoxicated with it, and knew not well what he said or did; and the discourse at table ran upon the beauty of women, as the latter Targum; when the king asserted there were no women so beautiful as those of Babylon, and, as a proof of it, ordered his queen to be brought in:

he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bightha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains, that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king; or “eunuchs”, as the word is sometimes rendered; and such persons were made use of in the eastern countries to, wait upon women, and so were proper to be sent on the king’s errand to the queen.

Ver. 11. *To bring Vashti the queen before the king*, etc.] Not against her will, or by force; but they were sent to let her know it was the king’s pleasure that she should come to him immediately:

with the crown royal; that is, upon her head, to make her look the more grand and majestic:

to show the people and the princes her beauty; for she was fair to look upon; which was not wisely done, neither was it comely nor safe.

Ver. 12. *But the queen refused to come at the king’s commandment by his chamberlains*, etc.] Even though he sent by them again, as the Targum; and so says Josephus^{f62}; which might not purely arise from pride in her, and contempt of him, but because she might conclude he was drunk, and knew not well what he did; and therefore had she come at his command, when he was himself and sober, he might blame her for coming, nay, use her ill for it, and especially if she was to come naked, as say the Jews^{f63}; and besides, it was contrary to the law of the Persians, as not only Josephus^{f64}, but Plutarch^{f65} observes, which suffered not women to be seen in public; and particularly did not allow their wives to be with them at feasts, only their concubines and harlots, with whom they could behave with more indecency; as for their wives, they were kept out of sight, at home^{f66}; and therefore Vashti might think it an indignity to be treated as an harlot or concubine:

therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him; which was the more fierce, as he was inflamed with wine.

Ver. 13. *Then the king said to the wise men that knew the times,* etc.] Astrologers, as Aben Ezra, that knew the fit time for doing anything; or that had knowledge of ancient times, historians, well read in history, and knew things that had happened similar to this:

for so was the king's manner towards all that knew law and judgment; it was customary with him in any case of difficulty to have the opinion and advice of those that were expert in the law, and well understood right and wrong. These are called by Herodotus ^{f67} the king's judges.

Ver. 14. *And the next unto him,* etc.] That sat next to the king, and was the chief in dignity and authority under him:

was Carshena; and so everyone in their rank and order, as next mentioned:

Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan; who, according to the latter Targum, were of different countries; the first of Africa, the second of India, the third of Idumea, the fourth of Egypt, the fifth of Resen, (^{<01012>}Genesis 10:12) which is framed out of Marsena, who is dropped, and the last of Jerusalem, said to be Daniel; though the former Targum makes him to be Haman:

the seven powers of Persia and Media; which custom of having seven counsellors with the kings of Persia arose from the seven princes that slew Smerdis the pretender, and made Darius Hystaspis king, the father of Xerxes:

which saw the king's face; were intimate and familiar with him, often in his presence; yea, might go into it when they pleased, without the ceremony of being introduced; which privilege the above persons reserved to themselves, when they placed Darius on the throne, as Herodotus relates ^{f68}.

and which sat the first in the kingdom; next to the king, and were assisting to him in the administration of government, (see ^{<15074>}Ezra 7:14).

Ver. 15. *What shall we do unto the Queen Vashti, according to law,* etc.] The king desired to know what law was provided in such a case as her's, and what to be done according to it:

because she hath not performed the commandment of the king by the chamberlains? as this was the crime, disobedience to his commands, he would have those who had knowledge of the law consider what punishment was to be inflicted on her for it, according to former laws, usages, and customs, or as reason and justice required; and it being a festival, and they heated with wine, was no objection to a consultation on this head; for it was the manner of the Persians at festivals, and when inflamed with wine, to consult and determine about matters of the greatest moment ^{f69}; yea, reckoned their counsels and decrees firmer than when made when they were sober ^{f70}; so the ancient Germans ^{f71}.

Ver. 16. *And Memucan answered before the king and the princes,* etc.] Who was the last, and perhaps the least and the youngest of the counsellors; it being appointed by the king, according to the latter Targum that when his counsellors sat, the least should give their counsel first; just as puisne judges, and the youngest peers with us, give their opinion in a case first:

Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the people that are in all the provinces of the King Ahasuerus; he means, by setting a bad example to their wives, as after explained; it is an exaggeration of her crime, and made with a design to incense the king the more against her.

Ver. 17. *For this deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women,* etc.] It will soon be spread all over the king's dominions, and reach the ears of the wives of all his subjects, and become their general talk everywhere:

so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes: make light of their authority, refuse subjection to them, slight their commands, and neglect to yield obedience to them, and so not give them the honour that is due unto them:

when it shall be reported, the King Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, and she came not; was disobedient to his commands, refused to go along with the chamberlains sent by the king to fetch her.

Ver. 18. *Likewise shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto the king's princes, which have heard of the deed of the queen,* etc.] From henceforward they will give a like answer to their husbands, when they lay

their commands upon them, as Vashti has to the king; they will tell them to their faces they will not obey their orders:

thus shall there arise too much contempt and wrath; there will be in wives a general contempt of their husbands, which will cause discord and strife, quarrels, wrath and anger; contempt on one part, wrath on the other, and contention between both.

Ver. 19. *If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him,* etc.] Not only a proclamation made, but a law enacted and published by royal authority:

and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and Medes that it be not altered; for so it was, that when a law was made, and signed, and sealed, and registered among the laws of the kingdom, it remained unalterable, (^{<2788>}Daniel 6:8,15), this precaution Memucan took for his own safety; for had the king acted upon his advice, without passing it into a law in such form, he might change his mind, and recall Vashti, who would not fail of venting her wrath upon the counsellor, and so he be in danger of losing his life for it:

that Vashti come no more before King Ahasuerus; but be entirely divorced, never to be received any more:

and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she; or “to her companions”^{f72}; that was with her in the house of the women in the seraglio; one that was fairer, as the Targum, or of a better disposition than her; let her be made queen, and enjoy all the honour, and dignity, and marks of royalty Vashti did; her throne, her crown, and royal apparel, as it is interpreted in an ancient Jewish writing^{f73}.

Ver. 20. *And when the king’s decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire,* etc.] As it was proper it should, since the report of the queen’s deed would be made everywhere:

for it is great; the empire consisting of one hundred and twenty seven provinces, (^{<4700>}Esther 1:1), Aben Ezra and Abendana interpret it, “though” it is great, yet the decree should be published throughout; the latter observes, that this may respect the king’s decree; and so the Targum is,

“for his decree is great;”

it respecting a matter of great importance, and relating to a great personage, and would have great effect on the minds of persons, when it was observed that one so great was treated in this manner: and therefore

all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small; speaking respectfully to them, yielding a ready and cheerful obedience to all their commands; which would be done to princes and peasants, to high and low, to every rank of men.

Ver. 21. *And the saying pleased the king and the princes,* etc.] The king, and the other six princes and counsellors, approved of the proposal, and unanimously agreed to it:

and the king did according to the word of Memucan; passed a law according to his advice, and signed and sealed it, and registered it among the laws of the kingdom, not to be revoked.

Ver. 22. *For he sent letters unto all the king's provinces,* etc.] The one hundred and twenty seven provinces, (^{אֶרְצוֹת}Esther 1:1), which, according to the Targum, were written and sealed with his own seal; which is very probable:

into every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language; that is, these letters were written in the language, and in the characters in which that language was written, used in each of the provinces to which these letters were sent, that they might be easily read and understood by all: the sum of which was,

that every man should bear rule in his own house; be prince, lord, and master there, and his commands obeyed, not only by his children and servants, but by his wife also:

and that it should be published according to the language of every people; but as this is expressed, or at least implied, in the first clause of this verse, it should rather be rendered, “and that he should speak according to the language of his people”; and so is the latter Targum; it seems as if a man, who had married a woman in another country, in complaisance to her had neglected his own native tongue, and used hers in the family, by which means he lost, or seemed to lose, his authority in it: now, to guard against this, this part of the law was made; and, according to Jarchi, the husband was to compel his wife to learn and speak his language, if she was a

foreigner; to which agrees the first Targum, which paraphrases the whole thus,

“that a man rule over his wife, and oblige her to speak according to the language of her husband, and the speech of his people;”

and, in later times, Bahram Gaur forbid any other language, besides the Persian, to be used within his port, either in speaking or writing^{f74}.

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION TO ESTHER 2

By the advice of the ministers of King Ahasuerus, fair virgins were sought for throughout his dominions, and brought to his chamberlain, the keeper of the women, among whom was Esther, a Jewish virgin, (^{<1711>}Esther 2:1-8), who found favour with the chamberlain, and afterwards with the king, who made her queen instead of Vashti, and a feast on that account, (^{<1711>}Esther 2:9-18). Mordecai, to whom Esther was related, and according to whose advice she acted, sitting in the king's gate, discovered a conspiracy against the king, which he now made known to Esther, (^{<1711>}Esther 2:19-23).

Ver. 1. *After these things, when the wrath of King Ahasuerus was appeased,* etc.] Which went off with his wine, and so was quickly after, a few days at most, unless this can be understood as after the expedition of Xerxes into Greece, from whence he returned to Shushan, in the seventh year of his reign; and if he is the Ahasuerus here meant, he married Esther that year, (^{<1711>}Esther 2:16) and it seems certain, that after his expedition he gave himself up to his amours, and in his way to Sardis he fell in love with his brother's wife, and then with his daughter^{f75}:

he remembered Vashti; her beauty, and was grieved, as Jarchi observes, that she was removed from him; and so Josephus says^{f76}, that he passionately loved her, and could not bear parting with her, and therefore was grieved that he had brought himself into such difficulties: the Targumists carry it further, and say that he was wroth with those that advised him to it, and ordered them to be put to death, and that they were:

and what she had done; that it was a trivial thing, and not deserving of such a sentence as he had passed upon her; that it was not done from contempt of him, but from modesty, and a strict regard to the laws of the Persians:

and what was decreed against her; that she should come no more before him, but be divorced from him; the thought of which gave him great pain and uneasiness.

Ver. 2. *Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, etc.]*

Fearing that, if Vashti should be restored, vengeance would be taken on them; or however to remove the grief and melancholy of the king, they gave the following advice:

let there be fair young virgins sought for the king; that he might enjoy them, and choose one of them, the most agreeable to him, and put her in the room of Vashti.

Ver. 3. *And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, etc.]* Who best knew where beautiful virgins might be found in their respective provinces, in which they dwelt:

that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace; the metropolis of the kingdom, where was the royal palace:

to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hege the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women; in which house it seems were two apartments, one for the virgins before they were introduced to the king, the other for them when they were become his concubines, which had a keeper also; but this Hege seems to have been over the whole house, (¹⁷²⁴Esther 2:14). It was not only usual with the eastern people, as with the Turks now, for great personages to have keepers of their wives and concubines, but with the Romans also ^{f77}:

and let their things for purification be given them; such as oil of myrrh, spices, etc. to remove all impurity and ill scent from them, and make them look smooth and beautiful.

Ver. 4. *And let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti, etc.]* Have the royal estate, that was taken from Vashti, given to her, the crown royal set on her head, etc.

and the thing pleased the king, and he did so; appointed officers in all his provinces to seek out the most beautiful virgins, and bring them to his palace; so with the Chinese now, the king never marries with any of his kindred, though ever so remote; but there is sought throughout his kingdom a damsel of twelve or fourteen years, of perfect beauty, good natural parts, and well inclined to virtue; whence, for the most part, the queen is the daughter of some artisan; and in their history ^{f78}, mention is made of one that was the daughter of a mason.

Ver. 5. *Now in Shushan the palace was a certain Jew*, etc.] Not one of the tribe of Judah, for he was afterwards called a Benjaminite; but was so called, because he was of the kingdom of Judah, which consisted of both tribes. Jarchi says, all that were carried captive with the kings of Judah were called Jews among the nations, though of another tribe:

whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite; who was among those that came with Zerubbabel from Babylon to Jerusalem, and returned to Persia again, (^{<1511D>}Ezra 2:2 ^{<1511E>}Nehemiah 7:7), though some think this was another Mordecai; (See Gill on "^{<1511D>}Ezra 2:2"), who descended not from Kish, the father of Saul, but a later and more obscure person.

Ver. 6. *Who had been carried away from Jerusalem*, etc.] Which, according to some ^{f79}, is to be connected, not with Mordecai, but with Kish, his great-grandfather; and indeed otherwise Mordecai must be now a very old man, and Esther his first cousin, they being brothers' children, must be at an age, one would think, not to be reckoned among young virgins, and not be so amiable as she is represented; and indeed, according to the former Targum, she was seventy five years of age, which is not credible; and yet this, and more she must be, to be equal to Mordecai, if he was carried captive, as follows:

with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away; which was eleven years before the destruction of Jerusalem, for so long Zedekiah reigned after that captivity of Jeconiah: hence Sir John Marsham ^{f80} makes this affair of Esther to be within the time of the Babylonish captivity, and places Ahasuerus her husband between Darius the Mede and Cyrus, contrary to history and Scripture, (see ^{<1511D>}Daniel 6:28)

Ver. 7. *And he brought up Hadassah (that is Esther) his uncle's daughter*, etc.] Her Hebrew name was Hadassah, which signifies a myrtle, to which the Israelites, and good men among them, are sometimes compared, (^{<1511D>}Zechariah 1:8). Her Persian name was Esther, which some derive from "satar", to hide, because hidden in the house of Mordecai, so the former Targum, and by his advice concealed her kindred: or rather she was so called by Ahasuerus, when married to him, this word signifying in the Persian language a "star" ^{f81} and so the latter Targum says she was called by the name of the star of Venus, which in Greek is $\alpha\sigma\tau\eta\rho$; though it is said ^{f82}, that the myrtle, which is called "hadassah" in Hebrew, is in the

Syriac language “esta”; so “asa” in the Talmud^{f83} signifies a myrtle; and, according to Hillerus^{f84}, “esther” signifies the black myrtle, which is reckoned the most excellent; and so “amestris”, according to him, signifies the sole myrtle, the incomparable one. Xerxes had a wife, whose name was Amestris, which Scaliger thinks is as if it was *rtsa ꝓh*, and the same with Esther; but to this are objected, that her father’s name was Otanes, and her cruelty in the mutilation of the wife of Masistis, her husband’s brother, and burning alive fourteen children of the best families of the Persians, as a sacrifice to the infernal gods; and besides, Xerxes had a son by her marriageable, in the seventh year of this reign^{f85}, the year of Ahasuerus, in which he married Esther: but it is observed by some, that these things are confounded with the destruction of Haman’s family, or told by the Persians to obliterate the memory of Esther, from whom they passed to the Greek historians:

for she had neither father nor mother; according to the former Targum, her father died and left her mother with child of her, and her mother died as soon as she was delivered of her:

and the maid was fair and beautiful; which was both the reason why she was taken and brought into the king’s house, and why Mordecai took so much care of her:

whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter; loved her, and brought her up as if she had been his daughter, and called her so, as the Targum. The Rabbins, as Jarchi and Aben Ezra observe, say, he took her in order to make her his wife; and so the Septuagint render it; though perhaps no more may be intended by that version than that he brought her up to woman’s estate. Josephus^{f86} calls him her uncle; and so the Vulgate Latin version, his brother’s daughter; but both are mistaken.

Ver. 8. *So it came to pass, when the king’s commandment and decree was heard*, etc.] In the several provinces of his kingdom:

and when many maidens were gathered unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai; Josephus^{f87} says, there were gathered to the number of four hundred:

that Esther was brought also unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, the keeper of the women: by force, as Aben Ezra and the former Targum, and so the word is sometimes used.

Ver. 9. *And the maiden pleased him,* etc.] Not the king, into whose presence she was not yet introduced, but the chamberlain; her beauty and her behaviour recommended her to him, and he concluded within himself that she was the person that of all would be acceptable to the king:

and she obtained kindness of him: had favours shown others had not:

and he speedily gave her things for purification; as oil, spices, etc. that she might be the sooner fitted to be had into the king's presence:

with such things as belonged to her; food and drink from the king's table; the Targum interprets it gifts, as chains and royal apparel:

and seven maidens, which were given her, out of the king's house; to wait upon her the seven days of the week, as the same Targum:

and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women; removed her and them to it, which was the most splendid, had large, airy, and pleasant rooms.

Ver. 10. *Esther had not showed her people nor her kindred,* etc.] What nation or family she was of; it not being asked, she was under no obligation to declare it; and being born in Shushan, as very probable, she was taken to be a Persian:

for Mordecai had charged her that she should not show it; lest she should be despised and ill treated on that account; fearing, if the king knew it, he would not marry her, as Aben Ezra; or rather, as the same writer thinks, that she might keep the law of God privately, observe the sabbath, etc.

Ver. 11. *And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house,* etc.] Being one of the court, and in an high post, as Aben Ezra thinks, he might walk there without being examined, and called to an account for it:

to know how Esther did; to inquire of her health and prosperity, or peace, the word here used signifies, even all sorts of it:

and what should become of her; or was done to her, whether she was well used, or as yet introduced to the king, how it fared with her, and what befell her.

Ver. 12. *Now when every maid's turn was come to go in to King Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of women*, etc.] That were prepared in the house of the women to be presented to the king for his liking; for it seems that these virgins came in turns to him, according to the time they had been in the house; as did the wives of the kings of Persia, as Herodotus relates^{f88}:

for so were the days of their purifications accomplished; that is, in the space of twelve months, which were thus divided: to wit,

six months with oil of myrrh; which Ben Melech interprets of musk:

and six month's with sweet odours; the former was used to make the skin smooth and soft, and these to remove all ill scents through sweat, or any other cause:

and with other things for the purifying of women: by bathing, rubbing, etc. and such a space of time was observed not only for the thorough purification of them, but partly was of state and grandeur, and partly that it might be a clear case they were not with child by another, before they came to the king.

Ver. 13. *Then thus came every virgin unto the king*, etc.] When her twelve months were up, and she was purified in the manner before observed:

whatsoever she desired was given her to go with her out of the house of the women unto the king's house; whatever she commanded the chamberlain was obliged to furnish her with, or grant it to her, whether for ornament, as jewels, rich apparel, etc. or for attendance; whatever prince or peer she required to accompany her to the king, was to be obtained for her, as the Targum: and everything for mirth, all kinds of songs, or instruments of music, as Jarchi.

Ver. 14. *In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women*, etc.] Or the other apartment of the house of the women, where were kept those the king had made his concubines or secondary wives. Aben Ezra interprets it the second time, and so the Targum by “again”:

to the custody of Shaashgaz the king's chamberlain, which kept the concubines; of which the kings of Persia had a great number; Darius, whom Alexander conquered, had three hundred and sixty^{f89}:

she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she was called by name; but remained shut up in the house, and might not lie with, nor be married to, another man.

Ver. 15. *Now when the turn of Esther the daughter of Abihail, etc.*] For this was her father's name, and not Aminadab, as the Septuagint version:

the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter; which makes it quite clear that Mordecai was not Esther's uncle, as Josephus, but her own cousin: now when her turn

was come to go in unto the king; which the virgins under purification took by turns, (^{<T024>}Esther 2:14),

she required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed; what he ordered her to have, or to do, she submitted to, being in his hands, and so obeyed his orders; but more she asked not, either for ornament or attendance, being not at all solicitous whether the king liked her or not; for it was not of choice, but by constraint, she went unto him; nor needed she anything to recommend her, her virtue, modesty, and beauty, were sufficient:

and Esther obtained favour of all them that looked upon her: when she came to court, the eyes of all were attracted to her; all admired her beauty, her innocent and modest look, and her graceful mien and deportment.

Ver. 16. *So Esther was taken unto King Ahasuerus, into his house royal, etc.*] Did not return on the morrow to the house of the women, as those who only became the king's concubines did, (^{<T024>}Esther 2:14), but she was taken to be his wife, and designed for his queen, and so was retained in his palace, and placed in an apartment suitable to the dignity she was about to be advanced unto:

and this was done in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth; and answers to part of December and part of January; not the twelfth month Adar, as the Septuagint version, and so Josephus^{f90}, contrary to the original text: either that law had not obtained among the Persians, or the

king thought himself not bound by it, which forbid marriage at any other time than the beginning of the vernal equinox^{f91}:

in the seventh year of his reign; and the divorce of Vashti being in the third year of his reign, it was four years before Esther was taken by him; who, if Xerxes, it may be accounted for by his preparation for, and engagement in, a war with Greece, which took him up all this time; and from whence he returned in the seventh year of his reign, at the beginning of it, and married Esther at the close of it, (see ^{<770>}Esther 2:1) as may be suggested.

Ver. 17. *And the king loved Esther above all the women*, etc.] The virgins he made his concubines, as next explained; though Jarchi interprets it of married women, for such he supposes were gathered and brought to him, as well as virgins:

and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; who had been purified, and in their turns brought to him:

so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti; declared her queen, and gave her all the ensigns of royalty: so it was usual with the eastern kings to put a crown or diadem on the heads of their wives at the time of marriage, and declare them queens^{f92}.

Ver. 18. *Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and servants, even Esther's feast*, etc.] A feast to all his nobles, courtiers, and ministers of state, on account of his marriage with Esther; which, according to the Greek version, was held seven days; but, according to Josephus, it lasted a whole month^{f93}:

and he made a release to the provinces; of taxes and tribute due to him, as was the custom of the kings of Persia when they came to the throne, as Herodotus^{f94} relates; so Smerdis the magus, that mounted the throne after Cambyses, pretending to be his brother, released them for three years to come^{f95}; and Grotius says kings used to do it at their marriage, but gives no instance of it:

and gave gifts: according to the latter Targum, to the provinces, all of them, that he might be sure that the people of Esther shared his favours, who were as yet unknown; but rather these gifts were given to his nobles, or it may be to Esther; so the former Targum,

“he gave to her a gift and portion:”

according to the state of the king; his royal ability and munificence, and suitable to his grandeur; and it was usual with the Persian kings to give to their wives whole cities for one thing or another, as for necklaces, hair laces, shoes, etc. ^{f96}; Socrates ^{f97} speaks of a whole country in Persia called the “Queen’s girdle”, and another her “Headdress”.

Ver. 19. *And when the virgins were gathered together the second time*, etc.] Some think this second collection is that which was made when Esther was taken and brought to the keeper of the women, called the second, in reference to a former collection of them, made when Vashti was taken and made queen; but as there is no proof of any such collection then made, rather the case was this, such was the lust of the king, though he had a queen he loved, and a multitude of concubine’s, yet a second collection of virgins was made for his gratification:

then Mordecai sat in the king’s gate; or court, being an officer in it, promoted by the interest of Esther, though not as yet known to be a relation of her’s: so *ψυρα* in Xenophon ^{f98} is used of the court of the king of Persia, as the Ottoman or Turkish court is now called the “Porte”.

Ver. 20. *Esther had not showed her kindred nor her people, as Mordecai had charged her*, etc.] As not before, so neither since she was made queen, (see ^{<1720>}Esther 2:10), though, according to the Targums, she was urged to it by the king himself:

for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him: which showed great humility in her, notwithstanding her advancement, great respect to him, and a sense of gratitude for the kindness he had shown; and this charge to her was still continued by Mordecai, partly that she might not fall into contempt, and partly to prevent hatred and envy to the Jewish nation, through her promotion; but chiefly so it was ordered in Providence, the proper time being not yet come.

Ver. 21. *In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king’s gate*, etc.] Being, as before observed, an officer at court:

two of the king’s chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those that kept the door; of the inner court, as Aben Ezra, of the doors of his bedchamber; perhaps they were the chief of his bodyguards, as the Septuagint version; in later times, such officers were about the chambers of great personages as their guards ^{f99}:

these were wroth, and sought to lay hand on the King Ahasuerus; to poison him, as Jarchi and both the Targums; however, to take away his life by some means or another. Gorionides^{f100} says their design was, while the king was asleep, to cut off his head, and carry it to the king of Greece; there being at that time great wars between the kingdom of Greece and the kingdom of Persia, which exactly agrees with the times of Xerxes, and with this part of his reign, about the seventh year of it, what was the occasion of this wrath is not said, it is thought to be either the divorce of Vashti, whose creatures they were, or the marriage of Esther, and particularly the promotion of Mordecai, fearing they should be turned out of their places; so the former Targum.

Ver. 22. *And the thing was known to Mordecai,* etc.] But by what means does not appear; the Jewish writers say^{f101}, these two men were Tarsians, and spoke in the Tarsian language, which they thought Mordecai did not understand; but he, being skilled in languages, overheard them, and understood what they said; but, according to Josephus^{f102}, it was discovered to him by Barnabazus, a servant of one of the chamberlains; the latter Targum says, it was showed unto him by the Holy Ghost:

who told it unto Esther, and Esther certified the king thereof in Mordecai's name; whose name she mentioned, partly as a voucher of the truth of what she reported, and partly to ingratiate Mordecai to the king, that he might be still yet more promoted in due time.

Ver. 23. *And when inquisition was made of the matter, it was found out,* etc.] That these two men had entered into a conspiracy to take away the king's life; full proof and evidence were given of it:

therefore they were both hanged on a tree; Josephus^{f103} says they were crucified; but hanging was frequent among the Persians, as Grotius observes, and better agrees with the word here used:

and it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king; in a diary kept by the king's order, in which memorable events were set down, and might be done in the presence of the king, as well as the book lay open before him to read at any time; and this is observed to agree with the manner of Xerxes, who is reported^{f104} to sit on a throne of gold to behold a sea fight between the Grecians and Persians, and had several scribes by him to take down whatever was done in the fight.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION TO ESTHER 3

This chapter gives an account of the promotion of Haman, and of the mortification of him by Mordecai, who refused to bow to him, upon which he vowed revenge on him, and on all his people the Jews, (^{<TARG>}Esther 3:1-6), for which purpose, through a false representation of them, he obtained letters of the king, and sent to the deputies of all the provinces to destroy them all on a certain day fixed, (^{<TARG>}Esther 3:7-15).

Ver. 1. *After these things*, etc.] After the marriage of Esther, and the discovery of the conspiracy to take away the king's life, five years after, as Aben Ezra observe, at least more than four years, for so it appears from (^{<TARG>}Esther 3:7)

did King Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite; whom both the Targums make to descend from Amalek, and to be of the stock or family of Agag, the common name of the kings of Amalek; and so Josephus ^{f105}; but this is not clear and certain; in the apocryphal Esther he is said to be a Macedonian; and Sulpitius the historian says ^{f106} he was a Persian, which is not improbable; and Agag might be the name of a family or city in Persia, of which he was; and Aben Ezra observes, that some say he is the same with Memucan, (see ^{<TARG>}Esther 1:14),

and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him; erected a throne for him, higher than the rest, either of his own princes and nobles, or such as were his captives, (see ^{<TARG>}2 Kings 25:28). It was the custom of the kings of Persia, which it is probable was derived from Cyrus, to advance those to the highest seats they thought best deserved it: says he to his nobles, let there be seats with you as with me, and let the best be honoured before others;--and again, let all the best of those present be honoured with seats above others ^{f107}.

Ver. 2. *And the king's servants that were in the king's gate*, etc.] Or court, all his courtiers; for it cannot be thought they were all porters, or such only that

bowed and revered Haman; gave him divine honours, as to a deity; for such were given to the kings of Persia^{f108}, and might be given to their favourites, and seems to be the case; for, though Haman might not erect a statue of himself, or have images painted on his clothes, as the Targum and Aben Ezra, for the Persians did not allow of statues and images^{f109}; yet he might make himself a god, as Jarchi, and require divine worship, with leave of the king, which he had, yea, an order for it:

for the king had so commanded concerning him; which shows that it was not mere civil honour and respect, for that in course would have been given him as the king's favourite and prime minister by all his servants, without an express order for it; this, therefore, must be something uncommon and extraordinary:

but Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence; which is a further proof that it was not mere civil honour that was required and given; for that the Jews did not refuse to give, and that in the most humble and prostrate manner, and was admitted by them, (~~1028~~ 1 Samuel 24:8 ~~1044~~ 2 Samuel 14:4 18:28) (~~1016~~ 1 Kings 1:16), nor can it be thought that Mordecai would refuse to give it from pride and sullenness, and thereby risk the king's displeasure, the loss of his office, and the ruin of his nation; but it was such kind of reverence to a man, and worship of him, which was contrary to his conscience, and the law of his God.

Ver. 3. *Then the king's servants, which were in the king's gate*, etc.] Observing the behaviour of Mordecai towards Haman from time to time:

said unto Mordecai, why transgressest thou the king's commandment? of giving reverence to Haman, which they knew he could not be ignorant of.

Ver. 4. *Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him*, etc.] Putting him in mind of his duty to obey the king's command, suggesting to him the danger he exposed himself to, pressing him to give the reasons of his conduct:

and he hearkened not unto them; regarded not what they said, and continued disobedient to the king's order, and disrespectful to Haman

that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand; they informed Haman that Mordecai refused to give him reverence as the king had ordered; this they did to try whether such a conduct would be

suffered and bore with, and whether Mordecai would persevere in it when taken notice of:

for he had told them that he was a Jew; which was all the reason he gave why he would not reverence Haman; and a reason sufficient, because, by a fundamental law of his religion, he was not to worship mere man, but God only: and this confirms what has been before observed; for this would have been no reason for refusing civil respect and honour, but was a strong one for denying religious worship and reverence; and no wonder that the Jews should refuse it, when even the Grecians, though Heathens, refused to give the Persian kings the divine honours they required ^{f110}; yea, the Athenians put Timagoras to death for prostrating himself in such a manner to Darius ^{f111}; for the Persian kings were, as Aristotle says ^{f112}, called Lord and God, and said to hear and see all things.

Ver. 5. *And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence*, etc.] For, after the information given him, he observed and watched him, to see whether he bowed and did him reverence or not:

then was Haman full of wrath; exceedingly displeased and angry; it was such a mortification to him he could not bear.

Ver. 6. *And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone*, etc.] That would not be a sufficient gratification of his revenge; he was too low and mean a person only to wreak his vengeance on; nothing short of his whole nation would satisfy him:

for they had showed him the people of Mordecai; that they were the Jews; for Mordecai had told the king's servants, that talked with him on the subject, that he was a Jew, and gave that as a reason why he could not and would not reverence Haman:

wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus; even the people of Mordecai; and that not merely to be revenged on Mordecai, but because he plainly saw, that both by his example, and upon the same principle with him; they would all to a man refuse to give him reverence; and therefore he was resolved to root them out of the whole empire, that he might not be mortified by them.

Ver. 7. *In the first month, that is the month Nisan*, etc.] Which was the first month of the sacred year of the Jews, by divine appointment, (^(402B)Exodus 12:2 13:4), and there called Abib, and answers to part of

February and part of March; from hence it is clear this book was written by a Jew, and very probably by Mordecai:

in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus; four years and near two months after his marriage of Esther, (^{<A2E6>}Esther 2:16),

they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman; being a Persian word, it is explained in Hebrew a lot, the word signifying “steel” in the Persian language. Reland^{f113} conjectures that this was that sort of lot called “sideromantia”. Who cast this lot is not said; whether Haman himself, or one of his servants: perhaps a diviner. The latter Targum calls him Shimshai the scribe:

from day today, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, that is the month Adar; which answers to part of January and part of February; so that the lot was cast for every month and every day of the month throughout the year, to find out which was the most lucky month, and which the most lucky day in that month, to destroy the Jews in and none could be found till they came to the last month, and the thirteenth day of that month, (^{<A2E3>}Esther 3:13), the providence of God so overruling the lot, that there might be time enough for the Jews, through the mediation of Esther to the king, to prevent their destruction; so in other nations the Heathens had their lucky and unlucky days^{f114}.

Ver. 8. *And Haman said unto King Ahasuerus*, Or “had said”^{f115}, as some choose to render it; nor indeed is it likely that Haman should cast lots to know when would be a proper time to destroy the Jews, until he had got leave of the king to do it:

there is a certain people scattered abroad, and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; for, though many of the Jews returned to their own land, on the proclamation of Cyrus, yet others remained, being well settled as to worldly things, and not having that zeal for God and his worship as became them, and not caring to be at the trouble and expense of such a journey, and especially those of the ten tribes; now Haman, through contempt of them, mentions them not by name, only describes them as a scattered insignificant people:

and their laws are different from all people; concerning their diet and observation of days, and other things; so Empedocles, an Heathen, observes^{f116} of the Jews, that they were a separate people from all others in those things; for he says,

“they separated not only from the Romans, but even from all men; for, having found out an unmixed way of living, they have nothing common with men, neither table nor libations, nor prayers, nor sacrifices, but are more separate from us than the Susians or Bactrians, or the more remote Indians:”

neither keep they the king’s laws; and, no doubt, he had a special respect to the non-observance of the king’s command to give him reverence; and in like manner the Jews are represented by Heathen writers, as by Tacitus ^{f117}, Juvenal ^{f118}, and others:

therefore it is not for the king’s profit to suffer them; that is, to dwell in his dominions; he got nothing by them, and they might be prejudicial to his subjects, and poison them with their notions; and since they were not obedient to the laws of the kingdom, it was not fit and equitable that they should be continued in it.

Ver. 9. *If it please the king, let it be written, that they may be destroyed,* etc.] That is, a law made, signed and sealed, for their destruction, and letters written and sent everywhere, ordering it to be put in execution:

and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those who have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king’s treasury; this he proposed, to prevent any objection that might be made from the loss of tribute paid by this people to the king; and this was a very large sum for him to pay out of his own estate, it being near four millions of our money; it is computed by Brerewood ^{f119} at 3,750,000 pounds; for as to what is suggested by some, that he intended to repay himself out of the spoil of the Jews, it may be observed, that, according to the king’s letter, they that were employed in destroying the Jews were to have the spoil for a prey or booty to themselves, (^{f119}Esther 3:13). Now this sum of money he proposed not to put into the hands of them that should slay the Jews, but into the hands of the king’s receivers of the dues, that they might lay it up in the king’s treasury or exchequer.

Ver. 10. *And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews’ enemy.*] As a token of his affection for him, and a mark of honour to him; with the Persians ^{f120} for a king to give a ring to anyone was a token and bond of the greatest love and friendship imaginable; and it may be this was given to Haman, to seal with it the letters that were or should be written, giving

order for the destruction of the Jews. It seems as if as yet Esther had not acquainted the king who her kindred and people were; or it can hardly be thought he would have so easily come into such a scheme, or so highly favoured an enemy of her people.

Ver. 11. *And the king said unto Haman, the silver is given unto thee,* etc.] The 10,000 talents of silver Haman proposed to pay into the treasury were returned to him, or the king out of his great munificence refused to take them:

the people also, to do with them as seemeth good unto thee; that is, the people of the Jews; he gave him full power to do with them as he thought fit, and who breathing revenge upon them, would not spare them.

Ver. 12. *Then were the king's scribes called, on the thirteenth day of the first month,* etc.] The month Nisan, (^{<TAB>}Esther 3:7), after Haman had leave and power from the king to destroy the Jews, and his ring given him in token of it; the king's scribes or secretaries of state were called together on that day, to write the letters for that purpose:

and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded; whatever he would have done; he had an unlimited power to do what he pleased, and he made use of it, and directed the scribes what they should write:

unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors that were over every province; the deputy governors of the one hundred and twenty seven provinces, (^{<TAB>}Esther 1:1)

and to the rulers of every people of every province; it seems there were different people in every province, which had their rulers; and these were sent to:

according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language; and letters were written in the language, and character of the language, each people spoke, that they might be understood by them:

in the name of King Ahasuerus was it written, and sealed with the king's ring. All this Haman took care to have done so early as the thirteenth of Nisan, though the execution was not to be until the thirteenth of Adar, eleven months after; partly that there might be time enough to send the letters everywhere, even to the most distant parts; and chiefly lest

Ahasuerus should change his mind, and be prevailed upon to revoke his grant; and, it may be, either to keep the Jews in continual dread, or cause them to flee.

Ver. 13. *And the letters were sent by post into all the king's provinces,* etc.] Or by the runners ^{f121}; by which it seems as if these letters were carried by running footmen, men swift of foot; or rather they were running horses, on which men rode post with letters, and which the Persians called Angari; a scheme invented by Cyrus, for the quick dispatch of letters from place to place, by fixing horses and men to ride them at a proper distance, to receive letters one from another, and who rode night and day ^{f122}, as our mail men do now; and nothing could be swifter, or done with greater speed; neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor night, could stop their course, we are told ^{f123}: the purport of these letters was,

to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar; (see ^{<TR>}Esther 3:7). The orders were to destroy, by any means whatsoever, all the Jews, of every age and sex, all in one day, in all the provinces which are here named, that they might be cut off with one blow: and to take the spoil of them for a prey; to be their own booty; which was proposed to engage them in this barbarous work, to encourage them in it to use the greater severity and dispatch.

Ver. 14. *The copy of the writing, for a commandment to be given in every province, was published unto all people,* etc.] Not only letters were sent to the governors, but a copy, or the sum of the contents of them, was published by heralds, or stuck up as with us, in various places, that it might be publicly known by the common people everywhere:

that they should be ready against that day; and fall upon the people of the Jews, and slay them, and seize on their goods as a prey.

Ver. 15. *The post went out, being hastened by the king's command,* etc.] Both to set out and make as much dispatch as possible:

and the decree was given in Shushan the palace; by the king, and with the advice of his courtiers:

and the king and Haman sat down to drink; at a banquet which perhaps Haman had prepared, in gratitude to the king for what he had granted him, both being highly delighted with what had been done:

but the city Shushan was perplexed; the court was agreed, but the city was divided, as the former Targum says, with the joy of strange nations, and the weeping of the people of Israel, there being many Jews in the city; with whom no doubt there were many in connection, through affinity or friendship, or commerce, that were concerned for them; or, however, were shocked at such a barbarous scheme; and which they knew not where it would end, and how far they themselves might be involved in it, when once a mob had such a power granted to them.

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION TO ESTHER 4

This chapter relates the mourning of Mordecai, and of the Jews in every province, on account of the edict to destroy them, (^{<1704>}Esther 4:1-3), the information Esther had of it, and what passed between her and Mordecai, through Hatach, a chamberlain, by whom he put her upon making a request to the king in their favour, (^{<1704>}Esther 4:4-8), to which she at first objected, because of a law in Persia which forbids any to come to the king unless called, (^{<1704>}Esther 4:9-12), but being pressed to it by Mordecai, she agreed, and ordered a general fast among the Jews, (^{<1704>}Esther 4:13-17).

Ver. 1. *When Mordecai perceived all that was done*, etc.] By the king, at the instigation of Haman, against the Jews; which he came to the knowledge of, either by some of the conflicts or by common fame, or on the sight of the edicts which were published in Shushan; though the Jews think it was made known to him in a supernatural way, either by Elijah, as the former Targum ^{f124}, or by the Holy Ghost, as the latter:

Mordecai rent his clothes: both behind and before, according to the same Targum; and this was a custom used in mourning, not only with the Jews, but with the Persians also, as Herodotus ^{f125} relates:

and put on sackcloth with ashes; upon his head, as the former Targum; which was usual in mourning, even both; (^{<1812>}Job 2:12 ^{<1704>}Daniel 9:3)

and went out into the midst of the city; not Elam the province, as Aben Ezra, but the city Shushan:

and cried with a loud and bitter cry; that all the Jews in the city might be alarmed by it, and inquire the reason of it, and be affected with it; and a clamorous mournful noise was used among the Persians, as well as others, on sad occasions ^{f126}.

Ver. 2. *And came even before the king's gate*, etc.] Or court, that Esther might if possible be made acquainted with this dreadful calamity coming upon her people:

for none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth: or appear in such a dress at court, where nothing was admitted to damp the pleasures of it.

Ver. 3. *And in every province whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came,* etc.] For destroying the Jews on such a day, in every place where they were to be found:

there was great mourning among the Jews, and weeping, and wailing; which continued all day:

and many lay in sackcloth and ashes: all night; made use of no other bed to lie on, nor clothes to cover them with.

Ver. 4. *So Esther's maids and her chamberlains came and told it her,* etc.] Her maids of honour and eunuchs that attended her, which they might tell her merely as a piece of news, there being something shocking in it to tender minds; or perhaps nothing more than that Mordecai was in sackcloth; and they might have observed, by some incident or another, that there was some connection between Mordecai and Esther, and that she had a peculiar respect for him:

then was the queen exceedingly grieved; even though she might not know the whole of the matter; but perceiving whatever it was it greatly affected Mordecai, with whom she sympathized:

and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him; that so he might appear at court, and she get better intelligence of the cause of all this:

but he received it not; refusing to be comforted, or appear cheerful under such melancholy circumstances.

Ver. 5. *Then called Esther for Hatach, one of the king's chamberlains, whom he had appointed to attend upon her,* etc.] Which, according to the Targum, was Daniel^{f127}; but it is not likely that Daniel should have lived to this time; however, this officer was not only intrusted with the care of the queen by the king, but she had also an high opinion of him, and therefore employed him in this affair:

and gave a commandment to Mordecai, to know what it was, and why it was; what was the reason of his appearing in sackcloth, and why he did not receive the clothes she sent him.

Ver. 6. *So Hatach went forth to Mordecai, unto the street of the city, etc.]* Where he was, in a public manner, expressing his grief and sorrow:

which was before the king's gate: that led to the royal palace.

Ver. 7. *And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, etc.]* How that, for refusing to reverence Haman, he was incensed against him, and against all the Jews for his sake; and had vowed revenge on them, and had formed a scheme for the ruin of them:

and of the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them the 10,000 talents of silver he proposed to pay into the king's exchequer in lieu of the Jews' tribute; which Mordecai observes, to show how bent he was upon the destruction of the Jews, and cared not what it cost him to gain his point; and perhaps Mordecai as yet might not know that the king had remitted it.

Ver. 8. *Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them, etc.]* Which had now been published in the city; by which means Mordecai had had a sight of it, and had transcribed it; (see ^{<17B4>} Esther 3:14)

to show it unto Esther, and to declare it unto her; what Haman intended against the people of the Jews; as the Targum adds:

and to charge her; in his name; whose charges she had always regarded, both before and since she was queen; or in the name of God:

that she should go in unto the king to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him for her people; signifying there was a necessity of doing it speedily, and of urging her request with great earnestness and importunity, since it was not the life of a single person, but the lives of a body of people, and her own, that lay at stake.

Ver. 9. *And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai.]* Both the case of the Jews, and the cause of it, and what he would have her do at this critical juncture.

Ver. 10. *Again Esther spake unto Hatach, etc.]* For there was no other way of corresponding and conversing but by an eunuch; the wives of kings being altogether under their watch and care:

and gave him commandment unto Mordecai; to go unto him, and what he should say to him from her, which is as follows.

Ver. 11. *All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces do know*, etc.] Not only the princes and courtiers, but all the king's subjects, the meanest of them; there is scarce a person throughout the whole empire, to whom the following law is not known; this is said, to show how notorious it was:

that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death; according to the former Targum, Human got this law to be made now, to prevent any application to the king about this affair; but then it would not have been so universally known as before declared; and it appears that there was such a law among the Medes, made by Dejoces, that none should go into the king's presence, but all should be done by messengers^{f128}; and this was altered among the Persians, for the seven princes that slew Smerdis made an agreement, that whoever of them was chosen king, the rest should have the liberty of going unto him when they pleased, without a messenger to introduce them^{f129}; it seems by this account it was death to go into the inner parlour, where the king usually was, without leave, or being called; this was made both for the king's safety, and for awe and reverence of his majesty, and to prevent any insinuations into him by ill-designing persons:

except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live; which, whether he would or not, was very precarious; so that a person ran a great risk to go in uncalled:

but I have not been called to go in unto the king these thirty days; which looked as if the king had not that fond affection for her he formerly had; and therefore there was greater danger in going in to him uncalled, and the less hope of success.

Ver. 12. *And they told to Mordecai Esther's, words.*] The messengers she sent to him.

Ver. 13. *Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther*, etc.] Gave in charge to the messengers what they should say to Esther from him, by way of reply:

think not with thyself that thou shall escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews; signifying that her being queen, and in the king's palace, would be no protection to her; and she would be no safer there than the Jews elsewhere, since they had no greater enemies any where than in the king's court; and it was or would be known of what nation she was, and therefore must not expect to escape the fury of the enemy.

Ver. 14. *For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time*, etc.] And will not speak to the king in favour of the Jews, because of the danger she would be exposed to in doing it:

then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; Mordecai seemed confident of it, that by some means or another the Jews would be delivered; if not through the intercession of Esther, yet from some other quarter, or by some other hand:

but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed; for such neglect of the people of God when in distress, want of pity to them, and not exerting herself as she might in their behalf; so that seeing she and her family must perish, it was better to perish in a good cause than in a bad one:

and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this? he intimates that he believed that the providence of God had raised her to that dignity, that she might be an instrument of saving his people in the time of their distress; and this he said to encourage her to make the experiment.

Ver. 15. *Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer.*] Which follows, and was sent by the messengers she sent the above to him.

Ver. 16. *Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan*, etc.] To acquaint them with what follows; but not to continue in a body together, which might cause suspicion of an ill design in them; according to the latter Targum, 12,000 chosen priests were found in it; but that must be an exaggeration of their number; it can hardly be thought there were so many Jews in all there:

and fast ye for me; that is, pray for her, that she might have courage to go in to the king, and meet with success; for prayer was the principal thing, fasting only an accessory to it, and as fitting for it, and expressive of affliction and humiliation of soul:

and neither eat nor drink three days, night nor day; it was to be a continued fast unto the third day; as Aben Ezra interprets it, they were not to eat at evening, but fast two whole days, and two whole nights, until the third day came, on which Esther went in to the king, (~~TARGUM~~ Esther 5:1).

I also and my maidens will fast likewise; in the same manner and as long; these maids of honour were either proselytes, perhaps of her making, or Jewish ladies, she being allowed by the king to choose whom she pleased:

and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law; or “afterwards”, or “and then”^{f130} when they, and she and her maids, had fasted and prayed so long, then she was determined in the strength of the Lord to go into the king’s presence with her petition, though it was contrary to law:

and if I perish, I perish; signifying, that she readily and cheerfully risked her life for the good of her people; and if such was the pleasure of God, that she should lose it, she was content, and acquiesced in his will, leaving herself entirely in his hands, to dispose of her as he thought fit.

Ver. 17. *So Mordecai went his way*, etc.] About the business he was directed to; the word used having sometimes the signification of passing over or transgressing, Jarchi interprets it of Mordecai’s transgressing the command, by fasting on a festival; the letter being written on the thirteenth of Nisan, (~~TARGUM~~ Esther 3:12), the next day was the passover, on which he supposes the fast began; and the three days were, the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth of the month, and belonged to the feast of the passover and of unleavened bread; so the Targum:

and did according to all that Esther had commanded him; got the Jews together, and kept a fast three days; according to the Midrash^{f131} they were the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth of Nisan.

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION TO ESTHER 5

This chapter gives an account of Esther's going in to the king, and of his holding out the golden sceptre to her, on which she invited him and Haman to a banquet of wine that day, and to another the next day, (^{<TARG>}Esther 5:1-8), which highly delighted Haman; and he went to his house and family with great joy, and yet chagrined at Mordecai's not bowing to him; wherefore, at the advice of his wife and friends, he erected a gallows to hang him upon, proposing to get a grant for it from the king the next day, (^{<TARG>}Esther 5:9-14).

Ver. 1. *Now it came to pass on the third day*, etc.] Of the fast; though the former Targum paraphrases it the third day of the passover, the sixteenth of Nisan, (see Gill on "^{<TARG>}Esther 4:17"), though it is probable this was nearer the time fixed for the destruction of the Jews, (see ^{<TARG>}Esther 8:9), yet the Jews have fixed the fast of Esther on that very day, the thirteenth of Adar ^{f132}:

that Esther put on her royal apparel; in order to go in to the king, and appear before him; which to do in a mournful habit, such as she had on when fasting, was not proper; for then she put off her royal crown, as is intimated in the additions to the book of Esther, And upon the third day, when she had ended her prayers, she laid away her mourning garments, and put on her glorious apparel. (Esther 15:1)

and as was usual for princes to do in times of mourning ^{f133}; but now she put it on, as both Ben Gorion ^{f134} and the latter Targum affirm:

and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house; into which none might go but such as were called; yet Esther being queen, the keepers of the door could not forbid her, as Aben Ezra observes:

and the king sat upon his royal throne, in the royal house, over against the gate of the house; so that he could see whoever came in at it, into the inner court.

Ver. 2. *And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight,* etc.] Which no doubt was of God, who has the hearts of kings in his hand, and turns them as he pleases; the king had not called her for thirty days past, or more, which showed coolness of affection to her, and now she transgressed a law by coming uncalled for, which might have provoked his wrath; and for a lesser matter than this was Vashti divorced; but yet his mind was inclined to her, and she appeared very amiable and pleasing to him:

and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand; as a token of his well pleasedness in her, and acceptance of her; and that no harm should come to her for transgressing the law:

so Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre; as acknowledging his kindness, and her thankfulness for it, as well as subjection and obedience to him.

Ver. 3. *Then said the king unto her, what wilt thou, Queen Esther?* etc.] He supposed she had some business with him, some suit to make to him, by her coming in this manner:

and what is thy request? signifying he was ready to grant it, be it what it would:

it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom; as it was usual with the Persian kings to give their wives cities for certain purposes, (see Gill on “⁴¹⁶³Esther 2:18”), here Ahasuerus, out of his great affection to Esther, offers half of his dominions, his one hundred and twenty seven provinces; meaning that he would grant her anything, and everything that was reasonable, and even magnificent; it is an hyperbolical and courtly way of speaking, and which has been used in later times, and in other countries; (see ⁴¹⁶³Mark 6:23).

Ver. 4. *And Esther answered, if it seem good unto the king,* etc.] She humbly submits it to his pleasure, suggesting it would be exceeding grateful to her, could it be granted:

let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him; for the king; and supposing it would be acceptable to him, and the rather engage him to come to it, she invited his favourite; and chiefly, that she might have an opportunity of accusing him before the king to his face, and when alone.

Ver. 5. *Then the king said, cause Haman to make haste, that he may do as Esther hath said,* etc.] That is, he ordered some of his servants to make haste and acquaint Haman with the queen's invitation, and to press him to make haste to comply with it:

so the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared; which was wisely done, to prepare for what she had to say to the king, when cheerful with wine, and when she had her adversary with him alone.

Ver. 6. *And the king said unto Esther at the banquet of wine,* etc.] For such it seems the banquet was she prepared; it was not properly a meal, neither dinner nor supper, but a drinking bout; or, however, it was at that part of the banquet in which wine was drank that the king accosted Esther, when he began to be cheerful with it. The Persians at their meals had two courses: the first consisted of meats, etc. at which they drank water, the other of fruits, when they drank wine; Aelianus^{f135} says, the Persians, after they are filled with food, indulge themselves in drinking wine:

what is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed; by which it appears he retained the same affection for Esther, and the same disposition to show her kindness. (see ^{<TARG>}Esther 5:3).

Ver. 7. *Then answered Esther and said, my petition and my request is.*] What she should for the present make; the principal one she had to ask, for wise reasons, she still deferred.

Ver. 8. *If I have found favour in the sight of the king,* etc.] Or, seeing she had; for it was a clear case she had, both by his holding out the golden sceptre to her, and by accepting her invitation to her banquet:

and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request; as he had been so gracious as to promise in such a large and liberal manner as before expressed:

let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them; the Targum says, in the evening; but from (^{<TARG>}Esther 5:12), it appears to be on the morrow; and which agrees with what follows:

and I will do tomorrow as the king hath said; make her petition and request to him; which she had deferred, partly in hope of still increasing his affection to her, and partly to prepare him to expect something of moment

and importance to be asked of him. Jarchi restrains this to what he supposes the king had often importuned her to tell, namely, who were her people and her kindred.

Ver. 9. *Then went Haman forth that day, joyful, and with a glad heart,* etc.] From court to his own house

but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him; did not show him the least degree even of civil respect; which he refused to do, partly lest it should be interpreted an adoration of him, and partly because it was well known to him he had formed a scheme for the destruction of him and all his people; and the rather he refused it to him, as Esther was about to make intercession with the king to revoke his decree, of the success of which he had no doubt; and therefore had nothing to fear from him, but treated him with the utmost contempt, as he deserved:

he was full of wrath against Mordecai; it was a sad mortification to him, and a great alloy of that joy and elation of mind on account of the favour he was in; not with the king only, but the queen also, as he imagined.

Ver. 10. *Nevertheless Haman refrained himself,* etc.] From showing any outward resentment to Mordecai, from laying hands upon him or taking revenge on him, as being too much below him to avenge himself on a single person, when the whole body of the people Mordecai belonged to would shortly feel the power of his hand for such insolent treatment of him:

and when he came home, he sent and called for his friends, and Zeresh his wife; who, the Targum says, was the daughter of Tatnai, the governor on the other side the river, (^{<1788B>}Ezra 5:3).

Ver. 11. *And Haman told them of the glory of his riches,* etc.] Of the multitude of them; which he did partly in a way of ostentation, and partly, if he could, to make his mind easy under the mortification he received from Mordecai; and, it may be, chiefly to aggravate his rudeness and ill behaviour towards him, a man of so much wealth: and the multitude of his children; he had ten, as we learn from (^{<1790>}Esther 9:10), but the former Targum enlarges them, beyond credit, to the number of two hundred and eight, besides his ten sons, and Shimshai the scribe; such were had in great esteem with the Persians who had many children; to such the king used to send gifts annually^{f136}:

and all the things wherein the king had promoted him; the high offices of honour and trust he had put him into:

and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king. (see ^{<TAB>}Esther 3:1).

Ver. 12. *Haman said, moreover*, etc.] To all which he added, and what seemed to delight him most of all, or however was a new additional honour done him:

yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself; which he judged was doing him singular honour; and, by the joint affection of the king and queen to him, he thought himself established in his dignity and grandeur:

and tomorrow am I invited unto her also with the king; had been invited, not by a messenger, but by the queen herself, which was a double honour.

Ver. 13. *Yet all this availeth me nothing*, etc.] Is not equal or sufficient for me; it gives me no satisfaction and contentment:

so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate: not rising up to bow unto him; this single circumstance spoiled all his joy and pleasure.

Ver. 14. *Then said Zeresh his wife, and all his friends, unto him*, etc.] His wife very probably first moved it, and all his friends present approved of it and united in it:

let a gallows be made, of fifty cubits, high; that the person hanged thereon might be seen at a distance, and so be a greater reproach to him, and a terror to others, to take care they were not guilty of the same offence: Cartalo was ordered by his father to be fixed to the highest cross in the sight of the city ^{f137}; and it was usual for crosses to be erected very high ^{f138} both for that purpose, and for greater infamy and disgrace ^{f139}:

and tomorrow speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon; get a grant from him for it; of which they made no doubt, since Haman had such an interest in him, and had already obtained an order to destroy all Jews in his dominions:

then go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet; eased of the burden of his mind, and honoured to be a guest with the royal pair:

and the thing pleased Haman, and he caused the gallows to be made; but it was for himself, as it proved in the issue. (see ¹⁷⁰⁰Esther 7:10).

CHAPTER 6

INTRODUCTION TO ESTHER 6

Ahasuerus, not being able to sleep in the night, ordered the book of records to be brought and read to him, where a fact of Mordecai's was registered, and, upon inquiry, it appeared that nothing had been done to him for it, (^{<Targ>}Esther 6:1-3) and Haman being in the outward court, was ordered in, with whom the king consulted what should be done to the man the king delighted to honour; to which Haman gave answer, and was bid to do as he said, (^{<Targ>}Esther 6:4-10), which he did, but went home after it confounded and sorrowful, and told his mournful case to his wife and friends, who plainly foresaw his downfall, (^{<Targ>}Esther 6:11-14).

Ver. 1. *On that night could not the king sleep*, etc.] The night after he had been at Esther's banquet, which it might be thought would rather have caused sleep; and therefore Jarchi calls it a miracle; and no doubt it was owing to the overruling providence of God, and not to anxious thoughts about his neglect of Esther so long, nor what should be her request to him, nor jealousy of any amorous intrigue with Haman, nor of any conspiracy of theirs against his life:

and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; the diaries or journal, in which memorable facts were recorded; this he did to divert himself, and pass away time; though here also the providence of God was specially concerned; for otherwise he might have sent for any of his wives and concubines, or singing men and women, to have diverted him:

and they were read before the king; until the morning, until it was time to rise, as appears by what follows.

Ver. 2. *And it was found written*, etc.] Upon reading, and in which there was also a peculiar hand of Providence, directing to the reading of that part of them in which the affair of Mordecai was registered: and if what the latter Targum says is true, it was the more remarkable, that when Shimshai the scribe, who was ordered to bring the book and read, and who, according to the former Targum, was Haman's son, seeing what was

recorded of Mordecai, turned over the leaves of the book, being unwilling to read it; but the leaves rolled back again, and he was obliged to read it:

that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the King Ahasuerus; (see ^{<1722>}Esther 2:21), and it was usual in such diaries to record the names of persons, who, by any actions, had deserved well of the king, that they might be rewarded as there was an opportunity for it; and such, in the Persian language, were called Orosangae, as Herodotus relates ^{f140}.

Ver. 3. *And the king said, what honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this?* etc.] He judged it an action worthy of regard, and what ought to be rewarded, as it was the saving of his life; but had forgot whether any royal favour had been shown to the person for it:

then said the king's servants that ministered unto him; the lords of his bedchamber then in waiting:

there is nothing done for him; not on that account, nothing more than what he had; he had an office at court before, but was not advanced to anything higher on this account.

Ver. 4. *And the king said, who is in the court?* etc.] Being in haste to confer some honour on Mordecai for what he had done:

now Haman was come into the outward court of the king's house; though it was early in the morning, being eager to get to the speech of the king before he was engaged in any business, to obtain a grant from him:

to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him; of which he made no doubt of having, and therefore had prepared for it.

Ver. 5. *And the king's servants said unto him, behold, Haman standeth in the court,* etc.] In the outward court; for into the inward court none might enter without being called, for which he was waiting:

and the king said, let him come in; into his bedchamber; and it was of God, no doubt, that Haman should be on the spot at this very time, when the king was in the humour to do honour to Mordecai, and by him.

Ver. 6. *So Haman came in,* etc.] But was prevented speaking to the king about the business he came upon by the following speech of the king:

what shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? he mentions not the name of any man, that he might the more freely, and unbiassedly, and disinterestedly give his advice; nor might the king know of any resentment of Haman to Mordecai:

(now Haman thought in his heart, to whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?) who had been advanced above all the princes and nobles of the realm, and was now in such high honour both with the king and queen, with whom he was to be at a banquet that day; and he might conclude, that by putting this question to him, he could have in view none but himself: Aben Ezra observes, that some from hence gather, that this book was written by the spirit of prophecy, because none could know the thoughts of the heart but God; but though he believes it to be written by the Holy Ghost, yet, as he observes, Haman might disclose this thought of his heart to his friends afterwards.

Ver. 7. *And Haman answered the king,* etc.] At once, being very prompt to suggest the honours he hoped to have done to himself:

for the man whom the king delighteth to honour; let the following things be done.

Ver. 8. *Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear,* etc.] Not a whole suit of clothes, but a single garment; the purple robe, as both the Targums, such as kings wore; that which Cyrus appeared in public in was half purple, and half white, and no other person besides might wear such an one^{f141}; it was a capital crime with the Persians to wear any of the king's apparel; Trebazus, an intimate of Artaxerxes, having begged an old gown of him, it was granted, on condition that he would not wear it, it being contrary to the laws of Persia; but he, regardless of the order, appeared in it at court; which affront to the king was so resented by the Persians, that they were for punishing him rigorously, according to the law, had not Artaxerxes declared, that he had ordered him to appear in that dress as his fool^{f142}; hence Artabanus, though uncle to Xerxes, was very unwilling to obey his orders, to put on his royal robes, sit on his throne, and sleep on his bed^{f143}; so that this was a daring proposal in Haman, which he would never have ventured to have made, had it not been for the great confidence he had in the king's favour;

and the horse that the king rideth upon: the kings of Persia, as Herodotus^{f144} relates, had horses peculiar to them, and those were Nisaeen horses,

which were brought from Armenia, as Strabo says ^{f145}, and were remarkable for their beauty ^{f146}; and if the same law obtained in Persia as did in Judea, no man might ride on the king's horse any more than sit on his throne, or hold his sceptre ^{f147} and perhaps this horse here was not proposed for the person to ride on, but to be led in state before him; and though it is afterwards said that Mordecai rode on horseback, yet it might not be on the king's horse, which might be only led; and what follows seems to confirm it:

and the crown royal which is set upon his head; or, "let it be set", etc. not the head of the man, but on the head of the horse; and so Aben Ezra; and which sense is countenanced by the Targum, and by the Syriac version, and is approved of by Vatablus and De Dieu; and which the order of the words requires, the horse being the immediate antecedent; and no mention is made of the crown afterwards, as set on the head of Mordecai; nor would Haman have dared to advise to that, nor could it be granted; but this was what was wont to be done, to put the royal crown on the head of a horse led in state; and this we are assured was a custom in Persia ^{f148}, as it is with the Ethiopians to this day ^{f149}; and so, with the Romans, horses drawing triumphal chariots were crowned ^{f150} which Tertullian calls ^{f151} public horses with their crowns.

Ver. 9. *And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes*, etc.] The one,

that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour; and the other to be led in state before him:

and bring him on horseback through the street of the city; on another horse, that all might see what honour was done him:

and proclaim before him; as before Joseph, when advanced next to Pharaoh, (^{<0443>}Genesis 41:43) this was not to be done by an herald, but by a nobleman, to whom the apparel and horse were to be delivered, and was done by Haman, (^{<0701>}Esther 6:11),

thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour; these were the words said in the proclamation, signifying this was the man the king delighted to honour, and this the manner in which he would have it done.

Ver. 10. *Then the king said to Haman, make haste*, etc.] And without delay go into the royal treasury, or wardrobe, as the Targum adds: “and take the apparel”; the royal robe, the purple one, or one of the precious purple robes; and then, as the same Targum, go to the king’s stable, and take thence the king’s “horse”, that stands in the chief place in the stable, whose name is “Shiphregaz”; but how the Targumist came by the name of it, I know not; however it was not unusual for kings to give a name to their favourite horse, as Alexander the great did to his called Bucephalus and even for all kings of Persia, as Darius Hystaspis^{f152}:

as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king’s gate; the person he meant this honour for he describes by name, by nation, and by office, that there might be no mistake:

let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken; the king objected not to anything that had been proposed, and insisted on it that every thing be done punctually by Haman as he had advised, and from which he could not with honour recede; though nothing could be more mortifying to him to do, to a man he came to court to get a grant to hang on a gallows he had prepared.

Ver. 11. *Then took Haman the apparel, and the horse*, etc.] The one out of the wardrobe, the other out of the stable, and the crown also no doubt, though no mention is made of it, since the king made no objection to it, yea, commanded that nothing fail of what had been spoken; but this was included in the pomp and state of the led horse: and brought him on horseback through the street of the city; the most grand and public part of it, thus arrayed, and in this state: and proclaimed before him, thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour; (see Gill on “~~400~~ Esther 6:9”).

Ver. 12. *And Mordecai came again to the king’s gate*, etc.] To attend his post and office at court; which confirms what has been already hinted, that he was in some office in the court, which this phrase is expressive of, and not a porter at the gate; for it is not probable he should return to such a station, after so much honour had been done him; and much less that he returned to his sackcloth and fasting, as Jarchi and the former Targum; since he might reasonably conclude things were taking a turn in his favour, and that of his people; though as yet he knew not what success Esther had had, to wait for which he returned to court:

but Haman hasted to his house; pushed forward as fast as he could:

mourning; at his sad disappointment:

and having his head covered; through grief and sorrow, confusion and shame; so Demosthenes, being hissed, went home with his head covered ^{f153}, as confounded and ashamed to be seen ^{f154}.

Ver. 13. *And Haman told Zeresh his wife, and all his friends, every thing that had befallen him*, etc.] How he was prevented speaking to the king on this errand he went; instead of which, he had the mortification of being obliged to do the honour to Mordecai which he thought would never have been given to any but himself, and so related the whole affair as above:

then said his wise men; before called his friends; perhaps they were magicians and soothsayers he kept in his house, to advise with about the proper methods and times of advancing himself, and destroying his enemies:

and Zeresh his wife unto him; who joined with the wise men in giving her opinion, and who set up for a knowing woman, and of whom Haman thought highly:

if Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews; as it was said he was; and therefore Haman had vowed and plotted revenge on the people of the Jews for his sake:

before whom thou hast begun to fall; as he did, by being obliged to execute the king's will in doing him so much honour:

thou shall not prevail against him; to get him hanged, or his people destroyed, though he had prepared a gallows for the one, and had got an edict for the other:

but shall surely fall before him: which might be concluded from his being set above him, who would not fail of using his power and interest to crush him, who had showed himself to be such an implacable enemy to him; or they might have some knowledge of the history of the Jews, and of what wonderful things God often did for them, in defeating the designs of their enemies, and in raising them up from a low to an high estate.

Ver. 14. *And while they were yet talking with him,* etc.] About these things, and giving their opinion of the issue of them, upon the present appearance of them:

came the king's chamberlains, and hasted to bring Haman unto the banquet that Esther had prepared; the time appointed for it being very near, or quite up, and Haman being backward and dilatory, having no stomach to go to it, and perhaps fearing worse things were coming upon him he should hear of there.

CHAPTER 7

INTRODUCTION TO ESTHER 7

Esther, being solicited by the king to tell him her petition, asks for her life and the lives of her people, who were sold to be destroyed, (^{<T00B>}Esther 7:1-4), the king, amazed at her request, inquires who was the person that dared to do so vile a thing; and was told by her it was Haman there present, (^{<T00B>}Esther 7:5,6) on which the king went out into the garden in wrath, and, returning, found Haman on Esther's bed, which still more incensed him; and being told that Haman had prepared a gallows for Mordecai, the king ordered that he himself should be hanged upon it, which was done accordingly, (^{<T00B>}Esther 7:7-10).

Ver. 1. *So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen.*] Or, "to drink with her"^{f155}, that is, wine; for in the next verse it is called a banquet of wine; so they did according to the invitation the queen had given them, (^{<T00B>}Esther 5:8).

Ver. 2. *And the king said again to Esther on the second day, at the banquet of wine,* etc.] This was the third time he put the following question to her, being very desirous of knowing what she had to ask of him; and it was of God that this was kept upon his mind, and he was moved to solicit her petition, or otherwise it would not have been so easy for her to have introduced it:

what is thy petition, Queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? and it shall be performed, even to the half of my kingdom; (see ^{<T00B>}Esther 5:3,6).

Ver. 3. *Then Esther the queen answered and said,* etc.] Not rolling herself at the king's knees, as Severus^{f156} writes; but rather, as the former Targum, lifting up her eyes to heaven, and perhaps putting up a secret ejaculation for direction and success:

if I have found favour in thy sight, O king; as she certainly had heretofore, and even now:

and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition; not riches, nor honour, nor any place or post at court, or in any of the king's dominions for any friend of her's, was her petition; but for her own life, that that might not be taken away, which was included in the grant the king had made to Haman, though ignorantly, to slay all the Jews, she being one of them:

and my people at my request; that is, the lives of her people also, that was her request; her own life and her people's were all she had to ask.

Ver. 4. *For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish*, etc.] She makes use of these several words, to express the utter destruction of her and her people, without any exception; not only the more to impress the king's mind with it, but she has respect to the precise words of the decree, (^{<7813>}Esther 3:13) as she has also to the 10,000 talents of silver Haman offered to pay the king for the grant of it, when she says, "we are sold", or delivered to be destroyed:

but if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue: should never have asked for deliverance from bondage, but have patiently submitted to it, however unreasonable, unjust, and afflictive it would have been; because it might have been borne, and there might be hope of deliverance from it at one time or another; though it is said, slaves with the Persians were never made free ^{f157}; but that being the case would not have been so great a loss to the king, who would have reaped some advantage by their servitude; whereas, by the death of them, he must sustain a loss which the enemy was not equal to, and which he could not compensate with all his riches; which, according to Ben Melech, is the sense of the next clause:

although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage; or, "for the enemy cannot", etc. the 10,000 talents offered by him, and all the riches that he has, are not an equivalent to the loss the king would sustain by the death of such a multitude of people, from whom he received so large a tribute; but this the enemy regarded not; and so Jarchi interprets it, the enemy took no care of, or was concerned about the king's damage; but there is another sense, which Aben Ezra mentions, and is followed by some learned men, who take the word for "enemy" to signify "distress", trouble, and anguish, as in (^{<3001>}Psalm 4:1 119:143) and read the words, "for this distress would not be reckoned the king's damage" ^{f158}, or loss; though it would have been a distress to the Jews to have been sold for slaves, yet the

loss to the king would not be so great as their death, since he would receive benefit by their service.

Ver. 5. *Then the King Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen*, etc.] The words in the original text lie thus, “and the King Ahasuerus said, and he said to Esther the queen”; which doubling of the word does not signify, as Jarchi suggests, that before he spoke to her by a messenger, or middle person, but, now he knew she was of a royal family, he spoke to her himself; but it is expressive of the ruffle of his mind, and the wrath and fury he was in, that he said it again and again, with a stern countenance and great vehemence of speech:

who is he? and where is he? who is the man? and where does he live?

that durst presume in his heart to do so; that has boldness, impudence, and courage enough to perpetrate so vile an action: or “that has filled his heart”^{f159}; the devil no doubt filled his heart to do it, (see ~~4~~Acts 5:3), but the king had either forgot the decree he had granted, and the countenance he had given him to execute it; or, if he remembered it, he was now enraged that he should be drawn in to such an action by him; and perhaps till now was ignorant of Esther’s descent, and knew not that she would be involved in the decree.

Ver. 6. *And Esther said, the adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman*, etc.] Who was not only an enemy to her and her people, but an adversary to the king, by advising and persuading him to that which was to the loss of his revenues, as well as of his reputation; also, she pointed at him, and gave him his just character; her charge of wickedness upon him, as it was true, it was honourably made to his face before the king, of which, if he could, he had the opportunity of exculpating himself:

then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen; gave visible signs of his confusion, consternation, and trouble of mind, by the fall of his countenance, his pale looks, his trembling limbs, and quivering lips, being struck dumb, and not able to speak one word for himself.

Ver. 7. *And the king, arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath, went into the palace garden*, etc.] Not being able to bear the sight of Haman, who had done such an injury both to himself and to the queen; as also that his wrath might subside, and he become more composed and sedate, and be able coolly to deliberate what was fitting to be done in the present case:

and Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen; hoping that her tender heart might be wrought upon to show mercy to him, and be prevailed on to entreat the king to spare his life; and this request he made in the most submissive manner:

for he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king; he perceived it both by the king's countenance, by the rage he went out in, and by the threatening words which he very probably uttered as he went out.

Ver. 8. *Then the king returned out of the palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine,* etc.] Being a little cooler, and more composed in his mind, see (see Gill on "¹⁰⁰⁵Esther 1:5")

and Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther was; not the bed she lay on to sleep in the night, (for it cannot be thought that it was a bedchamber in which the banquet was,) but on the bed or couch on which she sat or reclined at the banquet, as was the custom in the eastern countries; now, "by", or "near" this, as the word may be rendered, Haman fell down, even at the feet of the queen, begging for mercy; and some think he might embrace her feet or knees, as was the custom of the Greeks and Romans as they were supplicating^{f160}; and so it seems to have been with the Jews, (see ¹⁰⁰⁷2 Kings 4:27), and being in this posture, it might appear the more indecent, and give the king an opportunity to say as follows:

then said the king, will he force the queen also before me in the house?, that is, ravish her; not that he really thought so; it was not a time nor place for such an action; nor can it be thought that Haman, in such terror and confusion he was in, could be so disposed; and besides there were others present, as the next clause shows: but this he said, putting the worst construction on his actions, and plainly declaring his opinion of him, that he thought him a man capable of committing the vilest of crimes, and that his supplications were not to be regarded:

as the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face; the servants present, as a man unworthy to see the light; and they took what the king said to amount to a sentence of condemnation, and that it was his will he should die; and they covered his face, as condemned malefactors used to be; which was a custom among the Greeks and Romans, of which many instances may be given^{f161}; though Aben Ezra says it was the custom of the kings of Persia, that their servants covered the face of him the king

was angry with, that he might not see his face any more, which was well known in the Persian writings.

Ver. 9. *And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king,* etc.] One of the seven chamberlains, (see ^{<7010>}Esther 1:10), his name, with Josephus ^{f162}, is Sabouchadas.

Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. This man, perhaps, had seen it there, when he went with others to fetch Haman to the banquet, (^{<7064>}Esther 6:14). The sin of Haman is aggravated by preparing a gallows for a man before he was accused to the king, or condemned, or had a grant for his execution, and for a man that had well deserved of the king for discovering a conspiracy against him, and whom now the king had delighted to honour:

then the king said, hang him thereon; immediately, being ready prepared, the king's word was enough, being a sovereign and tyrannical prince.

Ver. 10. *So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai,* etc.] Not within his house, (^{<7009>}Esther 7:9), but more probably in his courtyard, in the sight of his family and friends; or, it may be, the gallows was taken from thence, and set up without the city, where he was hanged: for so it is said in the additions of the book of Esther,

“For he that was the worker of these things, is hanged at the gates of Susa with all his family: God, who ruleth all things, speedily rendering vengeance to him according to his deserts.” (Esther 16:18)

that he was hanged without the gates of Shushan; (see ^{<8075>}Psalms 7:15,16),

then was the king's wrath pacified; having inflicted punishment on such a wicked counsellor of his, and the contriver of such mischief.

CHAPTER 8

INTRODUCTION TO ESTHER 8

This chapter relates the gifts Ahasuerus gave to Esther and Mordecai, (^{<TARG>}Esther 8:1,2), the suit Esther made to him to reverse the letters for the destruction of the Jews, (^{<TARG>}Esther 8:3-6), which, though it could not be formally granted, was in effect done by letters sent to the Jews, giving them power to rise in their own defence, and slay their enemies, (^{<TARG>}Esther 8:7-14), the consequence of which, and the advancement of Mordecai, were matter of great joy to the Jews, (^{<TARG>}Esther 8:15-17).

Ver. 1. *On that day did the King, Ahasuerus, give the house of Haman, the Jews' enemy, unto Esther the queen, etc.*] That, and all the goods in it, and estate belonging to it; which being confiscated to the king, he gave to Esther, who would have been the sufferer, had his scheme taken place; so the Targum adds,

“and the men of his house, and all his treasures, and all his riches:”

and Mordecai came before the king; was introduced into his presence, became one of his privy counsellors, one of those that saw the king's face, and sat first in the kingdom, (^{<TARG>}Esther 1:14)

for Esther had told what he was unto her; what relation he stood in to her; her uncle, according to the Vulgate Latin version, and so Aben Ezra and Josephus, but wrongly, for she was his uncle's daughter; so that they were brother's children, or own cousins, (see ^{<TARG>}Esther 2:7).

Ver. 2. *And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai, etc.*] which, with the Persians, was a token of the strongest affection and strictest friendship^{f163}; the Targum calls it his signatory ring, that with which he signed laws, edicts, letters, patents, etc. and so hereby made him keeper of the seals:

and Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman; appointed him her steward of the estate of Haman, the king had given her.

Ver. 3. *And Esther spake yet again before the king*, etc.] Went into his presence, without being called for as before, with a new petition:

and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears; the more to work upon his affections, and move him to grant her request; which she might be the more encouraged to hope for, through the success she already had:

to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews; to revoke, abolish, and make void a mischievous scheme Haman had devised against the Jews, to root out the whole nation of them in the Persian empire.

Ver. 4. *Then the king held out the golden sceptre towards Esther*, etc.] As a token that she had not incurred his displeasure by coming into his presence without leave, and that she was admitted to speak and make her request; (see ^{<TAB>}Esther 5:3)

so Esther arose and stood before the king; she rose from the ground on which she lay prostrate, and stood upon her feet, in an humble manner, to make her speech, and present her petition to the king.

Ver. 5. *And said, if it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasing in his eyes*, etc.] This heap of phrases, which signify much the same thing, are used to work upon the king's affections, and to show how submissive she was to his will:

let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which are in all the king's provinces. She wisely takes no notice of any concern the king had in them, but suggests as that she looked upon them as forged by Haman, who put the king's name and seal to them, without his knowledge and consent.

Ver. 6. *For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people?* etc.] I cannot bear it; it will break my heart; I shall die to see all my people massacred throughout the realm; the thought of it is shocking and shuddering; to see it, intolerable: or "how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?" the same thing in different words, and somewhat more express and explanative. She explains the evil coming upon her people of the utter destruction of them, not barely an oppression, but an extermination of them; and she makes use of a word expressive of

their relation to her, as more endearing, being her kindred; she and they being, as it were, of the same family, and with whom she could not but sympathize in distress.

Ver. 7. *Then the King Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen, and to Mordecai the Jew,* etc.] Who was present at the same time, either at the desire of Esther, or by virtue of his office, being now one of those that saw the king's face, (^{<T000>}Esther 8:1),

behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman; (see Gill on "^{<T000>}Esther 8:1"),

and him they have hanged upon the gallows; which he had prepared for Mordecai, (^{<T000>}Esther 7:10)

because he laid his hand upon the Jews; intended to do so, and had prepared for it, and wrote letters, ordering their destruction on such a day. Now as the king had shown favour to Esther and Mordecai, and had punished Haman for contriving mischief against them and the Jews, which was publicly known, the people would be fearful of doing anything against them, lest they should incur the king's displeasure, and therefore might make themselves easy about this matter; but, however, to give them all the satisfaction he could, he directs them to do as follows.

Ver. 8. *Write ye also for the Jews as it liketh you,* etc.] Whatever may be thought fit and proper for their safety and security:

in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring; as the former letters were:

for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse; which is a reason both for the writing and sealing of the present letters in this manner, and why the former could not be reversed; nor does it appear that they were, but that, in virtue of them, the people had power to rise and kill the Jews on the day appointed, if they dared, or were so disposed; and these empowered the Jews to rise in their own defence, and kill all that made any attempts upon them, for which they had the royal authority; and these letters coming after the other, though they did not formally reverse them, which might not be done, yet rendered them ineffectual.

Ver. 9. *Then were the king's scribes called at that time,* etc.] As they were to write the former letter, (^{<TAB2>}Esther 3:12),

in the third month, that is the month Sivan, on the three and twentieth day thereof; which answers to part of May, and part of June. This was two months and ten days after the writing of the former letters; so long the Jews had been in distress by reason of them, and was a just rebuke upon them for not returning to their own land when they might, as well as for other sins:

and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded to the Jews. Mordecai dictated to the scribes, and ordered what they should write; and which were sent to the Jews in the first place, partly to ease them of their present distress, and partly that they might prepare against that time for their defence, for which they had sufficient time, it being now more than nine months to it:

and to the lieutenants, and the deputies, and the rulers of the provinces, which are from India unto Ethiopia, an hundred twenty and seven provinces. The letters were directed to the same magistrates in the several provinces as the former, giving orders to them, that, notwithstanding them, they were to suffer the Jews to defend themselves, and not punish them for what should be done by them in self-defence; (see ^{<TAB2>}Esther 1:1 2:12),

unto every province according to the writing thereof, and unto every people after their language, and to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language; some provinces spoke the Persian language, and used the character of it, others Chaldee, others Syriac, etc. and wrote in the usual characters, as the Jews did in Hebrew, and in the characters of that language; and now these letters were written in the language and character of the people of the several provinces they were sent to, that they might be easily read and understood.

Ver. 10. *And he wrote in the King Ahasuerus' name, and sealed it with the king's ring,* etc.] Which gave the letters authority, and made them irreversible, and for this Mordecai had the king's order, (^{<TAB2>}Esther 8:8)

and sent letters by post; by runners or couriers:

on horseback; that rode on horses that were racers, that ran swiftly:

and riders on mules, camels, and young dromedaries; which were all different creatures, and swift ones, according to our version, especially the latter; (see ^{<4123>}Jeremiah 2:23) which were a kind of camels, but swifter, and would go more than one hundred miles a day ^{f164}; and, as Diodorus Siculus says ^{f165}, not less than 1500 furlongs or about two hundred miles: though it may be only one sort are meant, namely, “mules”, for the next word, “ahashteranim”, in the Persian language signifies mules ^{f166}, and so Aben Ezra interprets it, and likewise Kimchi and Ben Melech; and the last words may be rendered “sons of mares”, so David de Pomis; that is, such mules as are gendered by he asses and mares: and so the same writer observes, that the word in the Arabic language signifies “mares”; and such mules that come from them he says are stronger than those that come from she asses; so that the whole may be rendered to this sense, “riders on mules”, (which in the Persian language are called “ahashteranim”,) namely, such as are “sons of mares”; and which according to Aelianus ^{f167} and Pliny ^{f168} are the swiftest; though the Persians had camels swifter than are common elsewhere, called “revatrie”, the “goer”, which trot as fast as an horse can gallop ^{f169}.

Ver. 11. *Wherein the king granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together*, etc.] In some part of the city they should choose, and remain in a body, being sufficiently armed:

and to stand for their life; to defend themselves, and fight for their life, should any attack them, or attempt to take it away; in such case they might act offensively,

so as to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them; every army of them, or as many as should join in a body to attack them, any mighty or powerful mob; and not men only,

but both little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey; the same words are used, and the same power is given them as were to their enemies, (^{<47913>}Esther 3:13), not that they made use of it to the utmost extremity, it is certain they did not in one point, in taking the spoil, (^{<47910>}Esther 9:10,15,16), and, since they spared that, it is highly probable they spared women and children.

Ver. 12. *Upon one day, in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, namely, upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar.*]

The day appointed and fixed in the former letters for the destruction of the Jews, (^{<TIBS>}Esther 3:13).

Ver. 13. *The copy of the writing, for a commandment to be given in every province, was published to all people*, etc.] A copy of the letters sent to the governors of provinces; the sum and substance of them was published by an herald, or fixed in public places, that all might know the contents thereof; and take care not to assault the Jews, as it would be to their peril:

and that the Jews should be ready against that day to avenge themselves on their enemies; Abendana thinks this is to be restrained to those that were of the seed of Amalek, who were their principal enemies; but no doubt it includes all that should rise up against them.

Ver. 14. *So the posts that rode upon mules and camels went out*, etc.] Or on the mules, which in the Persian language were called “ahashteranim”; (see Gill on “^{<TIBO>}Esther 8:10”),

being hastened and pressed on by the king’s commandment; who gave them a special order to make what haste they could, that the Jews might have time to prepare for their defence, and their enemies be the more intimidated:

and the decree was given at Shushan the palace; the king’s counsellors agreeing to it, and perhaps signing it, as they did the former; (see ^{<TIBS>}Esther 3:15).

Ver. 15. *And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king*, etc.] And walked or rode about in the city to show himself to his friends:

in royal apparel of blue and white; such as the Persian kings wore, and were not allowed to any other, as Xenophon writes ^{f170}:

and with a great crown of gold; a coronet, such as princes and nobles wear; the latter Targum calls it a great golden chain, and such the eastern kings used to give to their favourites; (see ^{<TIBS>}Daniel 5:29),

and with a garment of fine linen and purple; this must be an inner garment, since it is distinct from the royal robe before mentioned; though as the word signifies a wrap, or roll, it may design a turban, which was a roll of linen wrapped about the head; and such was the Persian diadem, according to Curtius ^{f171}, which was of a purple colour, mixed with white; and so the Septuagint version is, “and a diadem of fine linen, of a purple

colour"; and if so, the crown of gold was not worn on his head, nor is it likely it should be allowed, but was carried before him, (see Gill on "^{<1708>}Esther 6:8"),

and the city of Shushan rejoiced, and was glad; not only the Jews in it, but the native inhabitants of it, that had any sense of humanity, expressed their joy at the sight of Mordecai thus arrayed; that so good a man was advanced at court, and so bad a man as Haman was displaced and put to death; (see ^{<1819>}Proverbs 29:2).

Ver. 16. *And the Jews had light*, etc.] Prosperity, as opposed to the darkness of adversity in which they had been, (see ^{<2382>}Isaiah 8:22,9:1,2), or lightsomeness and cheerfulness of spirit, as explained by the two next words:

and gladness and joy; at the good news of their deliverance, so unexpected by them; thus light is explained by gladness, (^{<1971>}Psalms 97:11)

and honour: among men; from their neighbours, who before were held in contempt, as a people doomed to destruction.

Ver. 17. *And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came*, etc.] As they did to every province in the realm, and to every city in the province, where there were any Jews:

the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day; they expressed their joy on this occasion by keeping a festival, which in their language is called a good day; and such an one is annually kept by them unto this day, on account of their deliverance; of which (see ^{<1702>}Esther 9:27,28)

and many of the people of the land became Jews; or were proselyted, as both the Targums and Jarchi interpret it; they embraced the Jewish religion, and submitted to the rites and ceremonies of it; were circumcised, as in the Septuagint version, and so were proselytes of righteousness; and indeed no other could they be, dwelling in their own land; many of them very probably were serious in it, observing the wonderful manner in which the Jews were delivered; wherein manifestly appeared to them the providence of God, the hand of the Supreme Being, and from hence concluded their God must be the true God, and they his favourite people, and their religion most correct; though others might only do it to gain the favour of Esther and Mordecai, who had now such great power and influence at court:

for the fear of the Jews fell upon them; lest they should be slain by them, in virtue of this new edict.

CHAPTER 9

INTRODUCTION TO ESTHER 9

In this chapter we have an account of the Jews gathering together, on the day fixed for their destruction, to defend themselves, which they did in all the provinces, and smote their enemies; (^{<T000>}Esther 9:1-5). In Shushan the palace they slew the ten sons of Haman and five hundred men on that day, (^{<T006>}Esther 9:6-11) and at the request of the queen they were allowed the next day to hang up his sons, when they slew three hundred men more, (^{<T012>}Esther 9:12-15), in the provinces they slew 75,000 and those in one day only, and the following days they kept as a festival, but they in Shushan kept the two days following, (^{<T016>}Esther 9:16-19), and which two days were established by Esther and Mordecai as festivals, to be observed as such in future ages, by the name of the days of Purim, (^{<T020>}Esther 9:20-32).

Ver. 1. *Now in the twelfth month, that is the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same,* etc.] Of which (see ^{<T013>}Esther 3:13),

when the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution; even both his commandments and decrees, the one empowering the enemies of the Jews on that day to destroy them, and the other empowering the Jews to act both defensively and offensively against their enemies:

in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them; by virtue of the first decree of the king; and notwithstanding the second, they might hope to have it because of their superior numbers:

though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them; it proved the reverse, partly through the second decree in favour of the Jews, and partly through the fear of them that fell upon their enemies; because the court was on their side, and the officers everywhere, and especially their God filled them with courage, and their enemies with terror.

Ver. 2. *The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities, throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus,* etc.] Wherever they lived:

to lay hand on such as sought their hurt; who not only threatened them what they would do on this day, but were risen up in arms in quest of them:

and no man could withstand them, for the fear of them fell upon all people; when they understood that Haman was hanged, and Mordecai the Jew advanced, and that the queen herself was a Jew, and that the Jews had the royal grant to act both defensively and offensively; and no doubt but the panic was of God.

Ver. 3. *And all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and officers of the king, blessed the Jews*, etc.] Countenanced them and encouraged them, and gave them all assistance in their power; extolled them, as the word signifies, lifted them up, and spoke well of them, or praised them, as the Targum:

because the fear of Mordecai was upon them; he being now chief minister, they might fear, if they took part with the enemies of the Jews against them, they might be turned out of their places.

Ver. 4. *For Mordecai was great in the king's house*, etc.] Not only over Esther's affairs, but was one of the king's counsellors, and was the chief minister of state:

and his fame went out throughout all the provinces; what a favourite he was of the king, as well as a relation of the queen, and how wise and just his administrations were:

for this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater, was more and more in the king's favour, and had offices of honour and trust heaped upon him, and increased both in wealth and power.

Ver. 5. *Thus the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter, and destruction*, etc.] Some with swords, and others with clubs, and staves; as the Targum; and such like slaughtering weapons of destruction:

and did what they would unto those that hated them; being then entirely at their will, and under their power.

Ver. 6. *And in Shushan the palace the Jews slew and destroyed five hundred men*.] Not in the royal palace, where it cannot be thought the Jews had so many enemies, or such a bloody slaughter of them should be

made there; but in the city, where the palace was: and this may seem somewhat wonderful, that there should so many rise there against the Jews, so near the court, now altogether in the interest of the Jews; but these were men no doubt of Haman's faction, and enraged at his disgrace and death, and headed by his ten sons, who took the advantage of the decree to avenge his death; the Targum says, these were princes of the house of Amalek.

Ver. 7-10. *And Parshandatha, and Dalphon, and Aspatha, and Poratha, and Adalia, and Aridatha, and Parmashta, and Arisai, and Aridai, and Vajezatha, the ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews, slew they,* etc.] Along with the five hundred men, at the head of which they were:

but on the spoil laid they not their hands; though they were allowed by the edict to do it, (^{<1781b>}Esther 8:11), but this they did not, that it might appear that they did not take away their lives from a covetous desire of their estates, but purely in self-defence; and they might do this, the more to ingratiate themselves to the king, to whom the goods and estates of those men would be confiscated.

Ver. 11. *On that day the number of those that were slain in Shushan the palace was brought before the king.*] Either by order of the king, that he might know how many enemies the Jews had in the city, and how many of subjects had been slain; or officiously by others, with an intention to irritate the king against the Jews.

Ver. 12. *And the king said unto Esther the queen,* etc.] After the account had been brought in to him:

the Jews have slain and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the palace; the Targum adds, of the seed of Amalek:

and the ten sons of Haman: which very probably were all he had; though the Targum, in (^{<1794>}Esther 9:14), makes mention of seventy sons that Zeresh his wife fled with:

what have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? that could not be said; but it might be concluded, that if so many were slain in Shushan, the number must be great in all the provinces:

now what is thy petition and it shall be granted thee: or “what is thy request further? and it shall be done”; if this was not sufficient and satisfactory, whatever else she should ask for should be granted.

Ver. 13. *Then said Esther, if it please the king,* etc.] For she was all submission to his will:

let it be granted to the Jews which are in Shushan; for no further did she desire the grant to be extended:

to do tomorrow also according to this days decree; one Targum makes the request only that they might keep the morrow as a festival, but the other, more rightly, to do according to the decree of this day; which was, to slay as many of their enemies as rose up against them; and whereas many might flee and hide themselves, who were implacable enemies of the Jews, Esther moves for a grant that the decree might be continued for the next day, that these might be found out and slain; in which she sought the glory of divine justice, in their righteous destruction, and the peace of the people of God, and not private revenge, or to indulge malice:

and let Haman’s ten sons be hanged upon the gallows; on which their father was; this was deferred, though they were already slain, for their greater reproach, and for a terror to others not to injure the people of God; and it was usual with the Persians to hang persons on a gallows, or fix them to a cross, after they were dead; as Polycrates was by Oroites^{f172}, and Bagspates by Parysatis^{f173}.

Ver. 14. *And the king commanded it so to be done: and the decree was given at Shushan,* etc.] That the Jews might have leave to seek out and slay the rest of their enemies in Shushan, on the fourteenth day, in like manner as they had on the thirteenth:

and they hanged Haman’s ten sons; on the same gallows very probably their father was hanged; the Targum gives us the distance between each person hanged thereon.

Ver. 15. *For the Jews that were in Shushan gathered themselves together on the fourteenth day also of the month Adar,* etc.] As they had on the thirteenth:

and slew three hundred men at Shushan; the Targum adds, of the family of Amalek: but there is no reason to confine it to them; it respects all such as

were the enemies of the Jews, and rose up against them; so that the whole number slain in Shushan were eight hundred persons, besides the sons of Human:

but on the prey they laid not their hand; (see Gill on “~~1700~~ Esther 9:7”).

Ver. 16. *But the other Jews that were in the king’s provinces gathered themselves together,* etc.] In a body, in their respective provinces and cities:

and stood for their lives; defended themselves against those that attacked them:

and had rest from their enemies; that selfsame day; all being destroyed by them, and none daring to appear against them:

and slew of their foes 75,000 men; that is, in all the provinces put together:

but they laid not their hands on the prey; (see Gill on “~~1700~~ Esther 9:7”).

Ver. 17. *On the thirteenth day of the month Adar,* etc.] This belongs to the preceding verse; and the meaning is, that on this day the Jews gathered together and slew so many thousand of their enemies as before related:

and on the fourteenth day of the same rested they, and made it a feast of gladness: rejoicing that they were delivered out of the hand of their enemies, who hoped and expected on that day to have made an utter end of them; according to the Jewish canons^{f174}, mourning and fasting on this day were forbidden, but feasting and gladness were to be multiplied.

Ver. 18. *But the Jews that were at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth day thereof, and on the fourteenth day thereof,* etc.] Of the month Adar; that is, they gathered together to defend themselves, and destroy their enemies, on both these days, having the decree renewed for the fourteenth as they had for the thirteenth:

and on the fifteenth day of the same they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness; as the Jews in the provinces did on the fourteenth.

Ver. 19. *Therefore the Jews of the villages, that dwelt in the unwalled towns, made the fourteenth day of the month Adar a day of gladness and feasting,* etc.] Jarchi observes that those in the villages, who are they that do not dwell in walled towns, observed the fourteenth, and they in towns surrounded with walls the fifteenth, as Shushan; and this circumvallation,

he says, must be what was from the days of Joshua; according to the Jewish canons, every place that was walled from the days of Joshua the son of Nun, whether in the land of Israel or out of it, though not now walled they read (i.e. the book of Esther) on the fifteenth of Adar, and this is called a walled town; but a place which was not walled in the days of Joshua, though now walled, they read in the fourteenth, and this is called a city; but the city Shushan, though it was not walled in the days of Joshua, they read on the fifteenth, because in it was done a miracle^{f175} and each of these was kept as a day of public rejoicing for their great deliverance and freedom from their enemies:

and a good day: as the Jews usually call the several days of the passover, pentecost, and tabernacles:

and of sending portions one to another: expressive of mutual joy, and congratulating one another upon the happiness they shared in; (see ^{<6110>}Revelation 11:10), and particularly this may respect sending gifts to the poor, who had not that to rejoice and make merry with others had; (see ^{<6180>}Nehemiah 8:10), though these seem to be distinct from them, (^{<6192>}Esther 9:22).

Ver. 20. *And Mordecai wrote these things*, etc.] The transactions of those two days, and the causes of them, as well as the following letter; some conclude from hence that he was the penman of the book; and so he might be, but it does not necessarily follow from hence:

and sent letters unto all the Jews that were in all the provinces of the King Ahasuerus, both nigh and far; such as were near the city Shushan, and those that were at the greatest distance from it; these were more especially the things he wrote.

Ver. 21. *To stablish this among them*, etc.] That it might be a settled thing, and annually observed in all future generations, what they had now done:

that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same, yearly; as the former had been observed by the Jews in the provinces, and both by those in Shushan, (^{<6197>}Esther 9:17-19)

as festivals in commemoration of their great deliverance; hence the fourteenth of Adar is called the day of Mordecai, being established by him;

“And they ordained all with a common decree in no case to let that day pass without solemnity, but to celebrate the thirtieth day of the twelfth month, which in the Syrian tongue is called Adar, the day before Mardocheus’ day.” (2 Maccabees 15:36)

Ver. 22. *As the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies,* etc.] Having slain all those that rose up against them, and assaulted them:

and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning unto a good day; for in this month Adar, on the thirteenth day of it, they expected to have been all destroyed, which had occasioned great sorrow and mourning in them; but beyond their expectation, in the same month, and on the selfsame day of the month, they had deliverance and freedom from their enemies; which was matter of joy, and made this day a good day to them:

that they should make them days of feasting and joy; keep both the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month as festivals, eating and drinking, and making all tokens of joy and gladness, though not in the Bacchanalian way in which they now observe them; for they say ^{f176}, a man is bound at the feast of Purim to exhilarate or inebriate himself until he does not know the difference between ‘cursed be Haman’ and ‘blessed be Mordecai.’

and of sending portions one to another; and these now consist of eatables and drinkables; and according to the Jewish canons ^{f177}, a man must send two gifts to his friend, at least; and they that multiply them are most commendable; and those are sent by men to men, and by women to women, and not on the contrary:

and gifts to the poor; alms money, as the Targum, to purchase food and drink with, nor may they use it to any other purpose; though some say they may do what they will with it ^{f178}; and a man must not give less than two gifts to the poor; these are called the monies of Purim ^{f179}.

Ver. 23. *And the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto them.*] They engaged to keep these two days as festivals annually, as they had at this time done; not in a religious but in a civil way, not as parts of religious worship, and as additions to and innovations of the law, but by way of commemoration of a civil benefit which they had received; and yet we find in later times that this was scrupled by some as an innovation; for we are told ^{f180} that there were

eighty five elders, and more than thirty of them prophets, who were distressed about this matter, fearing it was an innovation.

Ver. 24. *Because Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them,* etc.] Had formed a design to exterminate them from the whole Persian empire in one day:

and had cast Pur, (that is, the lot,) to consume them, and to destroy them; had cast lots to find out what would be the most lucky day in the year for him to do it on, and the most unlucky and unfortunate to the Jews; and, according to the lot, the thirteenth of Adar was pitched upon; this and the following verse give the reasons for observing the above two days as festivals.

Ver. 25. *But when Esther came before the king,* etc.] To request of him her life, and the life of her people:

he commanded by letters, that his wicked device, which he devised against the Jews, should return upon his own head; that whereas his wicked scheme was to destroy all the Jews, the king, by his second letter, gave orders that the Jews should have liberty to defend themselves, and destroy their enemies which rose up against them; and the friends and party of Haman were entirely cut off:

and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows; which he had prepared for Mordecai; not that they were ordered to be hanged together, nor were they; Haman was hanged before on the twenty third day of the month, but his sons not till the fourteenth day of the twelfth month; (~~ESTHER~~ Esther 7:10 8:9 9:13,14).

Ver. 26. *Wherefore they called these days Purim, after the name of Pur,* etc.] The lot; because of the lots cast by Haman; (see ~~ESTHER~~ Esther 3:7),

therefore for all the words of this letter; in obedience to what Mordecai wrote in his letter to the Jews, and because of the things contained in it:

and of that which they had seen concerning this matter; with their own eyes, in the several provinces where their enemies rose up to assault them, but were destroyed by them:

and what had come unto them: by report; as the fall of Haman, and advancement of Mordecai, and the favours shown to Esther and her

people; all this belongs to the following verse, containing the reasons of the Jews' appointment and engagement to observe the days of Purim.

Ver. 27. *The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such that joined themselves unto them,* etc.] Who became proselytes to their religion; that is, they appointed the above two days as festivals, and engaged for themselves, for their children, and all proselytes, to observe them as such; and one of their canons ^{f181} runs thus,

“all are obliged to read the Megillah (the book of Esther, which they always read on those days), priests, Levites, Nethinims, Israelites, men, women, and proselytes, and servants made free, and they train up little ones to read it:”

so as it should not fail; of being observed, so as no man should transgress it, or pass it over:

that they should keep these two days; the fourteenth and fifteenth of the month Adar or February:

according to their writing; in this book, the book of Esther, which was to be read, as Aben Ezra; written in the Hebrew character, as the Targum; that is, in the Assyrian character, as Jarchi; the square character, as they call it:

and according to their appointed time every year; whether simple or intercalated, as Aben Ezra observes: in an intercalary year the Jews have two Adars, and, though they keep the feast of Purim on the fourteenth of the first Adar, yet not with so much mirth, and call it the lesser Purim; but in the second Adar they observe it with all its ceremonies ^{f182}; so, in their canon, they do not keep Purim but in Adar that is next to Nisan or March, that redemption might be near redemption; the redemption of Mordecai near the redemption of Moses ^{f183}.

Ver. 28. *And that these days should be remembered, and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city,* etc.] And accordingly these days are commemorated by them now, and by all their families, and all in their families capable of it; and these words, “every province”, and “every city”, are used, as Aben Ezra observes, lest a man should think he was not bound to keep this feast where there were no Jews; for, let him be where he may, he is obliged to keep it:

and that these days of Purim should not fail among the Jews; or the observance of them be neglected and cease:

nor the memorial of them perish from their seed; neither the memorial of them, nor of the reason of keeping them; wherefore on those days they read the whole book of Esther, fairly written on a roll of parchment, and are careful that none omit the reading of it; rather, they say^{f184}, the reading and learning the law should be omitted, and all commands and service, than the reading this volume, that so all might be acquainted with this wonderful deliverance, and keep it in mind.

Ver. 29. *Then Esther the queen, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote with all authority*, etc.] Strongly pressing the observance of this festival; before, Mordecai only recommended it, but now the queen gave a sanction to it, and laid her obligation on the Jews to observe it; perhaps some of the Jews were backward to it, or neglected to observe it, and therefore Esther and Mordecai joined in a letter to them, to press them to it; the Jewish chronologer^{f185} says, this was written the year following; the former Targum is, they wrote this whole volume, and the strength of the miracle, or set the miraculous deliverance in the strongest light, with this view,

to confirm this second letter of Purim; that it might have its weight and influence upon them, to engage them to keep it, as the latter Targum adds; that when it was an intercalary year, they might not read the Megillah (or book of Esther) in the first Adar, but in the second Adar.

Ver. 30. *And he sent letters unto all the Jews*, etc.] That is, Mordecai did, signed in the queen's name, and his own:

to the hundred twenty and seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus; among which was Judea, that was become a province, first of the Chaldean, now of the Persian empire, (see ^{<188>}Ezra 5:8) to whom also these letters were sent, directing and ordering the Jews there to observe these days, who were also concerned in the deliverance wrought:

with words of peace and truth exhorting them to live in peace with one another, and their neighbours, and to constancy in the true religion; or wishing them all peace and prosperity in the most loving and sincere manner.

Ver. 31. *To confirm these days of Purim in their times appointed, etc.]*

The fourteenth and fifteenth of Adar:

according as Mordecai the Jew and Esther the queen had enjoined them;
in the letters written and signed by them both:

and as they had decreed for themselves, and for their seed; (see ^{<1007>}Esther 9:27),

the matters of their fastings and their cry; in commemoration of their deliverance from those distresses and calamities which occasioned fastings and prayers during the time of them; and to this sense is the former Targum; though it is certain the Jews observe the thirteenth day, the day before the two days, as a fast, and which they call the fast of Esther ^{f186}, and have prayers on the festival days peculiar to them; but the sense Aben Ezra gives seems best, that as the Jews had decreed to keep the fasts, mentioned in (^{<3075>}Zechariah 7:5), so they now decreed to rejoice in the days of Purim.

Ver. 32. *And the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim, etc.]*

As a festival to be observed by the Jews in future generations:

and it was written in the book; either in this book of Esther; or in the public acts and chronicles of the kings of Persia; or in a book by itself, now lost, as Aben Ezra thinks, as many others are we read of in Scripture, as the books of the chronicles of the kings of Israel and Judah, etc.

CHAPTER 10

INTRODUCTION TO ESTHER 10

This chapter is very short, and just makes mention of a tribute Ahasuerus laid on his realm, (^{<100>}Esther 10:1), refers to the Persian chronicles, both for the greatness of him, and of Mordecai, and is closed with the character of the latter, (^{<100>}Esther 10:2,3).

Ver. 1. *And the King Ahasuerus laid a tribute on the land, and upon the isles of the sea.*] Which include all his dominions, both on the continent, and on the sea, the Aegean sea; though Aben Ezra thinks it regards such as were not under his government, but stood in fear of him, of whom he demanded tribute. If Ahasuerus was Xerxes, perhaps his exchequer might be drained by his wars with the Grecians, which put him upon this; though some understand this of his renewing the taxes and tribute, which he remitted upon his marriage with Esther, (^{<1018>}Esther 2:18).

Ver. 2. *And all the acts of his power, and of his might,* etc.] As Xerxes was a very mighty and powerful prince:

and the declaration of the greatness of Mordecai, whereunto the king advanced him; the history of that, and which tended not a little to the greatness, dignity and prosperity of the king himself, and his whole kingdom:

are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia? to which the reader is referred by the writer of this book, the which were in being in his times, but now lost: had they been preserved, they might have been of great use to lead into the history of the Medes and Persians, which for want of them is very dark and intricate; the writer of this book having nothing further to do with it, than as it related to the affairs of the Jews.

Ver. 3. *For Mordecai the Jew was next unto Ahasuerus,* etc.] The second man in the kingdom, the principal of the counsellors, and prime minister of state:

and great among the Jews; highly respected by them, in great honour and esteem with them, for which there was great reason:

and accepted of the multitude of his brethren; or of many, of most, of the greatest part of them; for, let a man be ever so deserving, there are some that will envy his greatness, cavil at everything done by him, and speak evil of him without any just reason:

seeking the wealth of his people; their good, their welfare and happiness, temporal and spiritual:

and speaking peace to all his seed; not only to his family, but to all the Jews who were of the same seed with him, the seed of Abraham; either speaking to them in an humble and condescending manner, being very humane, affable, and courteous; or speaking for them to the king, asking of him for them what might conduce to their peace, prosperity, and happiness. No mention is made in this history of the death and burial either of Mordecai or Esther; but the author of Cippi Hebraici says^{f187}, that Mordecai was buried in the city of Shushan, and that all the Jews in those parts assemble at his grave on the day of Purim, and sing songs, playing on tabrets and pipes, rejoicing that there was a miracle wrought; and the same writer says^{f188}, they do the like at that time at the grave of Esther, half a mile from Tzephath, read this book that bears her name, eat, drink, and rejoice. Benjamin of Tudela says^{f189}, they were both buried before a synagogue, at a place called Hamdan.

FOOTNOTES

- Ft1** -- Stromat. l. 1. p. 329.
- Ft2** -- T. Bava Bathra, fol. 15. 1.
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- Ft21** -- Schichart. de Festo Purim. Rainold. Praelect. 144. p. 231. Alsted. Chronolog. p. 126, 181.
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- Ft23 -- Ut supra. (Broughton, Works, p. 38, 259, 581.)
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- Ft27 -- lb. Polymnia, sive, l. 7. c. 9.
- Ft28 -- lb. c. 65, 69, 70.
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- Ft30 -- lb. (Herodot.) Calliope, sive, l. 9. c. 109.
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- Ft32 -- lb. Clio, sive, l. 1. c. 133.
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- Ft67** -- Thalia, sive, l. 3. c. 14, 31. so in Aelian. Var. Hist. l. 1. c. 34.
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- Ft71** -- Tacitus de Mor. German. c. 22.

- Ft72** -- **htw[rl** “sodali ejus”, Montanus; “sociae ejus”, Tigurine version, Drusius, Rambachius.
- Ft73** -- Tikkune Zohar, correct. 21. fol. 59. 2.
- Ft74** -- Vid. Castel. Lexic. Persic. col. 266.
- Ft75** -- Herodot. Calliope, sive, l. 9. c. 107.
- Ft76** -- Antiqu. l. 11. c. 6. sect. 2.
- Ft77** -- “Pone seram, cohibe”, etc. Juvenal. Satyr. 6. ver. 346, 347.
- Ft78** -- Semedo’s History of China, part 1. ch. 23.
- Ft79** -- Vid. Rainold. de Lib. Apocryph. Praelect. 113, 117, 146.
- Ft80** -- Chronicon. see. 18. p. 609, 621.
- Ft81** -- Castell. Lex. Persic. Latin. col. 329. Vid. Pfeiffer. difficil. Script. cent. 3. loc. 28.
- Ft82** -- Caphtor Uperah, fol. 60. 2.
- Ft83** -- T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 44. 1.
- Ft84** -- Onomastic. Sacr. p. 621, 622.
- Ft85** -- Herodot. Calliope, sive, l. 9. c. 107. 111. & Polymnia, sive, l. 7. c. 61. 114.
- Ft86** -- Ut supra. (Antiqu. l. 11. c. 6. sect. 2.)
- Ft87** -- Ibid. (Antiqu. l. 11. c. 6. sect. 2.)
- Ft88** -- Thalia, sive, l. 3. c. 69.
- Ft89** -- Curt. Hist. l. 3. c. 3.
- Ft90** -- Ut supra (Antiqu. l. 11. c.6. sect. 2.)
- Ft91** -- Strabo. Geograph. l. 1. p. 504.
- Ft92** -- Vid. Paschalius de Coronis, l. 10. c. 8. p. 689.
- Ft93** -- Ut supra. (Antiqu. l. 11. c. 6. sect. 2.)
- Ft94** -- Erato, sive, l. 6. c. 59.

- Ft95** -- Thalia, sive, l. 3. c. 67.
- Ft96** -- Herodot. Euterpe, sive, l. 2. c. 98. Cicero in Verrem, l. 3. Orat. 8.
- Ft97** -- In Plat. Alcibiad.
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- Ft100** -- Hist. Heb. l. 2. c. 1. p. 72.
- Ft101** -- T. Bab. Megillah, fol. 13. 2. Targum prius & Jarchi in loc.
- Ft102** -- Antiqu. l. 11. c. 6. sect. 4.
- Ft103** -- Ibid. (Antiqu. l. 11. c. 6. sect. 4.)
- Ft104** -- Plutarch. in Themistocle.
- Ft105** -- Ut supra, (Antiqu. l. 11. c. 6.) sect. 5.
- Ft106** -- Hist. Sacr. l. 2. p. 78.
- Ft107** -- Xenophon, Cyropaedia, l. 8. c. 41.
- Ft108** -- Vid. Salden. Otia Theolog. l. 3. Exercitat. 1. sec. 4, 5.
- Ft109** -- Laert. Prooem. ad Vit. Philosoph. p. 5, 6.
- Ft110** -- Herodot. Polymnia, sive, l. 7. c. 136. Justin e Trogo. l. 6. c. 2. Aelian. Var. Hist. l. 1. 21.
- Ft111** -- Plutarch. in Artaxerxe, Valer. Maxim. l. 6. c. 3.
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- Ft114** -- Vid. Macrob. Saturnal l. 1. c. 16. Alex. ab Alex. Genial. Dier. l. 4. c. 20.
- Ft115** -- **rmayw** “dixerat enim”, Junius & Tremellius, Piscator, Drusius, so Patrick.
- Ft116** -- Apud Philostrat. Vit. Apollon. l. 5. c. 11.

- Ft117 -- Hist. l. 5. c. 4.
- Ft118 -- “Romanas antem soliti”, etc. Satyr. 14. ver. 99.
- Ft119 -- De Pret. & Ponder. Vet. Num. c. 5.
- Ft120 -- Alex. ab. Alex. Genial. Dier. l. 1. c. 26. & l. 2. c. 19.
- Ft121 -- μϋχρh dyb “in manu cursorum”, Montanus; so the Tigurine version, Drusius, V. L. Junius & Tremellius, Piscator.
- Ft122 -- Xenophon. Cyropaedia, l. 8. c. 43.
- Ft123 -- Herodot. Urania, sive, l. 8. c. 98.
- Ft124 -- So Midrash Esther, fol. 94. 1.
- Ft125 -- Thalia, sive, l. 3. c. ----. Urania, sive, l. 8. c. 99.
- Ft126 -- Calliope, sive, l. 9. c. 24.
- Ft127 -- So Midrash Esther, fol. 94. 3. & Jarchi in Dan. iv. 5.
- Ft128 -- Herodot. Clio, sive, l. 1. c. 99.
- Ft129 -- Herodot. Thalia, sive, l. 3. c. 84.
- Ft130 -- ^kbw “et postea”, Noldius, p. 198. No. 899. so the Targum, כאִי טוֹטֵ, Sept. “et tune”, V. L. Pagninus, Montanus; “tum”, Tigurine version.
- Ft131 -- Midrash Esther, fol. 94. 4.
- Ft132 -- Vid Reland. Antiqu. Heb. par. 4. c. 13. sect. 5.
- Ft133 -- Vid. Paschaliium de Coronis, l. 10. c. 11. p. 699.
- Ft134 -- Hist. Heb. Jud. l. 2. c. 4.
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- Ft136 -- Herodot, Clio, sive, l. 1. c. 136. Strabo. Geograph. l. 15. p. 504.
- Ft137 -- Justin e Trogo, l. 18. c. 7. Vid. l. 22. c. 7.
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- Ft140** -- Urania, sive, l. 8. c. 85.
- Ft141** -- Xenophon Cyropaedia, l. 8. c. 23.
- Ft142** -- Plutarch. in Artaxerxe.
- Ft143** -- Herodot. Polymnia, sive, l. 7. c. 15, 16.
- Ft144** -- Clio, sive, l. 1. c. 192.
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- Ft146** -- Julian. Opera, par. 1. Orat. 2. p. 94.
- Ft147** -- Misn. Sanhedrin, c. 2. sect. 5.
- Ft148** -- Brisson. apud Castell. Lexic. col. 4008.
- Ft149** -- Alvarez Hist. Ethiop. c. 105. apud ib. col. 3869.
- Ft150** -- Paschal. de Coronis, l. 8. c. 5. p. 536.
- Ft151** -- De Corona Militis, c. 13.
- Ft152** -- Herodot. Thalia, sive, l. 3. c. 88.
- Ft153** -- Plutarch in Demosthene.
- Ft154** -- See more instances in Lively's Chronology of the Persian monarchy, p. 18, 19.
- Ft155** -- **twtçl** "ut biberent", V. L. Tigurine version; "ad bibendum", Pagninus, Montanus, Drusius, Vatablus.
- Ft156** -- Hist. Sacr. l. 2.
- Ft157** -- Alex. ab. Alex. Genial. Dier. l. 3. c. 20.
- Ft158** -- **rxh** "adversitas", Drusius, De Dieu; "angustia", Cocc. Lexic. in rad. **hwç**.
- Ft159** -- **wbl wal m rça** "qui replevit cor suum", Drusius; "implevit", De Dieu.
- Ft160** -- "Genibusque suas", etc. Claudian. de Raptu Proserpin l. 1. ver. 50. & Barthius in ib. Vid. Homer. Iliad. 21. l. 75. Plin. l. 1. Ep. 18.

- Ft161** -- “Caput obnubito”, etc. Ciceron. Orat. 18. “pro Rabirio”, Liv. Hist. 1. 1. p. 15. Curt. Hist. 1. 6. c. 11. Vid. Solerium de Pileo, sect. 2. p. 20. & Lipsii not. in lib. 1. c. 1. de Cruce, p. 203, 204.
- Ft162** -- Antiqu. 1. 11. c. 6. sect. 11.
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- Ft165** -- Bibliothec. 1. 19. p. 683.
- Ft166** -- Castell. Dictionar. Persic. col. 29. Hottinger. Smegma Oriental 1. 1. c. 5. p. 75.
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- Ft170** -- Cyropaedia, 1. 8. c. 23.
- Ft171** -- Hist. 1. 3. c. 3. & 1. 6. c. 6. Vid. Solerium de Pileo, sect. 9.
- Ft172** -- Herodot. Thalia, sive, 1. 3. c. 125.
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- Ft174** -- Lebush, c. 697. Schulchan Aruch, par. 1. c. 697.
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- Ft176** -- T. Bab. Megillah, fol. 7. 2. Lebush, par. 1. c. 695. sect. 2. Schulchan Aruch, par. 1. c. 695. sect. 2.
- Ft177** -- Lebush & Schulchan, ib. sect. 4.
- Ft178** -- Ib. c. 694. sect. 1. 2.
- Ft179** -- Ib. sect. 2. 3.
- Ft180** -- T. Hieros. Megillah. fol. 70. 4.
- Ft181** -- Lebush & Schulchan, ib. (par. 1.) c. 689. sect. 1.
- Ft182** -- Vid. Buxtorf. Synagog. Jud. c. 29. p. 563.

Ft183 -- Lebush, par. 1. c. 6, 7. sect. 1.

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Ft186 -- Lebush & Schulchan, ut supra, (par. 1.) c. 686. sect. 1.

Ft187 -- P. 70. Ed. Hottinger.

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