

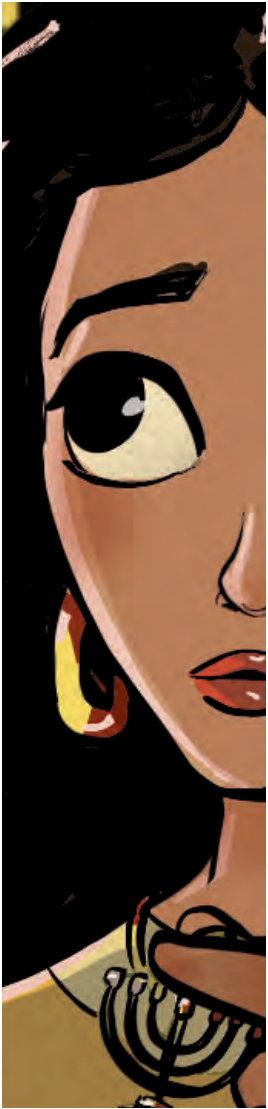
וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹמִי אַחֲשֵׁרוֹשׁ הוּא אַחֲשֵׁרוֹשׁ הַמֶּלֶךְ מֵהַדוֹ וְעַד כּוֹשׁ שֶׁבַע וְעֶשְׂרִים וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה: בַּיּוֹמִים הָהֵם כְּשִׁבְתָּהּ הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרוֹשׁ עַל כִּסֵּא מַלְכוּתוֹ אֲשֶׁר בְּשׁוֹשַׁן הַבִּירָה: בְּשָׁנָת שְׁלוֹשׁ לְמָלְכוֹ עָשָׂה מִשְׁתֵּה לְכָל־שָׂרָיו וְעַבְדָּיו חֵיל וּפָרִס וּמְדֵי הַפָּרָתָמִים וְשָׂרֵי הַמְּדִינוֹת לִפְנָיו: בְּהָרְאָתוֹ אֶת־עֶשֶׂר כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ וְאֶת־יָקָר תְּפָאֶרֶת גְּדוּלָּתוֹ יָמִים רַבִּים שְׂמוֹנִים וּמֵאָת יוֹם: וּבְמָלֹאֶת וְהַיּוֹמִים הָאֵלֶּה עָשָׂה הַמֶּלֶךְ לְכָל־הָעָם הַנִּמְצָאִים בְּשׁוֹשַׁן הַבִּירָה לְמַגְדוֹל וְעַד־קֶטֶן מִשְׁתֵּה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים בַּחֲצֵר גֶּנֶת בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ: חוּר וּפָרִס וְתַכְלֵת אַחוּז בַּחֲבִל־בוּץ וְאַרְגָּמָן עַל־גְּלִילִי כֶסֶף וְעַמּוּדֵי שֵׁשׁ מְטוֹת וְזָהָב וְכֶסֶף עַל רִצְפַת בַּהֲטוֹשֵׁשׁ וְדָר וְסִחֹרֶת: וְהַשְׁקוֹת בְּכָל־יָזֶה וּכְלִים מְכֻלִּים שׁוֹנִים וַיִּין מַלְכוּת רַב כִּיד הַמֶּלֶךְ: וְהַשְׁתַּחֲוֶה כְּדָת אֵין אֲנִס כִּי־כֵן וְיִסַּד הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל כָּל־רַב בֵּיתוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּרָצוֹן אִישׁ־וְאִישׁ: גַּם וְשִׁתִּי הַמַּלְכָּה עָשְׂתָה מִשְׁתֵּה נָשִׁים בֵּית הַמַּלְכוּת אֲשֶׁר לְמֶלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרוֹשׁ: בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי כְּטוֹב לִב־הַמֶּלֶךְ בִּיּוֹן אֲמָר לְמַהוּמָן בִּזְתָא חֲרֻבוּנָא בְּגִתָא וְאַבְגָּתָא וְתָר וְכֻרְפָּס שִׁבְעַת הַסְּרִיסִים הַמְּשֻׁרָתִים אֶת־לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרוֹשׁ: לְהִבְיֵא אֶת־וְשִׁתִּי הַמַּלְכָּה לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּכַתֵּר מַלְכוּת לְהִרְאוֹת הָעַמִּים וְהַשָּׂרִים אֶת־יָפִיָּה כִּי־טוֹבַת מְרָאָה הִיא: וְתַמְאֵן הַמַּלְכָּה וְשִׁתִּי לָבוֹא בְּדָבָר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר כִּיד הַסְּרִיסִים וּקִיצָף הַמֶּלֶךְ מֵאֹד וַחֲמָתוֹ בָּעֵרָה בוֹ: וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לַחֲכָמִים יָדְעִי הָעֵתִים כִּי־כֵן דָּבָר הַמֶּלֶךְ לִפְנֵי כָל־

It happened in the days of Ahashverosh – Ahashverosh who ruled 127 provinces from Hodu to Kush. At that time, when King Ahashverosh sat upon his royal throne in the imperial city of Shushan in the third year of his rule, he made a feast for his ministers and courtiers, the elite of Persia and Media, all his noblemen and the ministers of his provinces. There, for many days – 180 days in all – he displayed all the wealth of his noble reign and the dazzling glory of his greatness. When that time had passed, the king held a feast for all the people of the imperial city of Shushan, from the greatest to the lowliest, in the courtyard of the king’s palace garden. There, swaths of fine fabric – of precious white cotton and sky-blue wool – were caught up with cords of the finest linen and purple and draped over silver bars and columns of marble; and couches of gold and silver were arranged on a terrace paved with alabaster and marble, with mother of pearl and black onyx. And the guests were served drinks in vessels of gold, vessels unlike any other – royal wine, abundant as the king’s largesse. And the drinking followed a rule of no duress, for the king had thus instructed all the overseers of his home: honor the wishes of each and every man. Meanwhile Vashti the queen made a feast of her own, a women’s feast in King Ahashverosh’s royal palace. And on the seventh day, when the king had grown merry with wine, he instructed Mehuman, Bizta, Harvona, Bigta and Avagta, Zetar and Karkas – the seven eunuchs who attended King Ahashverosh – to bring Vashti the queen before the king in her royal crown, to show the peoples and the ministers her charms, for she was beautiful indeed. But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king’s word, conveyed through the eunuchs. So fury engulfed the king, and his rage blazed inside him. Now the king addressed the wise men, those well versed in procedure – for it was the king’s



יָדְעִי דָת וְדִין: וְהַקָּרָב אֵלָיו כְּרָשָׁנָא שְׁתַּר אֲדַמְתָא תְּרִשִׁישׁ מִרֶם מִרְסָנָא מְמוּכָן שִׁבְעַת שָׂרֵי וּפָרִס וּמְדֵי רְאֵל פְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ הַיִּשְׁבִּים רֵאשֻׁנָה בְּמַלְכוּת: כְּדָת מַה־לַּעֲשׂוֹת בְּמַלְכָּה וְשִׁתִּי עַל וְאֲשֶׁר לֹא־עָשְׂתָה אֶת־מֵאֲמַר הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרוֹשׁ כִּיד הַסְּרִיסִים: וַיֹּאמֶר *מוֹמְכָן לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַשָּׂרִים לֹא עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ לְבַדּוֹ עֹוֹתָה וְשִׁתִּי הַמַּלְכָּה כִּי עַל־כָּל־הַשָּׂרִים וְעַל־כָּל־הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל־מְדִינוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרוֹשׁ: כִּי־יֵצֵא דְבַר־הַמַּלְכָּה עַל־כָּל־הַנָּשִׁים לְהַבְזוֹת בַּעֲלֵיהֶן בָּעֵינֵיהֶן בְּאֶמְרָם הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרוֹשׁ אֲמָר לְהִבְיֵא אֶת־וְשִׁתִּי הַמַּלְכָּה לִפְנָיו וְלֹא־בָאָה: וְהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה תֵּאֲמַרְנָה וְשָׂרוֹת פָּרִס־וּמְדֵי אֲשֶׁר שָׁמְעוּ אֶת־דְּבַר הַמַּלְכָּה לְכָל־שָׂרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וּכְדִי בְּיוֹן וְקִצָּף: אִם־עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב יֵצֵא דְבַר־מַלְכוּת מִלִּפְנָיו וְיַכְתֵּב בְּדָתִי פָּרִס־וּמְדֵי וְלֹא יַעֲבוֹר אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תָבוֹא וְשִׁתִּי לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרוֹשׁ וּמַלְכוּתָהּ יִתֵּן הַמֶּלֶךְ לְרַעֲיוֹתָהּ הַטּוֹבָה מִמֶּנָּה: וְנִשְׁמַע פְּתָגָם הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה בְּכָל־מַלְכוּתוֹ כִּי רַבָּה הִיא וְכָל־הַנָּשִׁים יִתְּנוּ יָקָר לְבַעֲלֵיהֶן לְמַגְדוֹל וְעַד־קֶטֶן: וַיִּטַּב הַדָּבָר בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַשָּׂרִים וַיַּעַשׂ הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּדָבָר מְמוּכָן: וַיִּשְׁלַח סָפָרִים אֶל־כָּל־מְדִינוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל־מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה כְּכַתְּבָהּ וְאֶל־עַם וְעַם כָּל־שׁוֹנוֹ לְהִזְיֹת כָּל־אִישׁ שָׂרָר בְּבֵיתוֹ וּמִדְּבַר כָּל־שׁוֹן עַמּוֹ: אַחֵר הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה כְּשֵׁךְ חֲמַת הַמֶּלֶךְ

practice to consult with those who knew the law and the statutes; and those closest to him were Karshena, Shetar, Admata, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memukhan, the seven ministers of Persia and Media who came freely into the king’s presence and occupied the highest positions in the realm. What, he asked, would the law have them do with Queen Vashti for refusing to obey the word of King Ahashverosh as conveyed to her by the eunuchs? And Memukhan replied before the king and the ministers: “It is not only the king that Vashti the queen has wronged, but all the ministers and all the peoples in all the provinces of King Ahashverosh. For this tale of the queen will go out to all the women, who will cast their husbands into their contempt when they say, ‘King Ahashverosh commanded Vashti the queen to be brought before him, but she did not come!’ Yes, this very day, all the ministers’ wives of Persia and Media, who have heard what the queen did, will tell all the king’s ministers, and there will be no end to the contempt and the fury. If, then, it so please the king, let a royal declaration be sent out from him and be written among the laws of Persia and Media, never to be contravened – that Vashti shall come no more before King Ahashverosh and that the king shall give her royal position to a woman who is better than she. And the royal decree that the king will issue shall be heard in all his empire, vast as it is: that all women must honor their husbands, from the greatest of them to the least.” The proposal pleased the king and the ministers, and the king accepted Memukhan’s word. He sent scrolls to all the king’s provinces – province by province, each in its script, and people by people, each in its language – ruling that every man must be master in his home, speaking the language of his own people. Some time later, when King Ahashverosh’s rage had subsided,



אַחֲשֵׁרוֹשׁ זָכַר אֶת־וְשִׁתִּי וְאֶת אֲשֶׁר־עָשְׂתָה וְאֶת אֲשֶׁר נִגְזַר עָלֶיהָ: וַיֹּאמְרוּ נַעֲרֵי־הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁדָּתוֹ יִבְקָשׁוּ לְמֶלֶךְ נַעֲרוֹת בְּתוּלוֹת טוֹבוֹת מְרָאָה: וַיִּפְקֹד הַמֶּלֶךְ פְּקִידִים בְּכָל־מְדִינוֹת מַלְכוּתוֹ וַיִּקְבְּצוּ אֶת־כָּל־נַעֲרָה־כְּתוּלָה טוֹבַת מְרָאָה אֶל־שׁוֹשַׁן הַבִּירָה אֶל־בֵּית הַנָּשִׁים אֶל־יָד הָאָסְרִים הַמֶּלֶךְ שֹׁמֵר הַנָּשִׁים וְנִתְּנוֹ תַמְרָקִיָּהּ: וְהַנַּעֲרָה אֲשֶׁר תִּיטַב בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ תִּמְלֹךְ תַּחַת וְשִׁתִּי וַיִּטַּב הַדָּבָר בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיַּעַשׂ כֵּן: אִישׁ יְהוּדִי הָיָה בְּשׁוֹשַׁן הַבִּירָה וְשִׁמוֹ מְרֹדֳכִי בֶן יֹאִיר בֶּן־שֹׁמַעִי בֶן־קִישׁ אִישׁ יְמִינִי: אֲשֶׁר הָגִלָּה מִירוּשָׁלַם עִם־הַגִּלָּה אֲשֶׁר הַגִּלְתָּה עִם יְכָנְיָה מֶלֶךְ־יְהוּדָה אֲשֶׁר הָגִלָּה נְבוּכַדְנֶצַּר מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל: וְהָיָה אֲמֹן אֶת־הַדָּפָה הִיא אֶסְתֵּר בְּתֻדּוֹ כִּי אֵין לָהּ אָב וְאִם וְהַנַּעֲרָה יִפְתָּת־אֹר וְטוֹבַת מְרָאָה וּבְמוֹת אֲבִיהָ וְאִמָּהּ לְקַחָהּ מְרֹדֳכִי לוֹ לְבַת: וְהָיָה בְּהַשְׁמַע דְּבַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ וְדָתוֹ וּבְהַקְבֵּץ נַעֲרוֹת רַבּוֹת אֶל־שׁוֹשַׁן הַבִּירָה אֶל־יָד הָגִי וְתַלְקָח אֶסְתֵּר אֶל־בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל־יָד הָגִי שֹׁמֵר הַנָּשִׁים: וְתִיטַב הַנַּעֲרָה בְּעֵינָיו וְתִשָּׂא חֶסֶד לִפְנָיו וְיִבְהֵל אֶת־תַּמְרוּקִיָּהּ וְאֶת־מְנוּתָהּ לָתֵת לָהּ וְאֶת־שִׁבְעַת הַנַּעֲרוֹת הָרֵאוּת לָתֵת־לָהּ מִבֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ וּישֻׁנָה וְאֶת־נַעֲרוֹתֶיהָ לְטוֹב בֵּית הַנָּשִׁים: לֹא־הִגִּידָה אֶסְתֵּר אֶת־עַמָּהּ וְאֶת־מוֹלַדְתָּהּ כִּי מְרֹדֳכִי צִוָּה עָלֶיהָ אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תִגִּיד: וּבְכָל־יוֹם וַיּוֹם מְרֹדֳכִי מִתְּהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי חֲצַר בֵּית־הַנָּשִׁים לְדַעַת אֶת־שְׁלוֹם אֶסְתֵּר וּמַה־יַּעֲשֶׂה בָּהּ: וּבְהִגָּיעַ תָּר נַעֲרָה וְנַעֲרָה

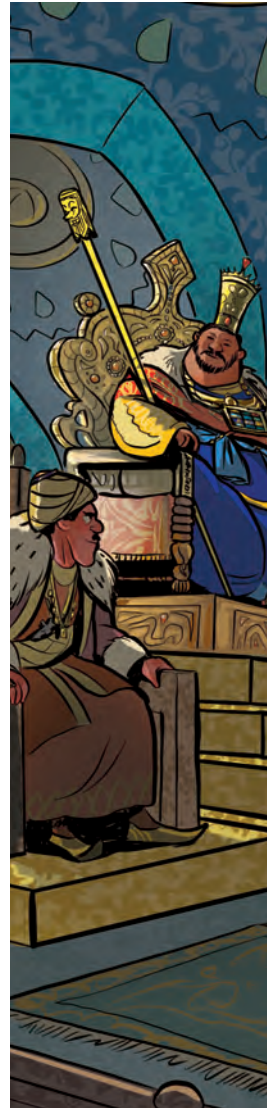
he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what had been decreed against her. The king’s attendants, those who served him closely, said, “Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king; let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his realm to gather every beautiful young virgin to the imperial city of Shushan, to the harem, into the charge of Hegeh, the king’s eunuch, the keeper of the maidens, to be given their ointments there. Which-ever young woman the king likes best – let her become queen in Vashti’s place!” The suggestion pleased the king, and that is what he did. Now there was a Jewish man in the imperial city of Shushan, and his name was Mordekhai son of Yair son of Shimi son of Kish of the tribe of Benjamin. He had been exiled from Jerusalem among the exiles expelled with Yekhonya, king of Yehuda – exiled by Nevukhadnetzar, king of Babylon. And Mordekhai was guardian to Hadasa – Esther – his uncle’s daughter, for she had no father or mother. The girl was lovely and beautiful, and when her father and mother had died, Mordekhai had adopted her as his own child. When the king’s word and his law were heard, and vast numbers of young women were gathered in the imperial city of Shushan into the charge of Hegai, Esther too was taken to the king’s palace into the charge of Hegai, the keeper of the women. The young woman pleased him, and she carried kindness with her, and he hastened to give her all her ointments and meals and the seven young maids from the king’s palace to whom she was entitled; and he moved her and her maids to the best quarters in the royal maidens’ quarters. And Esther made no mention of her people or her birth, for Mordekhai had instructed her strictly not to reveal them. But every single day Mordekhai would walk around before the harem courtyard to find out whether Esther was well and what was being done



לָבוֹא וְאֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרוֹשׁ מִקֵּץ הַיּוֹת לָהּ כְּדָת הַנָּשִׁים שְׁנִים עָשָׂר חֹדֶשׁ כִּי כֵן יִמְלֹאוּ יְמֵי מְרוּקִיָּהֶן שִׁשָּׁה חֳדָשִׁים בְּשֶׁמֶן הַמֹּר וְשִׁשָּׁה חֳדָשִׁים בְּבִשְׂמָיִם וּבְתַמְרוּקֵי הַנָּשִׁים: וּכְזֹה הַנַּעֲרָה בָּאָה אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר תֹּאמַר יִנָּתֵן לָהּ לָבוֹא עִמָּה מִבֵּית הַנָּשִׁים עַד־בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ: בַּעֲרָב וְהָיָה בָּאָה וּבִבְקָר הָיָה שָׁבָה אֶל־בֵּית הַנָּשִׁים שְׁנֵי אֶל־יָד שְׁעִשְׁגֹן סָרִיס הַמֶּלֶךְ שֹׁמֵר הַפִּילִגְשִׁים לֹא־תָבוֹא עוֹד אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי אִם־חֲפֵץ בָּהּ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְנִקְרָאָה כְּשֵׁם: וּבְהִגָּיעַ תַּר־אֶסְתֵּר בְּתַאבִּיתָהּ וְיָד מְרֹדְכִי אֲשֶׁר לְקַח־לוֹ לְבַת לָבוֹא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ לֹא בִקְשָׁה דְּבַר כִּי אִם אֶת־אֲשֶׁר יֹאמַר הָגִי סָרִיס־הַמֶּלֶךְ שֹׁמֵר הַנָּשִׁים וְתַהִי אֶסְתֵּר נְשֵׂאת חֹן בְּעֵינֵי כָל־רֵאִיָּה: וְתַלְקָח אֶסְתֵּר אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרוֹשׁ אֶל־בֵּית מַלְכוּתוֹ: בְּחֹדֶשׁ הָעֲשָׂרִי הוּא־חֹדֶשׁ טַבַּת בְּשָׁנָת־שִׁבְעַת לְמַלְכוּתוֹ: וַיֵּאָהֵב הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־אֶסְתֵּר מִכָּל־הַנָּשִׁים וְתִשָּׂא־חֹן וְחֶסֶד לִפְנָיו מִכָּל־הַבְּתוּלוֹת וַיִּשֶׂם כְּתֹר־מַלְכוּת בְּרֵאשִׁיָּהּ וַיִּמְלִיכָהּ תַּחַת וְשִׁתִּי: וַיַּעַשׂ הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁתֵּה גְדוֹל לְכָל־שָׂרָיו וְעַבְדָּיו אֶת מִשְׁתֵּה אֶסְתֵּר וְהַנְּחָה לַמְּדִינוֹת עָשָׂה וַיִּתֵּן מִשְׂאֵת כִּיד הַמֶּלֶךְ: וּבְהַקְבֵּץ בְּתוּלוֹת שְׁנֵית וּמְרֹדְכִי יוֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ: אֵין אֶסְתֵּר מַגִּידַת מוֹלַדְתָּהּ וְאֶת־עַמָּהּ כֹּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה עָלֶיהָ מְרֹדְכִי וְאֶת־מֵאֲמַר מְרֹדְכִי אֶסְתֵּר עָשָׂה כֹּאֲשֶׁר הִיתָה כְּאִמָּנָה אֹתוֹ: בַּיּוֹמִים הָהֵם וּמְרֹדְכִי יוֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ קִיצָף בְּגָתוֹ וְתָרָשׁ שְׁנֵי־סָרִיסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁמָרֵי

with her. As each young woman would reach her turn to come before King Ahashverosh – after twelve months following her beauty regime, for that was how many the days of their ointments were: six months in myrrh oil and six months in perfumes and the women’s ointments – the young woman would come before the king. All that she asked for would be given her to bring with her from the royal harem to the palace of the king. She would enter in the evening, and in the morning she would return to the royal harem, passing into the charge of Shaashgaz, the king’s eunuch, keeper of the concubines. Then she would come no more before the king unless he desired her and she was called for by name. When the time came for Esther daughter of Avihayil – Mordekhai’s uncle – whom Mordekhai had adopted as his own child, to come before the king, she did not ask for anything except for what Hegai, the king’s eunuch, keeper of the women, told her to bring. Yet Esther carried grace in the eyes of all who saw her. Esther was taken to King Ahashverosh, to his royal palace, in the tenth month, the month of Tevet, in the seventh year of his reign. And the king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she pleased him and carried grace and kindness with her, more so than all the other virgins; and he placed a royal crown upon her head and made her queen in Vashti’s place. And the king made a great feast for all his ministers and courtiers: the feast of Esther. And he granted the provinces both a remission of their dues and gifts as vast as the king’s largesse. As the virgins were gathered in for a second time, Mordekhai was sitting at the King’s Gate. Esther had not told of her birth or of her people, just as Mordekhai had instructed her; for Esther still heeded Mordekhai’s words, just as she had when she had lived under his care. As Mordekhai sat at the King’s Gate at that time, fury engulfed Bigtan

*מְמוּכָן



*באמרם

הִפָּר וַיִּבְקֹשׁ לְשַׁלַּח יָד בַּמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרֶשׁ: וַיּוֹדֶעַ הַדָּבָר לְמֶרְדֵּכַי וַיַּגֵּד לְאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה וּתְאֻמֶּר אֲסֵתֶר לַמֶּלֶךְ בְּשֵׁם מֶרְדֵּכַי: וַיִּבְקֹשׁ הַדָּבָר וַיִּמְצֵא וַיִּתְּלוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם עַל־עֵץ וַיִּכְתֹּב בְּסֵפֶר דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ: אַחֵר ׀ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה גָּדַל הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרֶשׁ אֶת־הַמֶּן בֶּן־הַמֶּדְתָּא הָאֲגָגִי וַיִּנְשְׂאָהּ וַיֵּשֶׁם אֶת־כֶּסֶּאֱו מִעַל כָּל־הַשָּׂרִים אֲשֶׁר אָתּוּ: וְכָל־עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר־בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ כְּרָעִים וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוִים לְהַמֶּן כִּי־כֵן צִוָּה־לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ וּמֶרְדֵּכַי לֹא יִכְרַע וְלֹא יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה: וַיֹּאמְרוּ עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר־בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְמֶרְדֵּכַי מִדּוּעַ אַתָּה עוֹבֵר אֶת מִצְוַת הַמֶּלֶךְ: וַיְהִי *בִּאמְרָם אֵלָיו יוֹם וַיּוֹם וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּגִּידוּ לְהַמֶּן לְרָאוֹת הֵיעָמְדוּ דְּבָרֵי מֶרְדֵּכַי כִּי־הִגִּיד לָהֶם אֲשֶׁר־הוּא יְהוּדִי: וַיֵּרָא הַמֶּן כִּי־אֵין מֶרְדֵּכַי כְּרָע וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לוֹ וַיִּמְלֵא הַמֶּן חֲמָה: וַיָּבֹו בְּעֵינָיו לְשַׁלַּח יָד בְּמֶרְדֵּכַי לְבַדּוֹ כִּי־הִגִּידוּ לוֹ אֶת־עַם מֶרְדֵּכַי וַיִּבְקֹשׁ הַמֶּן לְהַשְׁמִיד אֶת־כָּל־הַיְּהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל־מַלְכוּת אַחֲשֵׁרֶשׁ עִם מֶרְדֵּכַי: בַּחֲדָשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן הוּא־חֲדָשׁ נִסָּן בִּשְׁנַת שְׁתַּיִם עָשָׂרָה לַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרֶשׁ הִפִּיל פֹּור הוּא הַגּוֹדֵל לִפְנֵי הַמֶּן מִיּוֹם ׀ לַיּוֹם וּמַחֲדָשׁ לַחֲדָשׁ שְׁנַיִם־עָשָׂר הוּא־חֲדָשׁ אָדָר: וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּן לַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרֶשׁ יֵשְׁנוּ עַם־אֶחָד מִפְּזָר וּמִפֹּרֵד בֵּין הָעַמִּים בְּכָל מַדִּינֹת מַלְכוּתְךָ וְדִתִּיהֶם שְׁנוֹת מְכַל־עַם וְאֶת־דַּתִּי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵינָם

and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, guards of the threshold, and they plotted to lay their hands on King Ahashverosh. But Mordekhai learned of the plot and conveyed the knowledge to Queen Esther, and Esther told the king in Mordekhai's name. The matter was investigated and found to be true, and the two men were hung from a post; and the story was written down before the king in the scroll of the chronicles. Some time after this, King Ahashverosh promoted Haman son of Hamedata the Agagite, raising him to a seat above those of all his fellow ministers. And all the king's courtiers serving at the King's Gate would kneel and bow before Haman, for so had the king instructed, but Mordekhai would neither kneel nor bow down. So the king's courtiers serving at the King's Gate would ask Mordekhai, "Why do you not obey the king's command?" When, day after day, they said this to him and he paid no attention, they reported the matter to Haman, interested to see whether Mordekhai's word would stand – for he had explained that he was a Jew. And Haman noticed that Mordekhai, indeed, did not kneel or bow down before him, and it filled Haman with rage. The thought of laying his hands only on Mordekhai filled him with contempt, for they had told him who Mordekhai's people were. No, Haman sought to destroy all of the Jews, all of Mordekhai's people, all across the empire of Ahashverosh. And so in the first month, the month of Nisan, of the twelfth year of King Ahashverosh's reign, a *pur* – lots, in other words – was cast before Haman, day for day and month for month, and it fell to the twelfth month, the month of Adar. Haman then spoke to King Ahashverosh: "There is one people, scattered and dispersed among the peoples across all the provinces of your realm, whose laws are different from those of all the other peoples, and who do not



*ותבואנה

עֹשִׂים וּלְמֶלֶךְ אֵין־שׁוּה לְהַנִּיחָם: אִם־עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב יִכְתֹּב לְאַבְדָם וְעִשְׂרַת אֲלָפִים כֶּסֶף־כֶּסֶף אֲשָׁקוֹל עַל־יָדֵי עֹשֵׂי הַמְּלָאכָה לְהָבִיא אֶל־גִּנּוּי הַמֶּלֶךְ: וַיֹּסֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־טִבְעָתוֹ מִעַל יָדוֹ וַיִּתְּנָה לְהַמֶּן בֶּן־הַמֶּדְתָּא הָאֲגָגִי צֶרֶר הַיְּהוּדִים: וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַמֶּן הַכֶּסֶף נָתַן לְךָ וְהָעָם לַעֲשׂוֹת בּוֹ כְּטוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ: וַיִּקְרְאוּ סִפְרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בַּחֲדָשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן בְּשָׁלוֹשָׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם בּוֹ וַיִּכְתֹּב בְּכָל־אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה הַמֶּן אֶל אַחֲשֵׁרֶשׁר־פְּנֵי־הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֶל־הַפַּחֲוֹת אֲשֶׁר ׀ עַל־מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה וְאֶל־שָׂרֵי עַם וְעַם מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה כְּתֻבָּה וְעַם וְעַם כָּל־שׁוֹנוֹ בְּשֵׁם הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרֶשׁ נִכְתָּב וּנְחַתָם בְּטִבְעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ: וּנְשַׁלּוּחַ סִפְרִים בְּיַד הָרָצִים אֶל־כָּל־מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַשְׁמִיד לְהָרַג וּלְאַבֵּד אֶת־כָּל־הַיְּהוּדִים מִנְּעֹר וְעַד־זָקֵן טַף וְנָשִׁים בְּיוֹם אֶחָד בְּשָׁלוֹשָׁה עָשָׂר לַחֲדָשׁ שְׁנַיִם־עָשָׂר הוּא־חֲדָשׁ אָדָר וּשְׁלָלָם לְבּוֹ: פִּתְשָׁנָה הַכְּתָב לְהַנִּיחַ דַּת בְּכָל־מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה גִלּוּי לְכָל־הָעַמִּים לְהַזִּיז עַתִּידִים לַיּוֹם הַזֶּה: הָרָצִים יֵצְאוּ דְחוּפִים בְּדָבָר הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַדַּת נִתְּנָה בְּשׁוֹשָׁן הַבִּירָה וְהַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּן יֵשְׁבוּ לִשְׁתּוֹת וְהָעִיר שׁוֹשָׁן נְבוֹכָה: וּמֶרְדֵּכַי יָדַע אֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשָׂה וַיִּקְרַע מֶרְדֵּכַי אֶת־בְּגָדָיו וַיִּלְבֹּשׁ שָׂק וָאֹפֶר וַיֵּצֵא בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר וַיִּזְעַק זָעָקָה גְּדוֹלָה וּמְרָה: וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי אֵין לְבֹא אֶל־שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּלִבּוֹשׁ שָׂק: וּבְכָל־מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ וְדָתוֹ מִגֵּיעַ אֲבָל גְּדוֹל לַיְּהוּדִים וַיָּצֹם וּבְכֵי וּמִסְפָּד שָׂק וָאֹפֶר יָצַע לְרַבִּים: *וְתִבְּאוּיָנָה נַעֲרוֹת

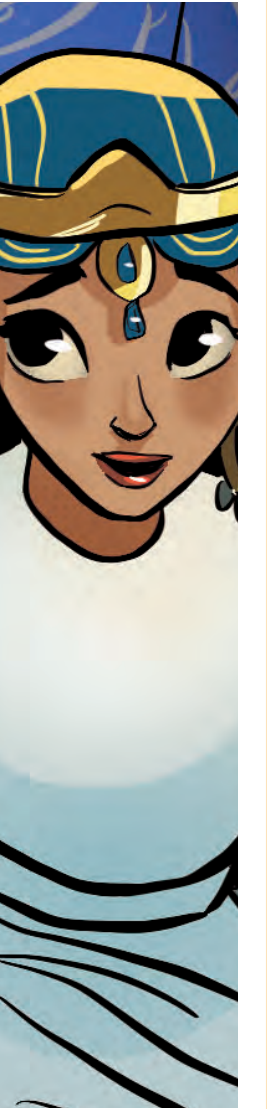
obey the king's own laws, and it really is not worth the king's while to leave them so. If it so please the king, let it be decreed in writing to destroy them, and I shall weigh out ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of the administrators, to be delivered to the king's treasury." The king removed the ring from his finger and gave it to Haman son of Hamedata the Agagite, enemy of the Jews. And the king said to Haman, "The silver is yours, and so is the people: do with them as you will." The king's scribes were called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and all that Haman commanded the king's viceroys, the administrators of every single province and the ministers of every single people, was written to province by province, each in its script, to people by people, each in its language – written in the name of King Ahashverosh and sealed with the king's ring. Scrolls were sent out with the runners to all the provinces of the king ruling that they kill, destroy, and annihilate all the Jews, young and old, children and women alike, all in one day – the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar – and seize the plunder. The text of that letter was to be laid down as law in each and every province, displayed for every people to see, to make them ready for that day. The runners rushed out at the king's word, and the law was laid down in the imperial city of Shushan. The king and Haman sat down to drink – and the town of Shushan stood aghast. Mordekhai understood all that had happened, and he tore his clothes and dressed himself in sackcloth and ashes; and he walked out to the middle of the town, crying out, a loud and bitter cry. He came as far as the entrance to the King's Gate, for no one may enter the King's Gate dressed in sackcloth. And in every single province, wherever the king's word and law extended, deep mourning prevailed among the Jews, fasting and weeping and



*כִּי־הוֹדִים

אֲסֵתֶר וְסִרְיָסָיָה וַיִּגִּידוּ לָהּ וּתְתַחַלְחַל הַמַּלְכָּה מֵאֹד וּתִשְׁלַח בְּגָדִים לְהַלְבִּישׁ אֶת־מֶרְדֵּכַי וּלְהַסִּיר שָׂקוֹ מִעַלָיו וְלֹא קִבַּל: וּתִקְרָא אֲסֵתֶר לְהַתֵּךְ מִסְרִיסי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר הַעֲמִיד לִפְנֵיהָ וּתִצְוָה עַל־מֶרְדֵּכַי לְרַעַת מַה־זֶּה וְעַל־מַה־זֶּה: וַיֵּצֵא הַתֵּךְ אֶל־מֶרְדֵּכַי אֶל־דְּרוֹחַב הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ: וַיַּגִּיד לוֹ מֶרְדֵּכַי אֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר קָרָהּ וְאֵת ׀ פֶּרֶשֶׁת הַכֶּסֶף אֲשֶׁר אָמַר הַמֶּן לְשָׁקוֹל עַל־גִּנּוּי הַמֶּלֶךְ *כִּי־הוֹדִיִּים לְאַבְדָם: וְאֶת־פִּתְשָׁנָה כְּתֻב־הַדָּת אֲשֶׁר־נָתַן בְּשׁוֹשָׁן לְהַשְׁמִידָם נָתַן לוֹ לְהַרְאוֹת אֶת־אֲסֵתֶר וּלְהַגִּיד לָהּ וּלְצִוּוֹת עָלֶיהָ לְבֹא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַתְחַנֵּן־לוֹ וּלְבַקֵּשׁ מִלִּפְנֵי עַל־עַמָּה: וַיָּבֹאוּ הַתֵּךְ וַיַּגִּיד לְאַסְתֵּר אֶת דְּבָרֵי מֶרְדֵּכַי: וּתְאֻמֶּר אֲסֵתֶר לְהַתֵּךְ וּתִצְוָה אֶל־מֶרְדֵּכַי: כָּל־עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְעַם מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ יִדְּעִים אֲשֶׁר כָּל־אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר־יָבֹאוּ אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל־הַחֲצֵר הַפְּנִמִּית אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יִקְרָא אַחַת דָּתוֹ לְהַמִּית לְבָד מֵאֲשֶׁר יוֹשִׁיט־לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־שְׂרָבִיט הַזֶּהב וְחִיָּה וְאֵין לֹא נִקְרָאֲתִי לְבֹא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ זֶה שְׁלוֹשִׁים יוֹם: וַיִּגִּידוּ לְמֶרְדֵּכַי אֶת דְּבָרֵי אֲסֵתֶר: וַיֹּאמֶר מֶרְדֵּכַי לְהַשִּׁיב אֶל־אֲסֵתֶר אֶל־תְּדַמִּי בְּנִפְשֶׁךָ לְהַמְלִיט בֵּית־הַמֶּלֶךְ מִכָּל־הַיְּהוּדִים: כִּי אִם־הַחֲרָשׁ תַּחֲרִישִׁי בָּעַת הַזֹּאת רֹחַ וְהִצָּלָה יַעֲמוּד לַיְּהוּדִים מִמָּקוֹם אֶחָד וְאֵת וּבֵית־אֲבִיךָ תֹאבְדוּ וּנְמִי יוֹדֵעַ אִם־לָעַת כְּזֹאת הִגַּעַת לְמַלְכוּת: וּתְאֻמֶּר אֲסֵתֶר לְהַשִּׁיב אֶל־מֶרְדֵּכַי: לֹךְ כְּנוֹס אֶת־כָּל־הַיְּהוּדִים הַנִּמְצָאִים בְּשׁוֹשָׁן

grief; the multitudes lay down upon sackcloth and ashes. Esther's young maids and her eunuchs came and told her of this, and the queen's whole body shook. She sent clothes for Mordekhai to put on, to lay aside the sackcloth he was wearing, but he would not accept them. So Esther called Hatakh, one of the king's eunuchs assigned to her, and instructed him to go and speak to Mordekhai to find out what all this was and why. Hatakh went out to Mordekhai, to the town square before the King's Gate, and Mordekhai told him all that had happened to him, and all about the silver that Haman had promised to have weighed out to the king's treasury in return for the right to destroy the Jews. And he gave him the text of the decree that had been issued in Shushan to annihilate them, telling him to show it to Esther and to speak to her, instructing her strictly to go to the king and plead with him, to implore him to help her people. Hatakh came and told Esther what Mordekhai had said. And Esther told Hatakh, instructing him to repeat her words to Mordekhai: "All the king's courtiers and all the people of his provinces know that there is only one law for any man or woman who comes before the king, into the inner courtyard, without being called: to be killed. Unless, that is, the king extends the golden scepter toward him so that he may live on. As for me – I have not been called to come before the king these thirty days past." And they told Mordekhai what Esther had said. Mordekhai sent back his reply to Esther: "Do not imagine that you can escape to the king's palace from the fate of all the Jews. For if you keep your silence at this time, relief and salvation will come forth for the Jews from some other place, but you and your father's house will be lost forever. And who can say; could it not be for just such a time as this that you came into royalty?" Esther sent back word to Mordekhai: "Go – gather all the Jews in



וַיְצוּמוּ עָלֶי וְאֶל־הַתְּאֻכָּלוּ וְאֶל־תִּשְׁתּוֹ שְׁלֹשַׁת יָמִים לִיְלֵה וַיּוֹם גַּם־אֲנִי וְנַעֲרָתִי אֵצֶם כֵּן וּבְכֵן אָבֹאוּ אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר לֹא־כִדָּת וְכֹאֲשֶׁר אֲבָדְתִי אֲבָדְתִּי: וַיַּעֲבֹר מֶרְדֵּכַי וַעֲשֵׂה כְכָל אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּתָה עָלָיו אֲסֵתֶר: וַיְהִי ׀ בְּיוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וּתְלַבֵּשׁ אֲסֵתֶר מַלְכוּת וּתַעֲמֹד בַּחֲצֵר בֵּית־הַמֶּלֶךְ הַפְּנִמִּית נֹכַח בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּלֶךְ יוֹשֵׁב עַל־כֶּסֶּא מַלְכוּתוֹ בְּבֵית הַמַּלְכוּת נֹכַח פֶּתַח הַבַּיִת: וַיְהִי כִרְאוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־אֲסֵתֶר הַמַּלְכָּה עֹמֶדֶת בַּחֲצֵר נִשְׂאָה חֵן בְּעֵינָיו וַיִּשְׁט הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאַסְתֵּר אֶת־שְׂרָבִיט הַזֶּהב אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדוֹ וּתִקְרַב אֲסֵתֶר וּתִגַּע בְּרֹאשׁ הַשְּׂרָבִיט: וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ הַמֶּלֶךְ מַה־לְךָ אֲסֵתֶר הַמַּלְכָּה וּמַה־בִּקְשָׁתְךָ עַד־חֲצִי הַמַּלְכוּת וַיִּנָּתֵן לָךְ: וּתְאֻמֶּר אֲסֵתֶר אֶסֶר עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב יָבֹאוּ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּן הַיּוֹם אֶל־הַמִּשְׁתָּה אֲשֶׁר־עֹשִׂיתִי לוֹ: וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ מִהֲרוּ אֶת־הַמֶּן לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־דְּבָר אֲסֵתֶר וַיָּבֹאוּ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּן אֶל־הַמִּשְׁתָּה אֲשֶׁר־עָשְׂתָה אֲסֵתֶר: וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאַסְתֵּר בְּמִשְׁתָּה הַיּוֹם מַה־שְּׂאֵלָתְךָ וַיִּנָּתֵן לָךְ וּמַה־בִּקְשָׁתְךָ עַד־חֲצִי הַמַּלְכוּת וּתַעֲשֵׂ: וּתַעַן אֲסֵתֶר וּתְאֻמֶּר שְׂאֵלָתִי וּבִקְשָׁתִי: אִם־מִצָּאֲתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאִם־עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב לִתֵּת אֶת־שְׂאֵלָתִי וְלַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־בִּקְשָׁתִי יָבֹאוּ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֶּן אֶל־הַמִּשְׁתָּה אֲשֶׁר אֶעֱשֶׂה לָהֶם וּמֵאֵחַר אֶעֱשֶׂה בְּדָבָר הַמֶּלֶךְ: וַיֵּצֵא הַמֶּן בְּיוֹם הַהוּא שִׁמְח וְטוֹב לֵב וּכְרָאוֹת הַמֶּן אֶת־מֶרְדֵּכַי בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ: וְלֹא־קָם וְלֹא־זָע מִמָּנוּ וַיִּמְלֵא הַמֶּן עַל־מֶרְדֵּכַי חֲמָה: וַיִּתְאַפֵּק הַמֶּן וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ וַיִּשְׁלַח וַיָּבֵא אֶת־אֶהֱבִיו

Shushan and fast for me: do not eat and do not drink for three whole days, day or night; I and my maids will fast also. So shall I come before the king in defiance of the law – and if I am lost, I am lost." Mordekhai walked away; and he did all that Esther had instructed him to do. On the third day, Esther dressed herself in royalty and came to stand in the inner courtyard of the king's palace, facing the king's palace, while the king sat upon his royal throne in the great hall, facing the palace entrance. When the king noticed Queen Esther standing in the courtyard, she carried grace in his eyes, so the king extended the golden scepter in his hand toward Esther, and Esther came forward and touched the scepter's end. And the king said to her, "What brings you, Esther, my queen? And what would you ask? Be it even half my kingdom, it shall be yours." Esther said, "If it so please the king, may the king and Haman come today to the feast that I have prepared for him." And the king called out, "Make Haman hurry to carry out Esther's word!" And the king and Haman came to the feast that Esther had prepared. At that drinking feast, the king said to Esther, "What is your desire, then? It shall be yours. What would you ask? Be it even half my kingdom, it shall be done." And Esther answered: "This is my desire and my request," she said. "If I have the king's favor, and if it so please the king to grant what I desire, to honor my request – let the king and Haman come again to the feast that I shall prepare for them. And tomorrow I shall do as the king asks." Haman went out on that day, happy and buoyant of heart. But when he saw Mordekhai at the King's Gate, and when Mordekhai did not stand up and did not tremble in his presence, Haman was filled with rage against him. Yet Haman restrained himself until he reached his home, and then he sent for all his friends and for his wife, Zeresh. And