

The Story of Purim

From the Book of Esther

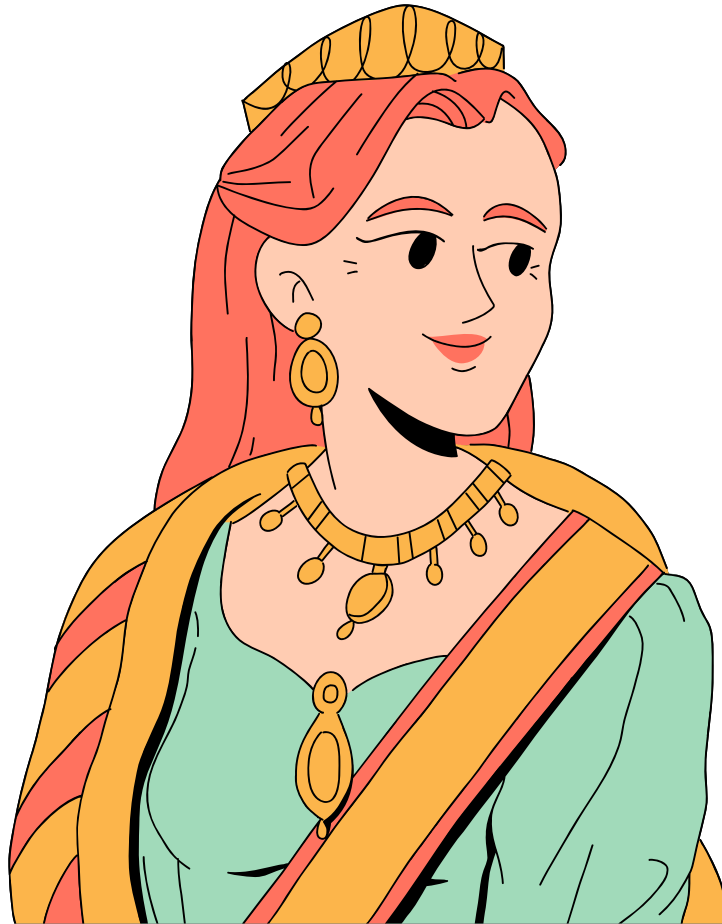
Around 2,500 years ago, there was a powerful king in the land of Persia. His name was Ahashverosh. He ruled a kingdom which stretched from Ethiopia all the way to India, with 127 provinces. His throne was in the city of Shushan.



One day he decided to make a feast and invited everyone in Shushan. This feast lasted 7 days. On the last day of the feast, he commanded that his wife Queen Vashti, come and show herself before all of the people. Vashti refused. The king was very angry and asked his wise men what should be done. They

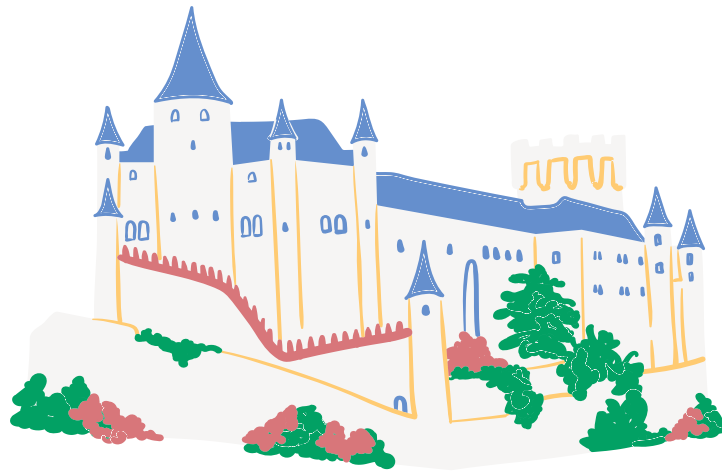
agreed that Vashti should lose her position and that there should be a new queen appointed.

After these things, when the king's anger went away, it was decided that the fairest maidens (unmarried women) should come before the king and he should select a new queen.



Now, in the palace there was a man of influence who had been taken captive from Jerusalem and now served the king. His name was Mordechai. He was raising his niece, Hadassah (also called Esther). When the call for all the maidens to come to the palace was made, Esther also came and was also gathered into the palace. Esther found favor with the person who took charge

of all the young women and she was given. When Esther's turn came to be taken to the king, he chose her to be the new queen.



During all of this time, Mordechai checked in on her every day. Mordechai was a godly man and had advised Esther not to tell that she was Jewish at that time. Mordechai sat daily at the gate of the king and he heard of a plot to kill the king. He informed Esther of the evil plot and Esther informed the king. The men were killed and Mordechai had saved the king!

Now, a man named Haman was given authority over all the princes who were with him. He noticed that Mordechai did not bow to the king nor did he show him reverence. Mordechai only bowed to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This made Haman very angry. He found out that Mordechai would not bow to him or the king because he was a Jew and only bowed to God. Haman was so angry that he made a plot to kill Mordechai and all the Jewish people in the entire kingdom!

Haman went before the king and told him that Mordechai and the Jewish people did not have the same laws as the king and that they did not obey the king. He talked the king into signing a decree that all of the Jewish people were to be killed and the people who would do the killing would be paid for it. Haman then went about making a very large gallows on which to hang Mordechai.

Mordechai told Esther all that had taken place. She told him to have all of the people fast and pray for her. No one was allowed to come before the king unless he called for them, but Esther was going to ask to see him without that calling.

On the third day, Esther put on her most beautiful and royal clothes and stood in the inner court. The king saw her and held out his royal sceptre, which was an invitation for her to come to him. Esther told him that she wanted to hold a banquet for him and for Haman and at the banquet she would reveal a request. The king agreed. That night, the king could not sleep and he asked that book of Chronicles be read to him. He heard read how Mordechai had saved his life from the evil plot and asked how Mordechai was rewarded. When he heard that nothing had been done for him, Haman had come in to the chambers and the king asked him what should be done for someone who deserved a great honor. Haman, thinking that the king was talking about him,

said that the person should have a royal robe put on him and a royal crown.



Imagine Haman's great surprise and sorrow to find out that the man being honoured was Mordechai!! He went home in great mourning. When hearing of the circumstances, Haman's wife told him that he would not prevail against this Jewish man.

So the time for the banquet arrives! The king asks Esther what was her request. Esther explains to the king that someone wants to kill her people. It is then revealed the fullness of Haman's evil plot.



The king was very angry! The decree is then cancelled by the king and Haman and his sons were hung on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordechai. Mordechai was given the king's signet ring and given a position of great authority.

We find at the end of the book of Esther that the Jewish people fasted on the 13th day of Adar. Today this is still observed and is called Ta'anit Esther. The Jewish people then celebrated the 14th day of Adar as a day of feasting and gladness. They also sent food to one another.

Mordechai sent letters unto all the Jews that were in the provinces ruled by King Ahashverosh and established among

them that they should keep the 14th day of Adar. The Bible also tells us that in Shushan, a walled city, Purim was celebrated on the 15th day of Adar. So today, Shushan Purim is celebrated in cities which were walled during the days of Joshua.

