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The Book of Esther

Ch. 1. The Banquet of King Ahashverosh and the Divorce of Queen Vashti.

Ahashverosh, king of Persia, gave, in the third year of his reign, a banquet to the grandees of his kingdom then assembled in Susa, for the purpose of showing them the greatness and glory of his kingdom; while the queen at the same time made a feast for the women in the royal palace (vv. 1-9). On the seventh day of the feast, the king, "when his heart was merry with wine," sent a message by his chief courtiers to the queen, commanding her to appear before him, to show the people and the princes her beauty, and on her refusal to come, was greatly incensed against her (vv. 10-12). Upon inquiring of his astrologers and princes what ought in justice to be done to the queen on account of this disobedience, they advised him to divorce Vashti by an irrevocable decree, and to give her dignity to another and better; also to publish this decree throughout the whole kingdom (vv. 13-20). This advice pleasing the king, it was acted upon accordingly (vv. 21 and 22).

Esther 1:1-8

Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, (this is Ahasuerus which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces:)

Verse 1-8. The banquet. Vv. 1-3 mark a period. *mish^ateh* (OT:4960) *`aasaah* (OT:6213), which belongs to *way^ahiy* (OT:1961), does not follow till v. 3, and even then the statement concerning the feast is again interrupted by a long parenthesis, and not taken up again and completed till v. 5. On the use of *way^ahiy* (OT:1961) in historical narratives at the beginning of relations having, as in the present instance

and Ruth 1:1, no reference to a preceding narrative, see the remark on Josh 1:1. Even when no express reference to any preceding occurrence takes place, the historian still puts what he has to relate in connection with other historical occurrences by an "and it came to pass." Ahashverosh is, as has already been remarked on Ezra 4 (p. 46), Xerxes, the son of Darius Hystaspis. Not only does the name '*achash^aweerowsh* (OT:325) point to the Old-Persian name Ks'ayars'a (*with* ' (OT:589) *prosthetic*), *but the statements also concerning the extent of the kingdom (Est 1:1; 10:1), the manners and customs of the country and court, the capricious and tyrannical character of Ahashverosh, and the historical allusions are suitable only and completely to Xerxes, so that, after the discussions of Justi in Eichhorn's Repert. xv. pp. 3-38, and Baumgarten, de fide, etc., pp. 122-151, no further doubt on the subject can exist.*

As an historical background to the occurrences to be delineated, the wide extent of the kingdom ruled by the monarch just named is next described: "He is that Ahashverosh who reigned from India to Ethiopia over 127 provinces." *m^adiynaah* (OT:4082)... *sheba`* (OT:7651) is not an accusative dependent on *moleek^a* (OT:4427), he ruled 127 provinces, for *maalak^a* (OT:4427), to reign, is construed with *`al* (OT:5921) or *b^a*, but is annexed in the form of a free apposition to the statement: "from India to Cush;" as also in Est 8:9. *hoduw* (OT:3034) is in the Old-Persian cuneiform inscriptions, Hidhu; in Zend, Hendu; in Sanscrit, Sindhu, i.e., dwellers on the Indus, for Sindhu means in Sanscrit the river Indus; comp. Roediger in Gesenius, *Thes.* Append. p. 83, and Lassen, *Indische Alterthumsk.* i. p. 2. *kuwsh* (OT:3568) is Ethiopia. This was the extent of the Persian empire under Xerxes. Mardonius in Herod. 7:9 names not only the Sakers and Assyrians, but also the Indians and Ethiopians as nations subject to Xerxes. Comp. also Herod. 7:97, 98, and 8:65, 69, where the Ethiopians and Indians are reckoned among the races who paid tribute to the Persian king and fought in the army of Xerxes. The 127 *m^adiynowt* (OT:4082), provinces, are governmental districts, presided over, according to Est 8:9, by satraps, pechahs, and rulers.

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This statement recalls that made in Dan 6:2, that Darius the Mede set over his kingdom 120 satraps. We have already shown in our remarks on Dan 6:2 that this form of administration is not in opposition to the statement of Herod. iii. 89f., that Darius Hystaspis divided the kingdom for the purpose of taxation into twenty *archai'* (NT:746) which were called *satrapeei'ai*. The satrapies into which Darius divided the kingdom generally comprised several provinces. The first satrapy, e.g., included Mysia and Lydia, together with the southern part of Phrygia; the fourth, Syria and Phoenicia, with the island of Cyprus. The Jewish historians, on the other hand, designate a small portion of this fourth satrapy, viz., the region occupied by the Jewish community (Judah and Benjamin, with their chief city Jerusalem), as *m^adiyⁿaa^h* (OT:4082), Ezra 2:1; Neh 1:3; 7:6; 11:3. Consequently the satrapies of Darius mentioned in Herodotus differ from the *medinoth* of Dan 6:2, and Est 1:1; 8:9. The 127 medinoth are a division of the kingdom into geographical regions, according to the races inhabiting the different provinces; the list of satrapies in Herodotus, on the contrary, is a classification of the nations and provinces subject to the empire, determined by the tribute imposed on them.

Verse 2. The words: in those days, take up the chronological statement of v. 1, and add thereto the new particular: when King Ahashverosh sat on the throne of his kingdom in the citadel of Susa. *shebet* (OT:3427) does not involve the notion of quiet and peaceable possession after the termination of wars (Clericus, Rambach), but that of being seated on the throne with royal authority. Thus the Persian kings are always represented upon a raised seat or throne, even on journeys and in battle. According to Herod. vii. 102, Xerxes watched the battle of Thermopylae sitting upon his throne. And Plutarch (*Themistocl.* c. 13) says the same of the battle of Salamis. Further examples are given by Baumg. *l.c.* p. 85f. On the citadel of Susa, see Neh 1:1, and remarks on Dan 8:2.

Verse 3. "In the third year of his reign he made a feast to all his princes and his servants, when the forces of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, were before him." *mish^hteh* (OT:4960) `aasaah (OT:6213), to make, to prepare, i.e., to give, a feast; comp. Gen 21:8. The princes and the servants are, all

who were assembled about him in Susa. These are specified in the words which follow as *p' cheeyl* (OT:2426). We might supply *l^a* before *cheeyl* (OT:2426) from the preceding words, (viz.) the forces, etc.; but this would not suit the *l^apaanaayw* (OT:6440) at the end of the verse. For this word shows that an independent circumstantial clause begins with *cheeyl* (OT:2426), which is added to call attention to the great number of princes and servants assembled at Susa (Bertheau): the forces of Persia...were before him: when they were before him. By *cheeyl* (OT:2426), the host, the forces, Bertheau thinks the body-guard of the king, which, according to Herod. vii. 40, consisted of 2000 selected horsemen, 2000 lancers, and 10,000 infantry, is intended.

There is, however, no adequate reason for limiting *chayil* (OT:2428) to the body-guard. It cannot, indeed, be supposed that the whole military power of Persia and Media was with the king at Susa; but *chayil* (OT:2428) without *kol* (OT:3605) can only signify an *élite* of the army, perhaps the captains and leaders as representing it, just as "the people" is frequently used for "the representatives of the people." The Persians and Medes are always named together as the two kindred races of the ruling nation. See Dan 6:9, who, however, as writing in the reign of Darius the Mede, places the Medes first and the Persians second, while the contrary order is observed here when the supremacy had been transferred to the Persians by Cyrus. On the form *paarac* (OT:6539), see rem. on Ezra 1:1. After the mention of the forces, the *Partemim*, i.e., nobles, magnates (see on Dan 1:3), and the princes of the provinces are named as the chief personages of the civil government.

Verse 4-6. "When he showed the glorious riches of his kingdom and the excellent honour of his greatness many days, one hundred and eighty days." This verse has been understood by most expositors as stating that the king magnificently and splendidly entertained all the grandees mentioned in v. 3 for a full half-year, and gave them a banquet which lasted 180 days. Clericus supposes proceedings to have been so arranged, that the *proceres omnium provinciarum* were not entertained at one and the same time, but *alii post alios*, because all could not be absent together *per sex menses a suis provinciis*. Bertheau, however, thinks that the historian did not purpose to give an exact and graphic description of the proceeding, but only to excite

astonishment, and that they who are

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astonished will not inquire as to the manner in which all took place. The text, however, does not say, that the feast lasted 180 days, and hence offers no occasion for such a view, which is founded on a mistaken comprehension of v. 4, which combines *wgw' b^ahar^aotow* (OT:7200) with *mish^ateh* (OT:4960) *`aasaah* (OT:6213) of v. 3, while the whole of v. 4 is but a further amplification of the circumstantial clause: when the forces, etc., were before him; the description of the banquet not following till v. 5, where, however, it is joined to the concluding words of v. 4: "when these (180) days were full, the king made a feast to all the people that were found in the citadel of Susa, from great to small, seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's house."

This verse is thus explained by Bertheau: after the soldiers, nobles, and princes of the district had been entertained for six months, all the male inhabitants of Susa were also entertained in a precinct of the palace garden, the women being feasted by Vashti the queen in the palace (v. 9), It is, however, obvious, even from v. 11, which says that on the seventh day of this banquet the king commanded the queen to appear "to show the people and the princes her beauty," that such a view of the occurrence is inadmissible. For this command presupposes, that the people and princes were assembled at the king's banquet; while, according to the view of Bertheau and older expositors, who insist on two banquets, one lasting 180 days, the other seven, the latter was given to the male inhabitants of Susa only. The princes and people of the whole kingdom did not, however, dwell in Susa. These princes and people, to whom the queen was to show her beauty, are undoubtedly the princes and servants of the king, the forces of Persia and Media, and the nobles and princes of the provinces enumerated in v. 3.

With this agrees also the description of the guests invited to the seven days feast. *b^ashuwshan hanim^ats^aiy^m kaal-haa`aam* does not signify "all the inhabitants of Susa," but all then present, i.e., then assembled in the citadel of Susa. *hanim^ats^aiy^m* (OT:4672) used of persons means, those who for some purpose are found or present in any place, in distinction from its usual inhabitants; comp. 1 Chron 29:17; 2 Chron 34:32; Ezra 8:25; and *haa`aam* (OT:5971) does not here signify people in the sense

of population, but people who are met in a certain place, and is used both here and Neh 12:38 of an assembly of nobles and princes. *qaaTaan* (OT:6996) *w^aad* (OT:5704) *l^mmigaadowl* (OT:1419), moreover, does not mean old and young, but high and low, the greater and lesser servants (*`abaadiym*) of the king, and informs us that of those assembled at Susa, both princes and servants participated without exception in the banquet.

This view of 3-5 is confirmed by the consideration, that if the seven days banquet were a different one from that mentioned in v. 3, there could be no reason for naming the latter, which would then be not only entirely unconnected with the narrative, but for which no object at all would be stated; for *b^hhar^aotow* (OT:7200) cannot be translated, as in the Vulgate, by *ut ostenderet* , because, as Bertheau justly remarks, *b* cannot indicate a purpose. From all these reasons it is obvious, that the feast of which further particulars are given in 5-8 is the same *mish^ateh* (OT:4960) which the king, according to v. 3, gave to his *saariym* (OT:8269) and *`abaadiym* , and that the text, rightly understood, says nothing of two consecutive banquets. The sense of vv. 3-5 is accordingly as follows: King Ahasuerus gave to his nobles and princes, when he had assembled them before him, and showed them the glorious riches of his kingdom and the magnificence of his greatness for 180 days, after these 180 days, to all assembled before him in the fortress of Susa, a banquet which lasted seven days.

The connection of the more particular description of this banquet, by means of the words: when these (the previously named 180) days were over, following upon the accessory clause, v. 4, is anacoluthistic, and the anacoluthon has given rise to the misconception, by which v. 5 is understood to speak of a second banquet differing from the *mish^ateh* (OT:4960) of v. 3. The purpose for which the king assembled the grandees of his kingdom around him in Susa fore a whole half-year is not stated, because this has no connection with the special design of the present book. If, however, we compare the statement of Herod. vii. 8, that Xerxes, after the re-subjection of Egypt, summoned the chief men of his kingdom to Susa to take counsel with them concerning the campaign against Greece, it is obvious, that the assembly for 180 days in Susa, of the princes and nobles mentioned in the book of Esther, took place for the purpose of such consultation.

When, too, we compare the statement of Herod. vii. 20, that Xerxes was four years preparing for this war, we

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When, too, we compare the statement of Herod. vii. 20, that Xerxes was four years preparing for this war, we receive also a corroboration of the particular mentioned in v. 3, that he assembled his princes and nobles in the third year of his reign. In this view "the riches of his kingdom," etc., mentioned in v. 4, must not be understood of the splendour and magnificence displayed in the entertainment of his guests, but referred to the greatness and resources of the realm, which Xerxes descanted on to his assembled magnates for the purpose of showing them the possibility of carrying into execution his contemplated campaign against Greece. The banquet given them after the 180 days of consultation, was held in the court of the garden of the royal palace. *biytaan* (OT:1055) is a later form of *bayit* (OT:1004), which occurs only here and Est 7:7-8. *chaatseer* (OT:2691), court, is the space in the park of the royal castle which was prepared for the banquet.

The fittings and furniture of this place are described in v. 6. "White stuff, variegated and purple hangings, fastened with cords of byssus and purple to silver rings and marble pillars; couches of gold and silver upon a pavement of malachite and marble, mother-of-pearl and tortoise-shell." The description consists of mere allusions to, or exclamations at, the splendour of the preparations. In the first half of the verse the hangings of the room, in the second, the couches for the guests, are noticed. *chuw* (OT:2354) from *chaawar* means a white tissue of either linen or cotton. Bertheau supposes that the somewhat larger form of *ch* is intended to denote, even by the size of letter employed, the commencement of the description. *kar^apac* (OT:3768), occurring in Sanscrit, Persian, Armenian, and Arabic, in Greek *ka'rpasos*, means originally cotton, in Greek, according to later authorities, a kind of fine flax, here undoubtedly a cotton texture of various colours. *t^akeelet* (OT:8504), deep blue, purple.

The hangings of the space set apart were of these materials. Blue and white were, according to Curtius Est 6:6,4, the royal colours of the Persians; comp. M. Duncker, *Gesch. des Alterthums*, ii. pp. 891 and 951 of the third edition, in which is described also the royal table, p. 952. The hangings were fastened (*'aachuwz* (OT:270)) with cords of white byssus and purple to rings and pillars of white marble. *miTowt*

(OT:4296), couches (divans) of gold and silver, i.e., covered with cloth woven of gold and silver thread, were prepared for the guests at the feast. These couches were placed upon a tessellated, mosaic-like floor; the tessellation being composed of stones of various colours. *bahaT* (OT:923), in Arabic a mock stone, in LXX *smaragdi'tees* (NT:4664), a spurious emerald, i.e., a green-coloured stone resembling the emerald, probably malachite or serpentine. *sheesh* (OT:8337) is white marble; *dar* (OT:1858), Arabic *darrun*, *darratun*, pearl, LXX *pi'nninos li'thos*, a pearl-like stone, perhaps mother-of-pearl. *cocheret*, a kind of dark-coloured stone (from *caachar* = *shaachar* (OT:7837), to be dark), black, black marble with shield-like spots (all three words occur only here).

Verse 7-8. The entertainment: "And drinks poured into vessels of gold! and vessels differing from vessels, and royal wine in abundance, according to the hand of a king. (V. 8) And the drinking was according to law; none did compel: for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house to do according to every one's pleasure." *hash^aqowt* (OT:8248), inf. Hiph., to give to drink, to hand drinks, is used substantively. The golden drinking vessels were of various kinds, and each differing in form from another. Great variety in drinking vessels pertained to the luxury of Persians; comp. Xenoph. *Cyrop.* viii. 8, 18. *mal^akuwt* (OT:4438) *yeeyn* (OT:3196) is wine from the royal cellar, therefore costly wine. Many interpreters understand it of the Chalybonian wine, which the Persian kings used to drink. See rem. on Ezek 27:18. *hamelek^a* (OT:4428) *k^ayad* (OT:3027), according to the hand of the king, i.e., according to royal bounty; comp. 1 Kings 10:13.

The words: "the drinking was according to law, none did compel," are generally understood to say, that the king abolished for this banquet, the prevailing custom of pledging his guests. According to Grecian information (see Baumgarten, p. 12f.), an exceedingly large quantity of wine was drunk at Persian banquets. This sense of the words is not, however, quite certain. The argument of Baumgarten, *Si hic mos vulgaris fuisset in epulis regiis, sine dubio haec omnia non commemorata essent*, no more holds good than his further remark: *formulam illam 'oneec* (OT:597) *'eeyn* (OT:369) *kadaat* (OT:1881) *non puto adhibitam fuisse, nisi jam altera contraria 'oneec* (OT:597) *kadaat* (OT:1881) *solemnis esset facta*. The historian can have

noticed this only because it was different from the Jewish custom. Bertheau also justly remarks: "We are not told in the present passage, that the

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king, on this occasion, exceptionally permitted moderation, especially to such of his guests as were, according to their ancestral customs, addicted to moderation, and who would else have been compelled to drink immoderately. For the words with which this verse concludes, which they imply also a permission to each to drink as little as he chose, are specially intended to allow every one to take much. *`al* (OT:5921) *yicad* (OT:3245), to appoint concerning, i.e., to enjoin, comp. 1 Chron 9:22. *bayit* (OT:1004) *rab* (OT:7227), those over the house, i.e., the court officials.

Esther 1:9-11

Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women in the royal house which belonged to king Ahasuerus.

Vashti the queen also gave a banquet to the women in the royal house (palace) which belonged to King Ahashverosh, probably in the royal apartments of the palace, which were placed at her disposal for this great feast to be given to the women. The name Vashti may be compared with the Old-Persian *vahista*, i.e., *optimus*. In Persian *šty*, means a beautiful woman. This statement serves as an introduction to the scene which follows.

Vv. 10 and 11. On the seventh, i.e., the last day of the banquet, when the king's heart was merry with wine, he commanded his seven chamberlains to bring Vashti the queen before him, with the royal crown, to show here beauty to the people and princes. *wgw' leeb* (OT:3820) *k^aTowb* (OT:2896), when the heart of the king was merry through wine, i.e., when the wine had made him merry, comp. 2 Sam 13:28; Judg 16:25. It was the office of the seven eunuchs who served before the king (*'et-p^aneey m^ashaareet* like 1 Sam 2:18) to be the means of communication between him and the women, and to deliver to them messages on the part of the monarch. Their number, seven, was connected with that of the Amshaspands; see rem. on v. 14. The attempts made to explain their several names are without adequate foundation; nor would much be gained thereby, the names being of no significance with respect to the matter in question. In the LXX the names vary to some extent. The queen was to appear with the crown on her head (*keter* (OT:3804), *ki'daris* or *ki'taris*, a high

turban terminating in a point), and, as is self-evident, otherwise royally apparelled. The queen was accustomed on ordinary occasions to take her meals at the king's table; comp. Herod. ix. 110. There is, however, an absence of historical proof, that she was present at great banquets. The notice quoted from Lucian in Brissonius, *de regio Pers. princ.* i. c. 103, is not sufficient for the purpose.

Esther 1:12

But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by his chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him.

The queen refused to appear at the king's command as delivered by the eunuchs, because she did not choose to stake her dignity as a queen and a wife before his inebriated guests. The audacity of Persians in such a condition is evident from the history related Herod. v. 18.

Esther 1:13-15

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Esther 1:13-15

Then the king said to the wise men, which knew the times, (for so was the king's manner toward all that knew law and judgment:

The king, greatly incensed at this disobedience to his behest, inquired of his wise men what was to be done to Queen Vashti according to law. These wise men are v. 13 designated as those "who knew the times," i.e., astrologers and magi, who give counsel according to celestial phenomena; comp. the wise men of Babylon, Dan 2:27; 5:15; Isa 44:25; 47:13; Jer 50:35. Of these he inquires, "for thus was the business of the king conducted before all that knew law and judgment." *daabaar* (OT:1697) here does not signify word or speech, but matter, business; and the meaning of this parenthetical sentence is, that in every matter, the king, before deciding, applied to those who were skilled in law and judgment to hear their opinions concerning it. With this is joined a second explanatory parenthetical sentence, v. 14: "And those next him were Carshena, etc., the seven princes of the Persians and Medes, who behold the king's countenance, who hold the first seat in his kingdom." *'eelaayw* (OT:413) *haqaarob* (OT:7138) is indefinite, and may be understood as expressing the plural.

It is perhaps questionable how this clause should be combined with what precedes, whether with *waadiyn daat kaal-yod^a eey*, before all that knew law and judgment and those next him, or with *lachakaamiym* (OT:2450), v. 13: he spoke to the wise men...and those next him. In any case the sense is, that the seven princes of the Persians and Medes were also numbered either among the wise men who knew the times, or those who were skilled in the law. These seven princes are the seven king's counsellors of Ezra 7:14, and by their number of seven form a counterpart to the seven Amshaspands. They who see the face of the king, i.e., are allowed direct intercourse with him. Herod. iii. 84 relates of the seven princes who conspired the overthrow of the pretended Smerdis, that they resolved, that it should be permitted them to present themselves unannounced before the future king. Hence many expositors identify these seven princes with the authorities called the seven

counsellors, but without sufficient grounds.

The number seven frequently recurs-comp. the seven eunuchs, v. 5, the seven maidens who waited on Esther, 2:9 - and refers in the present case to the seven Amshaspands, in others to the days of the week, or the seven planets. *ri'shonaah* (OT:7223) *haysh^abiym* (OT:3427), who sit first, i.e., in the highest place, i.e., constitute the highest authority in the realm. What the king said (v. 13) does not follow till v. 15: "According to law, what is to be done to Queen Vashti, because she has not done the word of the king," i.e., not obeyed his command by the eunuchs? *k^adaat* (OT:1881), according to law, legally, is placed first because it is intended emphatically to assert that the proceeding is to be in conformity with the law. *`aasaah* (OT:6213) with *b^a*, to inflict something on any one.

Esther 1:16-18

And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, 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.

The counsel of the wise men. V. 16. Memucan, who was the last mentioned in v. 14, comes forward as spokesman for the rest, and declares before the king and the princes, i.e., in a solemn assembly, and evidently as the result of a previous joint consultation: Vashti the queen has not done wrong to the king alone, but also to all the princes and all the people, because the example of the queen will lead all the Median and Persian wives to despise

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their husbands. Therefore an irrevocable edict is to be published decreeing the divorce of Queen Vashti, and this law published throughout the whole realm, that all wives may show honour to their husbands. Vashti has not transgressed against the king alone (v. 16), but against all the princes and people in all the provinces of King Ahashverosh (v. 16). In what respect, then, is the latter assertion true? We are told vv. 17 and 18. "For the deed of the queen will come abroad to (*'al* (OT:5921) for *'el* (OT:413)) all women, to bring their husbands into contempt in their eyes (the *infin.* *l^ahab^azowt* (OT:959) stating the result), while they will say," etc. (the suffix of *b^aaam^araam* (OT:559) relates to the women, who will appeal to the disobedience of the queen).

V. 18. "And this day (i.e., already) the princesses of the Persians and Medians, who hear of the act of the queen (*daabaar* (OT:1697), not the word, but the thing, i.e., her rejection of her husband's command), will tell it to all the princes of the king, and (there will be) enough contempt and provocation. *qetsep* (OT:7110) is an outburst of anger; here, therefore, a provocation to wrath. Bertheau makes the words *wq' bz' uwk^adeey* the object of *to'mar^anaah* (OT:559), which, after the long parenthesis, is united to the copula by *w* , and for, "to speak contempt and wrath," reads: to speak contemptuously in wrath. But this change cannot be substantiated. The expression, to speak wrath, is indeed unexampled, but that is no reason for making *qetsep* (OT:7110) stand for *b^aqetsep* , the very adoption of such an ellipsis showing, that this explanation is inadmissible. The words must be taken alone, as an independent clause, which may be readily completed by *yih^ayeh* (OT:1961): and contempt and wrath will be according to abundance. *k^aday* (OT:1767) is a litotes for: more than enough. The object of *to'mar^anaah* (OT:559) must be supplied from the context: it-that is, what the queen said to her husband. In the former verse Memucan was speaking of all women; here (v. 18) he speaks only of the princesses of the Persians and Medes, because these are staying in the neighbourhood of the court, and will immediately hear of the matter, and "after the manner of the court ladies and associates of a queen will quickly follow, and appeal to her example" (Berth.).

Esther 1:19-20

If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, That Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she.

After this argument on the queen's conduct, follows the proposal: "If it please the king (*`al* (OT:5921) *Towb* (OT:2896) like Neh 2:5), let there go from him a word of the kingdom (i.e., a royal edict), and let it be written (entered) in the laws of the Persians and the Medes, and not pass away, that Vashti come no more before King Ahashverosh; and let the king give her queenship (her royal rank) to another who is better than she." An edict issued by the king, entered among the laws of the Persians and Medes, and sealed with the royal signet (Est 8:8), does not pass away, i.e., remains in force, is irrevocable (comp. Dan 6:9). The counsellors press for the issue of such an edict, for the purpose of making it impossible to the king to take Vashti again into favour, lest they should experience her vengeance on the restoration of her influence. *r^auwtaah* (OT:7468), her companion, is any other woman, Vashti being here regarded merely as a woman. *haTowbaah* (OT:2896) includes both beauty and good behaviour (Berth.). By this means, add the counsellors in v. 20, all the ill effects of Vashti's contumacy will be obviated. "And when the king's decree, which he shall make, is heard in his whole kingdom, for it is great, all wives shall give honour to their husbands, from great to small." *pit^agaam* (OT:6599) is according to the *Keri* to be pointed as the constructive state, *pit^agam* (OT:6599). The expression *`aasaah* (OT:6213) *pit^agaam* (OT:6599) is explained by the circumstance, that *ptgm* signifies not only edict, decree, but also thing (see on Dan 3:16): to do a thing. In the present verse also it might be so understood: when the thing is heard which the king will do in his whole kingdom. The parenthetical clause, for it is great, is intended to flatter the king's vanity, and induce an

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inclination to agree to the proposal. "From great to small" signifies high and low, old and young.

Esther 1:21,22

And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan:

The saying pleased the king and the princes, and the king carried it into execution. He sent letters into all his provinces to make known his commands, and to let all husbands know, that they were to bear rule in their own houses. "In every province according to its writing, and to every people according to their speech" (comp. Est 8:9), that his will might be clearly understood by all the subjects of his wide domain, who spoke different languages and used different alphabetical characters. The contents of these letters follow in *wgw' lih^ayowt* (OT:1961), that every man should be master in his own house. These words state only the chief matter and object of the edict; but they presuppose that the fact which gave rise to the decree, viz., the refusal of Vashti, and her consequent deposition, were also mentioned. The last words: "and that he shall speak according to the language of his people," are obscure.

Older expositors understand them to mean, that every man was to speak only his native language in his house, so that in case he had a foreign wife, or several who spoke other languages, they might be obliged to learn his language, and to use that alone. Bertheau, on the other hand, objects that such a sense is but imported into the words, and in no wise harmonizes with the context. Both these assertions are, however, unfounded. In the words, the man shall speak according to the language of his people, i.e., he shall speak his native tongue in his house, it is implied that no other language was to be used in the house, and the application of this law to foreign wives is obvious from the context. The rule of the husband in the house was to be shown by the fact, that only the native tongue of the head of the house was to be used in the family. Thus in a Jewish family the Ashdodite or any other language of the

wife's native land could not have been used, as we find to have been the case in Judaea (Neh 13:23).

All other explanations are untenable, as has been already shown by Baumgarten, p. 20; and the conjecture set up after Hitzig by Bertheau, that instead of *`amow* (OT:5971) *kil^ashown* (OT:3956) we should read *`imow kaal-showeh*, every one shall speak what becomes him, gives not only a trivial, and not at all an appropriate thought, but is refuted even by the fact that not *`im* (OT:5973) *shaawaah* (OT:7737), but only *l^a shaawaah* (OT:7737) (comp. Est 3:8) could bear the meaning: to be becoming to any one. Such a command may, indeed, appear strange to us; but the additional particular, that every man was to speak his native tongue, and to have it alone spoken, in his own house, is not so strange as the fact itself that an edict should be issued commanding that the husband should be master in the house, especially in the East, where the wife is so accustomed to regard the husband as lord and master. Xerxes was, however, the author of many strange facts besides this.

Ch. 2. Elevation of Esther to the Throne. Service Rendered by Mordochai to the King.

Esther 2:1-4

After these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti, and what she

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After these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her.

When the wrath of King Ahashverosh was appeased, and he remembered his harsh treatment of Vashti, his courtiers proposed that he should send to fetch fair young virgins from all parts of his realm to the house of the women in Susa, that he might choose a new queen from among them. This proposal pleasing the king, was acted upon (vv. 1-4). In the fortress of Susa, however, there dwelt one of the Jews who had been carried into captivity from Jerusalem, and whose name was Mordochai. This man had brought up Esther, his uncle's daughter, as his own child (vv. 5-7). When, then, in pursuance with the king's commands, many maidens were gathered together in Susa, Esther also was brought into the king's house, and found favour with the keeper of the women while, according to order, she was going through a course of purification and anointing (vv. 8-14). Then her turn came to be brought before the king, she found favour in his sight above all the other maidens, and was chosen by him to be queen in the place of Vashti. By Mordochai's command, however, she disclosed her race and lineage to no one (vv. 15-20). At the same time two courtiers conspired against the life of the sovereign. Their conspiracy being discovered by Mordochai, was by him revealed to Esther, who gave information of it to the king, whereupon the matter was investigated, and found to have been correctly stated. The offenders were punished, and the event duly registered in the chronicles of the kingdom.

Verse 1-4. When, after these things, the wrath of King Ahashverosh was laid (*shok^a* (OT:7918), from *shaakak^a* (OT:7918), to be sunk, spoken of wrath to be laid), he remembered Vashti and what she had done, and what was decreed against her (*gaazar* (OT:1504), to determine, to decree irrevocably; comp. *g^azeeraah* (OT:1509), Dan 4:14); a desire for reunion with her evidently making itself felt, accompanied perhaps by the thought that she might have been too harshly treated. To prevent, then, a return of affection for his rejected wife ensuing—a circumstance which might greatly endanger all who had concurred in effecting her repudiation—the servants of the king, i.e., the court officials who were about him, said: "Let there be young maidens,

virgins fair to look on, sought for the king." *b^atuwlowt* (OT:1330), virgins, is added to *n^aaarowt* (OT:5291), the latter word signifying merely young women of marriageable age.

V. 3. "And let the king appoint (*w^ayap^aqeed* (OT:6485) is the continuation of *y^abaq^ashuw* (OT:1245)) officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together every virgin who is fair to look on to the citadel of Susa, to the house of the women, unto the hand of Hega the king's eunuch, the keeper of the women, and let them appoint their things for purification; and let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti." To the hand of Hega, i.e., to his care and superintendence, under which, as appears from v. 12, every maiden received into the house of the women had to pass a year before she was brought before the king. Hega (called Hegai, v. 8 and 15) was an eunuch, the keeper of the women, i.e., superintendent of the royal harem. *w^anaatown* (OT:5414) is the *infin. abs.* , used instead of the *verb. fin.* to give prominence to the matter: let them appoint. *tam^aruqiyim* , from *maaraq* (OT:4838), to rub, to polish, signifies purification and adornment with all kind of precious ointments; comp. v. 12. This speech pleased the king, and he acted accordingly.

Esther 2:5-7

Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite;

Before relating how this matter was carried into execution, the historian introduces us to the two persons who play the chief parts in the following narrative. V. 5. There was (dwelt) in the citadel of Susa a Jew of the name of

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Mordochai (*maar^ad^akay* (OT:4782), in more correct editions *maar^adaakay* (OT:4782)), the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite (*y^amiyniy* (OT:3228) *'iysh* (OT:376) like 1 Sam 9:1). Jair, Shimei, and Kish can hardly mean the father, grandfather, and great-grandfather of Mordochai. On the contrary, if Jair were perhaps his father, Shimei and Kish may have been the names of renowned ancestors. Shimei was probably the son of Gera, well known to us from the history of David, 2 Sam 16:5f. and 1 Kings 2:8,36f., and Kish the father of Saul, 1 Chron 8:33; 1 Sam 9:1; for in genealogical series only a few noted names are generally given; comp., e.g., 1 Chron 9:19; 6:24f.

Upon the ground of this explanation, Josephus (*Ant.* xi. 6) makes Esther of royal descent, viz., of the line of Saul, king of Israel; and the Targum regards Shimei as the Benjamite who cursed David. The name Mordochai occurs in Ezra 2:2 and Neh 7:7 as that of some other individual among those who returned from captivity with Zerubbabel, but can hardly be connected with the Persian *mrđky* , little man. Aben Ezra, Lightfoot, and others, indeed, are of opinion that the Mordochai of the present book really came up with Zerubbabel, but subsequently returned to Babylon. Identity of name is not, however, a sufficient proof of identity of person. The chronological statement, v. 6: who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captives who had been carried away with Jeconiah, king of Judah, etc., offers some difficulty. For from the captivity of Jeconiah in the year 599 to the beginning of the reign of Xerxes (in the year 486) is a period of 113 years; hence, if the *'asher* (OT:834) is referred to Mordochai, he would, even if carried into captivity as a child by then, have reached the age of from 120 to 130 years, and as Esther was not made queen till the seventh year of Xerxes (Est 2:16), would have become prime minister of that monarch at *about* the age of 125. Rambach, indeed, does not find this age incredible, though we cannot regard it as probable that Mordochai should have become minister at so advanced an age.

(Note: Baumg. aptly remarks, *l.c.* , p. 125: *Etsi concedendum est, non esse contra naturam, si Mordechaeus ad illam aetatem pervenerit, et summa hac constitutus senectute gravissimis negotiis perficiendis par fuerit, tamen est hoc rarissimum et nisi accedit certum testimonium, difficile ad credendum.*)

On this account Clericus, Baumgarten, and others refer the relative *'asher* (OT:834) to the last name, Kish, and understand that he was carried away with Jeconiah, while his great-grandson Mordochai was born in captivity. In this case Kish and Shimei must be regarded as the great-grandfather and grandfather of Mordochai. We grant the possibility of this view; nevertheless it is more in accordance with the Hebrew narrative style to refer *'asher* (OT:834) to the chief person of the sentence preceding it, viz., Mordochai, who also continues to be spoken of in

v. 7. Hence we prefer this reference, without, however, attributing to Mordochai more than 120 years of age. For the relative clause: who had been carried away, need not be so strictly understood as to assert that Mordochai himself was carried away; but the object being to give merely his origin and lineage, and not his history, it involves only the notion that he belonged to those Jews who were carried to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar with Jeconiah, so that he, though born in captivity, was carried to Babylon in the persons of his forefathers. This view of the passage corresponds with that formerly presented by the list of the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Jacob who went down with him to Egypt; see the explanation of the passage in question.

(Note: Baumgarten also considers this view admissible, rightly remarking, p. 127: *Scriptoribus sacris admodum familiare est singulos homines non per se et sepositos spectare, sed familias et gentes ut corpora quasi individua complecti, ita ut posteri majorum personis quasi contenti et inclusi, majores vero in posteris ipsi subsistere et vivere existimentur. Ex hac ratione Mordechaus captus esse dici potest, quamvis ipse satis diu post Jechoniae tempora ex iis, qui a Nebuchadnezzaro abducti sunt, natus fuerit.*)

V. 7. Mordochai was *'omeen* (OT:539), keeper, bringer up, i.e., foster-father, to Hadassh (*'omeen* (OT:539) constructed as a participle with *'eet* (OT:853)). *hadacaah* (OT:1919) means a myrtle (*hadac* (OT:1918) in the Shemitish), like the Greek name *Eurti'a Murrhi'nee* . "That is Esther," the queen known by the name of Esther.

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The name *'ec^ateer* (OT:635) is the Old-Persian *stara with ' (OT:589) prosthetic, and corresponds with the Greek *astee'r* (NT:792), *star, in modern Persian sitareh. She was bat-dodow, daughter of his father's brother, and adopted by Mordochai after the death of her parents; we are told, moreover, that she had a fine figure and beautiful countenance. Her father, whose name, according to v. 15, was Abihail, was uncle to Mordochai, and hence Esther was his cousin.**

Esther 2:8-9

So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women.

When, then, the king's commandment and decree was heard, i.e., proclaimed throughout the kingdom, and many maidens gathered together in Susa, Esther also was received into the royal harem, under the keeping of Hegai. The maiden pleased him and won his favour (*checed* (OT:2617) *naasaa'* (OT:5375), to bear away love, i.e., to obtain favour, synonymous with *cheen* (OT:2580) *naasaa'* (OT:5375), v. 15 and Est 5:2). *wgw' way^abaheel* (OT:926), and he hastened to give her her ointments for purification, and the seven maidens appointed to her from the king's house. The infinitives *laah* (OT:3807a) *laatet* (OT:5414) are, according to the Aramaean idiom, placed after their objects and dependent on *y^abaheel* (OT:926). On *tam^aruwqiym* , see on v. 3. *maanowt* (OT:4490), portions, are here portions of food, as in Est 9:19,22, and 1 Sam 1:4. The seven maidens (*han^aaarowt* (OT:5291) with the article) are the maids appointed to wait upon a young virgin selected for the king. The participle *r^auyowt* (OT:7200): chosen for a particular purpose-in the Talmud and rabbinical Hebrew *raa'uwy* (OT:7200), *dignus, decens, conveniens* , - occurs only here. *y^ashanehaa* (OT:8138), he changed her and her maids into the best of the house of the women, i.e., he took them out of the ordinary rooms and placed them in the best apartments, probably in the state-rooms, where those who were accustomed to be brought to the king used to dwell.

Esther 2:10-11

Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not shew it.

V. 10 contains a supplementary remark. This kind and respectful treatment was shown to Esther, because, in obedience to Mordochai's command, she had not shown her people nor her kindred, i.e., her Jewish extraction; for a Jewish maiden would hardly have experienced such friendly usage. V. 11 also contains an additional notice, prefixed here to enable what follows to be rightly understood, and repeated in another connection v. 19, and on several other occasions: Mordochai walked every day before the court or enclosure of the women's house, to know the welfare (*shaalown* (OT:7965)) of Esther and what became of her (*baah* (OT:871a) *yee`aaseh* (OT:6213), properly, what was done to her). Hence Mordochai was in constant communication with Esther. How this communication was effected is not more particularly stated; probably by means of the maids appointed to wait on her. Jewish expositors are of opinion, that Mordochai held high office, and that having consequently free access to the royal palace, he could easily find the means of communicating with his relative.

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Esther 2:12-18

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 the women, (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, to wit, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with other things for the purifying of the women;)

Before relating the appearance of Esther before the king, the narrator more particularly describes in vv. 12-14 the preparations for this event, and how Esther behaved with respect to them.

Verse 12-13. "When every maid's turn came (i.e., at every time that any maid's turn came) to go in to King Ahashverosh, after the time when it had been done to her twelve months according to the law of the women-for thus were the days of their purification accomplished: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with balsam and ointments of purification for women-and the maiden came to the king, all that she desired was given her to go with her out of the women's house unto the king's house." *towr* (OT:8447), turn in succession, used only here and v. 15. The turn to go in unto the king did not come to any maid until *wgw' heyowt* (OT:1961) *migeets* (OT:7093), at the end of the time when it had been done to her according to the law... This time lasted twelve months after her reception into the house of the women; and the law of the women, according to which it was done to her, was, that she should be purified for six months with oil of myrrh, and as long with *b^asaamiym* (OT:1314), sweet odours and other ointments. *baa'aah* (OT:935) *hana`araah* (OT:5291) *uwbaazeh* (OT:2088) (v. 13) forms the continuation of the antecedent clause commencing with *b^ahaniya`*, or, to speak more correctly, of a second antecedent with which the conclusion *kaal-'asher 'eet* is connected. Some expositors understand *baazeh* (OT:2088), with the LXX, of the time: *illo* sc. *tempore*; others of the condition: *hoc modo ornata* or *ea lege* (Cler.), and therefore as parallel in meaning with the *keen* (OT:3651) of Est 4:16. Either view is admissible and suits

the sense, but the latter is more in harmony with the parallel passage Est 4:16, and therefore preferable. All that was to be given her, can only relate to ornaments and jewels, which were to be given that each might appear before the king adorned and dressed after her own taste.

Verse 14. In the evening she went (to the king), and on the morrow she returned to the women's house, a second (time) to the hand (under the keeping of) Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain, who kept the concubines; she came no more to the king, except the king delighted in her and she were called by name, i.e., specially. *sheeniy* (OT:8145) instead of *sheeniyt* (OT:8145), like Neh 3:30.

Verse 15. When Esther's turn came to go in unto the king, she required nothing (to take with her, see v. 13) but what Hegai the king's chamberlain appointed (hence as not concerned to please the king by special adornment), and she obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her, namely, by her modesty and humility. On *cheen* (OT:2580) *naasaa'* (OT:5375), see remarks on v. 9.

Verse 16. She was taken into the king's house (*mal^akuwt* (OT:4438) *beeyt* (OT:1004) instead of *hamelek^a* (OT:4428) *beeyt* (OT:1004), the palace of the kingdom, the royal residence) in the tenth month, i.e., the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

Verse 17. And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; and he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti. The meaning evidently is, that the king, immediately after their first meeting, bestowed his affections upon Esther in preference

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to all the women and maidens, and chose her queen.

Verse 18. To celebrate Esther's elevation to the crown, the king made a great feast, called Esther's feast, to all his princes and servants, and granted release to the provinces. The *verbale Hiph. hanaachaah* (OT:2010) is translated in the LXX *a'fesis* (NT:859), Vulg. *requies*, and understood either of a remission of taxes or a remission of labour, a holiday. Although the Chald. understands it of a remission of taxes, yet the use of the verb *aasaah* (OT:6213) rather favours the latter meaning, viz., the appointment of a holiday, on which there would be arresting from labour. Finally, he gave gifts with royal munificence *mas^aeeet* (OT:4864) like Amos 5:11; Jer 40:5; *hamelek^a* (OT:4428) *k^ayad* (OT:3027) like Est 1:7. - It seems strange that a period of four years should intervene between the repudiation of Vashti in the third year of Ahashverosh and the elevation of Esther in the seventh, an interval whose length cannot be adequately accounted for by the statements of the present book.

Only a few days could have elapsed between the disgrace of Vashti and the time when the king remembered her; for this took place, we are told, when the king's wrath was appeased. The proposal to collect virgins from all parts of his kingdom to Susa was then immediately made. Now, if the carrying out of this proposal took half a year, and the preparation of the virgins by anointing, etc., lasted a year, Esther, even if her turn to go in unto the king had not come for six months, might have been made queen two years after the repudiation of Vashti. As she obtained the favour of Hegai immediately upon her reception into the women's house, so that he hastened her purifications (v.

9), she would not be brought before the king among the last, but would rather be one of the first to go in. The long interval which elapsed between the repudiation of Vashti and the elevation of Esther, can only be satisfactorily explained by the history of the reign of Xerxes; in fact, by the circumstance that his campaign against Greece took place during this time.

Esther 2:19-20

And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai sat in the king's gate.

Vv. 19-23 relate the intervention of an incident of great importance in the subsequent development of the narrative. When virgins were for the second time gathered together, two courtiers were incensed with the king, and sought to lay hands upon him. This thing was known to Mordochai, who sat in the gate of the palace and kept up a constant communication with Esther even after she became queen, and by him communicated to her, that she might bring it to the knowledge of the king. The matter being investigated and found to have been truly reported, the offenders were punished, and an entry of the particulars made in the chronicles of the kingdom. The words "when virgins were assembled for the second time," which serve to define the time when the conspiracy of the two courtiers took place, as is obvious from the circumstance that *haaheem* (OT:1992) *bayaamiym* (OT:3117), v. 21, refers to *bt' b^ahiqaabeets* (OT:6908), v. 19, are obscure.

The obscurity lies in the fact that no reason for assembling virgins can be perceived, after the choice of Ahashverosh had fallen upon Esther. The sentence *sheeniyt* (OT:8145) *b^atuwlowt* (OT:1330) *uwb^ahiqaabeets* (OT:6908) unmistakably corresponds with *n^a aarowt* (OT:5291) *uwb^ahiqaabeets* (OT:6908) of v. 8. This was already rightly perceived by Grotius, who, however, wrongly infers: *est epa'nodos* (*retrogressio*), *referendum enim hoc ad illa quae supra*, ii. 2. This is, however, not only incompatible with *sheeniyt* (OT:8145), but also with the circumstance that, according to the correct understanding of the sentences in vv. 21 and 22, Esther was then already queen, and Mordochai was sitting in the gate of the king's palace, and thence keeping up communication with her; while as long as Esther was in the women's house preparing for her interview with the king, under the guardianship of Hegai, he walked day by day before the court of the women's house (v. 11).

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Still less admissible is the view of Drusius, received by Bertheau, that the gathering of the virgins for the second time is to be understood from the circumstance, that after going in to the king, they had to go into the second house of the women, under the stricter guardianship of Shaashgaz (v. 14). For, being no longer *b^atuwlowt* (OT:1330), but *piylag^ashiym* (OT:6370) (v. 14), their reception into the house of the concubines could not be called a second gathering together, since as virgins they were formerly in a different house. The only explanation of the *sheeniyt* (OT:8145) left us is the view, that even after the choice of Esther to be queen, a second gathering together of virgins actually took place; for this, as C. a Lapede remarks, is what the words undoubtedly declare. The matter itself was in accordance with the prevailing custom of polygamy, which kings carried to such an extent, that, as C. a Lapede points out, Solomon, e.g., had 700 wives and 300 concubines, i.e., *secondarias uxores*. From *uwmaar^ad^akay* (OT:4782), v. 19, onwards, explanatory circumstantial clauses follow: "The Mordochai sat in the king's gate" introduces the parenthetical sentence, "Esther had not yet showed her kindred and her people (comp. v. 10), as Mordochai had charged her; for Esther did the commandment of Mordochai as when she was under his care;" i.e., Esther obeyed, after her elevation to be queen, the command of Mordochai not to make her Jewish descent known, as she had formerly done while she was yet his foster-daughter. *'aam^anaah* (OT:546), care, education, is a substantive derived from *'omeen* (OT:539).

Esther 2:21-23

In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus.

The definition of time in v. 19 is again taken up by the words: in those days; then the explanatory clause, v. 20, is repeated; and after this we are informed what it was that had then occurred. In those days Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's courtiers, who were the threshold-keepers (palace-watchers, LXX *archisoomatofu'lakes*), were wroth, and sought to lay hands on King Ahashverosh, i.e., to slay him. V. 22. This

thing was known to Mordochai, and by him communicated to Esther, who told it, in Mordochai's name, to the king. V. 23. The matter was investigated (sc. by the king), and found out, sc. as Mordochai had testified. The two criminals were hanged on a tree, i.e., impaled on a stake, a sort of crucifixion-see rem. on Est 6:11 - and the circumstance entered in the book of the chronicles, i.e., the chronicles of the kingdom. *hamelek*^a (OT:4428) *lip^aneey* (OT:6440), before the king, i.e., in his presence, immediately after sentence had been passed by a court over which the monarch presided.

Ch. 3. Haman's Elevation and His Design against the Jews.

King Ahashverosh promoted Haman the Agagite above all the princes about him, and commanded all his servants to fall down before him. This mark of reverence was refused by Mordochai the Jew from religious scruples. When intelligence of this was brought to Haman, he sought to obtain the extermination of the Jews throughout the kingdom (1-6). The twelfth month was appointed by the casting of lots for this purpose; and Haman, by exciting the suspicion of the king against the Jews as an exclusive and law-opposing people, obtained from him an edict to this effect (7-11), and sent it, by letters sealed with the king's seal, by the hand of messengers into all the provinces of the kingdom in the first month, that they might be ready to carry it into execution in the twelfth month; whereat the city of Susa was much perplexed (12-15).

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Esther 3:1-6

After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him.

Verse 1-6. The elevation of Haman above all the princes of the kingdom is said in a general manner to have taken place "after these things," i.e., after the matters related in ch. 2. *gideel* (OT:1435), to make great, to make any one a great man; *nisaa'* (OT:5375), elevated, is more precisely defined by the sentence following: he set his seat above all the princes that were with him, i.e., above the seat of all the princes about the king; in fact, advanced him to the highest post, made him his grand vizier. Haman is called the son of Hammedatha *haa'agaagiy* (OT:91), the Agagite, or of the Agagites. *'agaagiy* (OT:91) recalls *'agaag* kings of the Amalekites, conquered and taken prisoner by Saul, and hewn in pieces by Samuel, 1 Sam 15:8,33. Hence Jewish and Christian expositors regard Haman as a descendant of the Amalekite king. This is certainly possible, though it can by no means be proved. The name Agag is not sufficient for the purpose, as many individuals might at different times have borne the name *'agaag*, i.e., the fiery. In 1 Sam 15, too, Agag is not the *nomen propr.* of the conquered king, but a general *nomen dignitatis* of the kings of Amalek, as Pharaoh and Abimelech were of the kings of Egypt and Gerar. See on Num 24:7. We know nothing of Haman and his father beyond what is said in this book, and all attempts to explain the names are uncertain and beside the mark.

Verse 2. All the king's servants that were in the gate of the king, i.e., all the court officials, were to kneel before Haman and bow themselves to the earth. So had the king commanded concerning him. This mark of reverence was refused by Mordochai.

Verse 3-4. When the other officials of the court asked him from day to day, why he transgressed the king's commandment, and he hearkened not unto them, i.e., gave no

heed to their words, they told it to Haman, "to see whether Mordochai's words would stand; for he had told them that he was a Jew." It is obvious from this, that Mordochai had declared to those who asked him the reason why he did not fall down before Haman, that he could not do so because he was a Jew—that as a Jew he could not show that honour to man which was due to God alone. Now the custom of falling down to the earth before an exalted personage, and especially before a king, was customary among Israelites; comp. 2 Sam 14:4; 18:28; 1 Kings 1:16. If, then, Mordochai refused to pay this honour to Haman, the reason of such refusal must be sought in the notions which the Persians were wont to combine with the action, i.e., in the circumstance that they regarded it as an act of homage performed to a king as a divine being, an incarnation of Oromasdes. This is testified by classical writers; comp. Plutarch, *Themist.* 27; Curtius, viii. 5. 5f., where the latter informs us that Alexander the Great imitated this custom on his march to India, and remarks, §11: *Persas quidem non pie solum, sed etiam prudenter reges suos inter Deos colere; majestatem enim imperii salutis esse tutelam.* Hence also the Spartans refused, as Herod. 7.136 relates, to fall down before King Xerxes, because it was not the custom of Greeks to honour mortals after this fashion. This homage, then, which was regarded as an act of reverence and worship to a god, was by the command of the king to be paid to Haman, as his representative, by the office-bearers of his court; and this Mordochai could not do without a denial of his religious faith.

Verse 5-6. When, then, Haman, whose attention had been called to the fact, saw, when next he went in unto the king, that Mordochai did not fall down before him, he was full of wrath, and (v. 6) thought scorn, i.e., in his pride esteemed it too contemptible, to lay hands on Mordochai alone, i.e., to execute him alone, for this opposition to the royal commands; for they had showed him the people of Mordochai, i.e., had told him that as a Jew Mordochai had refused this act of worship, and that the whole Jewish nation thought and acted accordingly. Therefore he sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahashverosh, the people of Mordochai. The subject Haman is repeated before *way^abaqeesh* (OT:1245) for the sake of clearness, because it was not

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expressly named with *wayiben* (OT:1129). *maar^ad^{ak}ay* (OT:4782) *`am* (OT:5971) is in apposition to *kaal-hay^ahuwdiym* : all the Jews as the people of Mordochai, because they were the people of Mordochai and shared his sentiments.

Esther 3:7-11

In the first month, that is, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar.

To ensure the success of this great undertaking, viz., the extermination of all the Jews in the kingdom, Haman had recourse to the lot, that he might thus fix on a propitious day for the execution of his project. Astrology plays an important part among all ancient nations, nothing of any magnitude being undertaken without first consulting its professors concerning a favourable time and opportunity; comp. rem. on Ezek 21:26.

Verse 7. "In the first month, i.e., Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahashverosh, they cast Pur, i.e., the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to the twelfth month, i.e., the month Adar." The subject of *hipiyl* (OT:5307) is left indefinite, because it is self-evident that this was done by some astrologer or magician who was versed in such matters. Bertheau tries unnaturally to make Haman the subject, and to combine the subsequent *haamaan* (OT:2001) *lip^aneey* (OT:6440) with *hagowraal* (OT:1486): "Haman cast Pur, i.e., the lot, before Haman," which makes Pur signify: the lot before Haman. *haamaan* (OT:2001) *lip^aneey* (OT:6440) means in the presence of Haman, so that he also might see how the lot fell. *puwr* (OT:6332) is an Old-Persian word meaning lot (*sors*); in modern Persian, *bâra* signifies time, case (*fois, cas*), *pâra* or *pâre* , piece (*morceau, pièce*), and *behr, behre* , and *behre* , lot, share, fate; comp.

Zenker, **Turco- Arabic and Persian Lexicon** , pp. 162 and 229. The words "from day to day, from month to the twelfth month," must not be understood to say, that lots were cast day by day and month by month till the twelfth; but that in the first month lots were at once cast, one after the other, for all the days and months of the year, that a favourable day might be obtained. We do not know the manner in which this was done, "the way of casting lots being unknown to us." The words: from month to the twelfth month, are remarkable; we should expect from month to month till the twelfth month. Bertheau supposes that the words *`aasaar sh^aloshaah yowm `al hagowraal pol wayi l^achodesh* were omitted after *uwmeechodesh* (OT:2320) through the eye of the transcriber passing on from the first *l^achodeesh* (OT:2320) to the second. The text of the LXX actually contains such words, and the possibility of such an oversight on the part of a transcriber must certainly be admitted. In the book of Esther, however, the LXX translation is no critical authority, and it is just as possible that the author of the Hebrew book here expresses himself briefly and indefinitely, because he was now only concerned to state the month determined by lot for the undertaking, and intended to mention the day subsequently.

Verse 8-9. Haman having by means of the lot fixed upon a favourable day for the execution of the massacre, betook himself to the king to obtain a royal decree for the purpose. He represented to the monarch: "There is a people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of thy kingdom, and their laws are different from all other people (i.e., from the laws of all other people), and they keep not the laws of the king, and it is not fitting for the king to leave them alone. V. 9. If it seem good to the king, let it be written (i.e., let a written decree be published) to destroy them; and I will weigh ten thousand talents of silver to those who do the business, that they may bring them into the treasuries of the king." This proposal was very subtilly calculated. First Haman casts suspicion on the Jews as a nation scattered abroad and dwelling apart, and therefore unsociable-as refractory, and therefore dangerous to the state; then he promises the king that their extermination will bring into

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the royal treasury a very considerable sum of money, viz., the property of the slaughtered. Ten thousand talents of silver, reckoned according to the Mosaic shekel, are £3,750,000, according to the civil shekel £1,875,000; see rem. on 1 Chron 22:14. *ham^hlaa'kaah* (OT:4399) *`oseey* (OT:6213), those who execute a work, builders in 2 Kings 12:12, are here and Est 9:3 the king's men of business, who carry on the king's business with respect to receipts and disbursements, the royal financiers.

Verse 10. The king agreed to this proposal. He drew his signet ring from his hand, and delivered it to Haman, that he might prepare the edict in the king's name, and give it by the impression of the royal seal the authority of an irrevocable decree; see rem. on Est 8:8. "To the enemy of the Jews" is added emphatically.

Verse 11. Lest it should appear as though the king had been induced by the prospect held out of obtaining a sum of money, he awards this to Haman. "The silver be given to thee, and the people to do to them (let it be done to them) as seemeth good to thee." *w^haa`aam* (OT:5971) precedes absolutely: as for the people of the Jews, etc.

Esther 3:12-15

Then were the king's scribes called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors that were over every province, and to the rulers of every people of every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language; in the name of king Ahasuerus was it written, and sealed with the king's ring.

Haman, without delay, causes the necessary writings to be prepared, and sent into all the provinces of the kingdom. V. 12. "Then were called the king's scribes in the first month, on the thirteenth day of it (*bow* (OT:871a), in it, in the said month); and there was written according to all that Haman commanded, to the satraps of the king, and

to the governors who (were placed) over every province, and to the rulers of every people, to each several province according to its writing, and to each different people according to their language (comp. rem. on Est 1:22); in the name of King Ahashverosh was it written, and sealed with the king's seal." '*achash^adar^apaaniym* and *pachowt* (OT:6346) placed in juxtaposition, as in Ezra 8:36, are the imperial officials. Beside these are also named the *saariym* (OT:8269) of every people, the native princes of the different races. The writing was finished on the thirteenth day of the month, because this day of the month had been fixed upon as propitious by the lot.

Verse 13. And the letters were sent (*nish^alowach* (OT:7971), *infin. abs. Niph.* instead of the *verb. fin.*) by posts. *haaraatsiym* (OT:7323) are the post-riders, the aggaroi, who were stationed on the high roads of the realm, generally four parasangs apart, to transmit with the more speed the royal letters and messages. Herod. 5.14, 8.98 (Berth.), comp. Brisson, *de reg. Pers. princ.* i. c. 238f. *wgw' l^ahash^amiyd* (OT:8045), to destroy, to kill, and cause to perish all Jews from the youth to the old man, children and women, in one day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, and to deprive them of their spoil. The three verbs are combined to give strength to the expression. *sh^alaalaam* (OT:7998) is their property, which is called spoil because it was delivered up to plunder. Haman having held out the prospect of a large sum as the result of exterminating the Jews, and the king having bestowed this upon Haman, the plundering of the Jews, thus permitted to all the inhabitants of the kingdom who should assist in exterminating them, must be understood as implying, that they would have to deliver a portion of the booty thus obtained to Haman.

Verse 14. The copy of the writing, that the law might be given in every province, was opened to all people, that they might be ready by this day. This verse does not announce a copy of the royal decree that had been prepared and sent by the posts, which would in that case be replaced by a mere allusion to its contents (Bertheau).
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words contain no trace of an announcement such as we find in Ezra 4:11; 7:11, but the historical notice, that the copy of the writing which was sent as a law into the provinces was *gaaluwy* (OT:1540), opened, i.e., sent unclosed or unsealed to all people. *gaaluwy* (OT:1540) is the predicate to the subject *wgw' pat^ashegen* (OT:6572) (comp. on this word the note to Ezra 4:14), and between the subject and predicate is inserted the infinitive clause *wgw' daat* (OT:1881) *l'hinaateen* (OT:5414) for the purpose of once more briefly mentioning the contents and destination of the *k^ataab* (OT:3792): that a law might be given in every province. To attain this object the more certainly, the copy of the decree, which was brought into every province by the posts, was open or unsealed, that all people might read its contents, and keep themselves in readiness for the execution of what was therein commanded on the appointed day. *hazeh* (OT:2088) *layowm* (OT:3117) is the thirteenth day of the twelfth month named in the letter.

Verse 15. The posts went forth hastening (*daachap* like 2 Chron 26:20) at the king's commandment, and the decree was given (promulgated) in the citadel of Susa-an explanatory clause; and the king and Haman sat down to drink while the messengers went forth with the decree, but the city of Susa, in which it was first published, was in perplexity (on *naabowkaah* (OT:943) comp. Ex 14:3; Joel 1:18). The cruel measure could not but fill all peace-loving citizens with horror and anxiety. - Here the question is forced upon us, why the decree should have been so prematurely published. The scribes were summoned to prepare it on the thirteenth day of the first month. For this purpose, even though many copies had to be made in different languages, no very long time would be required in a well-appointed government office. As soon as the scribes had finished their work, the decree was sent out by the posts into all quarters of the realm, and would arrive in even the most distant provinces in three weeks at furthest.

This would place almost eleven, and in the remotest parts about ten months between the publication and execution of the decree. What then was the motive for such an interval? Certainly so long a time could not be required for preparing to carry it out, nor is this hinted at in the text, as Bertheau supposes. Nor could it be intended that the

Jews should suffer a long period of anxiety. On the contrary, the motive seems to have been, as Clericus and others have already conjectured, to cause many Jews to leave their property and escape to other lands, for the sake of preserving their lives. Thus Haman would attain his object. He would be relieved of the presence of the Jews, and be able to enrich himself by the appropriation of their possessions (comp. p. 192). On the other hand, the providence of God overruling the event in the interest of the Jews, is unmistakeably evident both in Haman's haste to satisfy his desire for vengeance, and in the falling of the lot upon so distant a day. It was only because there was so long an interval between the publication of the decree and the day appointed by lot for its execution, that it was possible for the Jews to take means for averting the destruction with which they were threatened, as the further development of the history will show.

Ch. 4. Mordochai's Mourning on account of the Decree for the Assassination of the Jews, and His Admonition to Esther to Intercede for Her People.

When Mordochai heard what had happened, he went mourning and lamenting about the city, and even to the king's gate; and the decree of Haman occasioned great lamentations among the Jews in all the provinces of the kingdom (1-3). When Queen Esther heard through her maids and courtiers of Mordochai's mourning, she sent him raiment that he might put off his mourning garb, but he refused to do so. She then sent an eunuch to him to inquire more particularly as to its cause. Mordochai informed him of all that had happened, giving him a copy of the decree to show to Esther, and charging her to entreat the king's favour for her people (4-8). The queen, however, expressed her hesitation to go in unto the king unsummoned, but upon Mordochai's repeated admonition, resolved to make the desired attempt, at the peril of her life (9-17).

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Esther 4:1-3

When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry;

Verse 1-3. Mordochai learnt all that was done-not only what had been openly proclaimed, but, as is shown by v. 7, also the transaction between the king and Haman. Then he rent his garments, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, making loud and bitter lamentation. Comp. on the last words, Gen 27:34. The combination of *'eeper* (OT:665) with *saq* (OT:8242) *yil^abash* (OT:3847) is an abbreviation for: put on a hairy garment and spread ashes upon his head, in sign of deep grief; comp. Dan 9:3; Job 2:12, and elsewhere.

Verse 2. And came even before the king's gate, i.e., according to v. 6, the open space before the entrance to the royal palace; for none might enter wearing mourning. *laabow'* (OT:935) *'eeyn* (OT:369), there is no entering, i.e., none may enter; comp. Ewald, §321, c.

Verse 3. Also in every province whither the king's decree arrived, there arose a great mourning among the Jews. *'asher* (OT:834) *m^aqowm* (OT:4725) is an adverbial *accusat. loci* in apposition to *b^akaal-m^adiy^anaah* : in every place to which the word of the king and his decree reached, i.e., arrived. "Sackcloth and ashes were spread for many," i.e., many sat in hairy garments upon the earth, where ashes had been spread; comp. Isa 58:5. The meaning is: All the Jews broke out into mourning, weeping, and lamentation, while many manifested their grief in the manner above described.

Esther 4:4-8

So Esther's maids and her chamberlains came and told it her. Then was the queen exceedingly grieved; and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him: but he received it not.

The matter was made known to Esther by her maids and eunuchs, i.e., by her attendants. The *Chethiv t^abow'eynaah* does not elsewhere occur after *w* consecutive, hence the substitution of the *Keri taabow'naah* (OT:935). The object of *yagiyduw* (OT:5046): what they told her, is evidently, from what follows, the circumstance of Mordochai's appearance in deep mourning before the gate of the palace. On receiving this information the queen fell into convulsive grief (*titchal^achal* (OT:2342), an intensive form of *chuwl* (OT:2342), to be seized with painful grief), and sent to Mordochai raiment to put on instead of his sackcloth, evidently for the purpose of enabling him to enter the palace and give her the particulars of what had happened. But Mordochai did not accept the raiment.

Verse 5-7. Then Esther sent Hatach, one of the eunuchs whom the king had set before her, i.e., appointed to attend her, to Mordochai to learn "what this, and why this," i.e., what was the meaning and the cause of his thus going about in mourning. When Hatach came forth to him in the open place of the city before the king's gate, Mordochai told him all that had happened, and the amount of the money which Haman had promised to weigh to the king's treasures (i.e., to pay into the royal treasury) for the Jews, to destroy them, i.e., that it might be permitted him to destroy the Jews. *paaraashaah* (OT:6575), properly a determined, accurate statement, from *paarash* (OT:6571) in the sense of to determine clearly (see rem. on Lev 24:12); here, according to the context:

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amount, sum. This promise of Haman is here emphatically mentioned as the chief point, not so much for the purpose of raising the indignation of Esther to the highest pitch (Bertheau), as to show the resentment and eagerness with which Haman had urged the extermination of the Jews. The *Chethiv y^ahuwdiyim* is the rarer form for *y^ahuwdiyim* (OT:3064), and is repeated Est 8:1,7,13; 9:15,18.

Verse 8. Mordochai also gave Hatach a copy of the decree published in Susa (*b^ashuwshaan* (OT:7800) *nitan* (OT:5414), like Est 3:15) to show it to the queen. The *laah* (OT:3807a) *uwl^ahagiyd* (OT:5046) following is more correctly drawn towards the subsequent *uwl^atsauwot* (OT:6680), as by Bertheau, than connected according to the accentuation with what precedes. Before this infinitive must be supplied from the context, especially from v. 7: and Mordochai commissioned him or told him (Hatach): to declare unto her and to command her (Esther) to go in unto the king, to entreat him and to make request before him for her people. *`al* (OT:5921) *baqeesh* (OT:1245), to beg, to make request for something, like Ezra 8:23, and Est 7:7. *`amaah* (OT:5971) *`al* (OT:5921), concerning her people, i.e., in this connection: for them.

Esther 4:9-11

And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

When Hatach brought this information to Esther, she sent word by him to Mordochai, that she might not go in unto the king unsummoned. *m' 'el t^atsauweehuw* , she ordered or commissioned him to Mordochai, viz., to tell him what follows, v. 11: "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces (i.e., all the officers and subjects of the king) know, that with respect to every man or woman that shall come in unto the king, into the inner court, that is not called-one (the same) law (is) for him: to put (him) to death, except him to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live." *w^aishaah kaal-'iysh* precede as *nominativi absol.*; these are followed by two relative clauses, which are succeeded by the anacoluthic

predicate *daatow* (OT:1881) '*achat* (OT:259): one and the same law is for him (*daatow* (OT:1881), the law concerning him, the unsummoned appearer, the matter of which is briefly stated by *l^ahaamiyt* (OT:4191)).

In the inner court dwelt the king, seated on his throne (comp. Est 5:1). The law, that every one entering unbidden should be put to death, was subject to but one exception: *wgw' mee'asher* (OT:834) *l^abad* (OT:905), except him to whom the king stretches out, etc. *howshiyT* (OT:3447) from *yaashaT* (OT:3447), appearing only in the present book (5:2; 8:4), but frequently in Chaldee and Syriac, signifies to hold out, to extend, with *low* (OT:3807a), to or towards him. *shar^abiyT* (OT:8275), the Aramaic form for *shebeT* (OT:7626), sceptre. Access to the royal presence had been already rendered difficult by an edict issued by Dejokes the Mede, Herod. 1:9; and among the Persians, none, with the exception of a few individuals (Herod. iii. 118), were permitted to approach the king without being previously announced (Herod. iii. 140; Corn. Nepos, *Conon*, 3). Any one entering unannounced was punished with death, unless the king, according to this passage, gave it to be understood by stretching forth his sceptre that he was to remain unpunished.

It is, however, self-evident, and the fact is confirmed by Herod. iii. 140, that any who desired audience were allowed to announce themselves. Esther might, it seems, have done this. Why, then, did she not make the attempt? The answer lies in her further message to Mordochai: "and I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days." From these words it appears, that formerly she had been more frequently summoned before the king. Now, however, a whole month had passed without any invitation. Hence she concluded that the king did not much wish to see her, and for this reason dared not go unto him unbidden. Evidently, too, she was unwilling to be announced, because in that case she would have been obliged immediately to make known to the king the cause of

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her desiring this interview. And this she would not venture to do, fearing that, considering the great favour in which Haman stood with the king, she might, if she did not provoke his displeasure against herself through her intercession for her people, at least meet with a rejection of her petition. To set aside an irrevocable decree sealed with the king's seal, must have appeared to Esther an impossible undertaking. To have asked such a thing of the king would have been indeed a bold venture.

Esther 4:12-14

And they told to Mordecai Esther's words.

When what Esther said was reported to Mordochai, he sent word back to her (*haashiyb* (OT:7725)): "Think not in thy soul (with thyself) to be saved in the house of the king above all the Jews; for if thou holdest thy peace at this time, recovery and deliverance will arise from another place, but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed. And who knows if thou hast attained to royalty for a time such as this?" By the words: "Think not that thou wilt be saved in the king's house above all the Jew," i.e., alone of all the Jews, Mordochai does not reproach Esther with being indifferent to the fate of her fellow-countrymen, but rather calls her attention to the fact that her own life is in danger. This is evident from the clause: if thou hold thy peace, will not intercede with the king for thy people, help will come from some other quarter. *rewach* (OT:7305) = *r^awaachaah*, Ex 8:11, *anapsu'xis* (NT:403), deliverance from oppressive restraint. *ya`amowd* (OT:5975), rise up, arise, used according to later custom for *quwm* (OT:6965), as in 1 Chron 20:4.

The thought is: the Jewish nation cannot perish, its continuance is guaranteed by the divine promise. If thou wilt venture nothing for its safety, God will bring deliverance, but destruction will come upon thee and thy family. Though Mordochai neither speaks of God, nor alludes directly to His assistance, he still grounds his hopes of the preservation of his people upon the word and promise of God, and Brentius

pertinently remarks: *habes hic excellentem ac plane heroicam Mardochei fidem, qua in praesentissimo ac periculosissimo discrimine videt futuram liberationem.* The last clause of v. 14 is by most expositors understood as saying: and who knows whether thou hast not for a time like this attained to royalty? This agrees with the sense, but cannot be verbally justified, for *'im* (OT:518) does not mean whether not. The sentence contains an aposiopesis. The clause depending on the conditional *'im* (OT:518) is unspoken, but understood. Besides, *higa`at^a* (OT:5060) is not in the imperfect. Hence it can only be translated: Who knows, if thou hadst not attained to royalty at or for such a time? Then the clause omitted would be: what thou then wouldst have done. *yowdeea`* (OT:3045) *miy* (OT:4310) more frequently has the meaning of *perhaps*; and Mordochai says: perhaps thou hast attained to royalty (to the dignity of queen) for a time like this, sc. to use thy position for the deliverance of thy people. In the turn thus given to the sentence it contains the most urgent injunction to Esther to use her high position for the preservation of her fellow-countrymen.

Esther 4:15-16

Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer,

This pressing monition produced its result. Esther returned answer to Mordochai: "Go, gather together all the Jews

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that are found in Susa, and fast ye for me: I also and my maidens will fast; and so will I go to the king against the law; and if I perish, I perish." Esther resolves to go to the king unsummoned, but begs Mordochai and all the Jews to unite in a three days' fast, during which she and her maidens will also fast, to seek by earnest humiliation God's gracious assistance in the step she proposes to take, for the purpose of averting the threatened destruction of her people. "Though 'God' and 'prayer' are not here mentioned, it is yet obviously assumed that it was before God that the Jews were to humble themselves, to seek His help, and to induce Him to grant it. 1 Kings 21:27-29; Joel 1:14; Jonah 3:5f." (Berth.). To designate the strictness of this fasting, the words: "neither eat nor drink," are added. The "three days, night and day," are not to be reckoned as three times twenty-four hours, but to be understood of a fast which lasts till the third day after that on which it begins; for according to Est 5:1, Esther goes to the king on the third day. Comp. the similar definition of time, Jonah 2:1. The addition "day and night" declares that the fast was not to be intermitted. *uwb^qkeen* (OT:3651), and in thus, i.e., in this state of fasting. *kadaat* (OT:1881) *lo'* (OT:3808) *'asher* (OT:834): which is not according to law. *lo'* (OT:3808) *'asher* (OT:834) is used, like the Aramaean form *laa'* (OT:3809) *diy* (OT:1768), in the sense of *without* (comp. Ewald, §222, *c*): without according to law = contrary to law. The last words: "if I perish, I perish," etc., are the expression not of despair, but of resignation, or perfect submission to the providence of God; comp. Gen 43:14.

Esther 4:17

So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.

And Mordochai went his way, i.e., from the place before the court of the king, to do what the queen had commanded him to do.

Ch. 5. Esther's Gracious Reception by the King. Haman's Rage against Mordochai.

On the third day Esther betook herself in her royal apparel to the inner court of the palace, and was so kindly received by the king, that he promised to grant her any petition she might make; whereupon she requested the king to come with Haman that day to a banquet which she had prepared (vv. 1-8). On returning from this banquet, Haman saw Mordochai in the king's gate, and when the latter did not bow before him, was so enraged, that, upon the advice of his wife and friends, he resolved to induce the king to permit the execution of Mordochai on the following day (vv. 9-14).

Esther 5:1-8

Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house.

Verse 1-8. On the third day Esther put on her royal apparel and entered the inner court of the king's house, opposite the dwelling of the king, where he was sitting on his throne before the gate (v. 1). The third day must be counted from the day of the transaction between the queen and Mordochai (Est 4:14); the first day being that on

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which it took place. The fasting, then, would not begin till midday; and on the third day Esther went to the king to invite him on that day to a banquet, which would surely take place in the forenoon. Thus the three days' fast would last from the afternoon of the first to the forenoon of the third day, i.e., from 40 to 45 hours. *mal^akuwt* (OT:4438) *til^abash* (OT:3847), she put on royalty, royal dignity, i.e., arrayed herself in royal apparel. Bertheau thinks that the word *l^abuwsh* (OT:3830) has been inadvertently omitted before *mal^akuwt* (OT:4438); but such a conjecture is without sufficient support, the passages 6:8 and 8:15 being of another kind. The expression is elliptical, and *mal^akuwt* (OT:4438) is easily completed by the notion *l^abuwsh* (OT:3830) furnished by the verb.

Verse 2. When the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, she obtained favour in his eyes (see rem. on Est 2:9), and he held out to her the golden sceptre that was in his hand; and Esther drew near and touched the top of the sceptre, probably kissed it, as the *Vulgate* renders the word.

Verse 3-4. The king, concluding from the circumstance of her appearing there unsummoned, that she had some urgent matter to bring before him, said to her: "What wilt thou, Queen Esther? and what is thy request? To the half of the kingdom it shall be granted thee." A short expression for: if thy request relates even to the half of the kingdom, it shall be granted. V. 4. Esther, however, for the present requested nothing further, than that on that day (to-day) the king and Haman should come to the banquet she had prepared. *`al* (OT:5921) *Towb* (OT:2896) *'im* (OT:518) like Est 1:19.

Verse 5. The king commanded Haman to hasten thither, to do as the queen had said. *maharuw* (OT:4116), hastened Haman, i.e., sent to fetch him quickly. *mihar* (OT:4116) like 2 Chron 18:8; 1 Kings 22:9. *la`asowt* (OT:6213), that the word of the queen might be done, carried out.

Verse 6. At the repast, and indeed at "the banquet of wine," when the greatest cheerfulness would prevail, the king repeated his question as to the desire of the queen, making the same promise as in v. 3. *w^atee`aas* (OT:6213), an abbreviated form of the imperfect *tee`aaseh* (OT:6213), is optative or jussive: and it shall be done.

Verse 7-8. Esther answered: "My petition and my request-if I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition and to do my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and to-morrow I will do as the king hath said," i.e., make known my request. Though the king had, in the midst of the gaiety, asked what was Esther's request, she did not esteem the time an appropriate one for expressing it. She begins: my petition and my request-but then stops, and says only, if the king will do her the favour to come with Haman to a banquet again on the morrow, she will then bring forward her petition. Esther invited Haman with the king on both occasions, that, as Calovius remarks, *eum apud regem praesentem accusaret decreti surrepti contra suos populares nomine, et in os omnes cavillandi vias ei praecluderet.*

Esther 5:9-14

Then went Haman forth that day joyful and with a glad heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai.

Haman went forth from the palace satisfied and with a joyful heart. When, however, he saw Mordochai in the king's gate, who neither stood up nor trembled before him, he was full of indignation against him. *wgw' qaam* (OT:6965) *w^alo'* (OT:3808) are circumstantial clauses following the principal clause without a copula. *qaam* (OT:6965) and *zaa`* (OT:2111) are perfects, and *w^alo'* (OT:3808) - *w^alo'* (OT:3808) are used in the sense of

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neque-neque. zuwa` (OT:2112) constructed with *min* (OT:4480) means to tremble before any one, to be disquieted.

Verse 10. Haman, however, refrained himself; and without immediately giving vent to his rage at Mordochai, went home and sent for his friends and his wife Zeresh, that he might unburden himself before them, and take counsel with them for Mordochai's destruction.

Verse 11-12. He first spoke to them of his wealth and domestic happiness, of the "glory of his riches and the multitude of his children." From Est 9:7-10 we learn that Haman had ten sons; and many sons were not looked upon as a great blessing from God by the Israelites only, but were also esteemed a signal prosperity among the Persians, the king annually sending presents to him who had the greatest number of sons.

(Note: Herod. says, i. 136: *Andragathi'ee d' ahu'tee apode'dektai meta' to' ma'chesthai ei'nai agatho'n ho's a'n pollou's apode'xee pai'das too' de' tou's plei'stous apodeiknu'nti doo'ra ekpe'mpei ho basileu's ana' pa'n e'tos* . Comp. Strabo. xv. 3. 17.)

Haman next recounted to them the great honours he had attained; *kaal-'asher 'eet* , all how the king had made him great, and how he had advanced him above the princes; comp. Est 3:1. *'asher* (OT:834) is a second accusative of the means by which something is brought to pass. Finally, v. 12, what high distinction had just been accorded him, by the queen having invited him alone to come to her banquet with the king. "Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet which she had prepared but myself; and to-morrow am I also invited unto her with the king." *'ap* (OT:639) enhances the meaning: even this honour is shown me. *qaaruw'-laah 'aniy* , I am her invited guest = I am invited to her and by her; comp. Ew. §295, c.

Verse 13. And yet all his good fortune is embittered to him as often as he sees the hated Jew Mordochai. "And all this availeth me not at every time when I see the Jew Mordochai sitting in the king's gate." *liy* (OT:3807a) *showeh* (OT:7737) is, not being equalled to me, i.e., not answering my desires, not affording me satisfaction. *'asher b^akaal-`eet* , at all time when = as often as. The fortune and honour he enjoys fail to satisfy him, when he sees the Jew Mordochai refuse to show him the reverence which he claims.

Verse 14. His wife and all his friends advise: "Let a tree be made (set up) fifty cubits high, and to-morrow speak to the king, that Mordochai may be hanged thereon (i.e., impaled; see on *taalaah* (OT:8518) Est 2:23); and then go in merrily with the king to the banquet." The counsellors take it for granted that the king will without hesitation agree to Haman's proposal to execute Mordochai, and therefore advise him at once to make the necessary preparations, so that the hated Jew may be hanged on the morrow before the banquet, and Haman may then go with the king to the feast prepared by the queen, free from all annoyance. *gb' `eets* (OT:6086) *`aasaah* (OT:6213), to make, i.e., to erect a high tree. The higher the stake, the farther would it be seen. The 3rd pers. plur. *ya`asuw* (OT:3299) stands instead of the passive: let them make = let...be made. So too *yit^aluw* (OT:8518) for let...be hanged. This speech pleased Haman, and he caused the stake to be erected.

Ch. 6. Elevation of Mordochai and Disgrace of Haman.

The next night the king, being unable to sleep, caused the chronicles of the kingdom to be read to him. The account of the conspiracy discovered by Mordochai, which was written therein, was thus brought before him, and he

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inquired of his servants whether this man had been rewarded (vv. 1-3a). On receiving a negative answer, the king sent to inquire who was in the court; and Haman being found there thus early, he had him summoned, and asked him: what should be done to the man in whose honour the king delighteth. Haman, supposing that the king could intend to honour no one but himself, voted for the very highest public mark of respect (vv. 3b-9), and was then obliged at the king's command to pay the proposed honour to Mordochai (vv. 10, 11). From this humiliation his wife and friends prognosticated his speedy downfall (vv. 12-14).

Esther 6:1-11

On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king.

Verse 1-11. An unexpected turn of affairs. V. 1. On that night between Esther's first and second banquet, the king's sleep fled, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles and to read therefrom. On *hazik^aronowt* (OT:2146) *ceeper* (OT:5612), comp. Ezra 4:15. The title is here more particularly stated than in Est 2:23, where the book is briefly called: The book of the chronicles. *niq^araa'iyim* (OT:7121) *wayih^ayuw* (OT:1961), and they (the chronicles) were read before the king. The participle denotes the long continuance of this reading.

Verse 2. And it was found written therein among other matters, that Mordochai had given information concerning the two courtiers who were plotting against the king's life. This is the conspiracy related Est 2:21-23. The name Bigthana is in 2:21 written Bighthan.

Verse 3. On this occasion the king asked: What honour and greatness hath been done to Mordochai for this? *`al-zeh* , for giving this information. And the king's servants

answered: Nothing has been shown him. *`im* (OT:5973) *`aasaah* (OT:6213), to show any one something, e.g., favour; comp. 2 Sam 2:6; 3:8, and elsewhere. *g^aduwlaah* (OT:1420), greatness, i.e., promotion to honour.

Verse 4. To repair this deficiency, and to do honour to the man who had done good service to the king-as the Persian monarchs were accustomed, comp. Brisson, *de reg. Pers. princ.* i. c. 135-he asked, "who is in the court?" i.e., whether some minister or state functionary were there with whom he might consult concerning the honour due to Mordochai. Those who desired an audience with the king were accustomed to appear and wait in the outer court, until they were summoned into the inner court to present themselves before the monarch. From this question of the king it appears that it was already morning. And Haman, it is parenthetically remarked, was come into the outer court to speak to the king, to hang Mordochai on the tree which he had prepared.

Verse 5. The attendants inform the king that Haman is in the court; whereupon the king commands: *yaabow'* (OT:935), let him come in.

Verse 6-9. As soon as he enters the king asks: What is to be done to the man in whose honour the king delighteth? i.e., whom he delights to honour. And Haman, thinking (*b^alibow* (OT:3820) *'aamar* (OT:559), to say in one's heart, i.e., to think) to whom will the king delight to show honour more than to me (*mimeniy* (OT:4480) *yowteer* (OT:3498), projecting before me, surpassing me, hence adverbially, beyond me, e.g., Eccl 12:12, comp. Esth 2:15; 7:11,16)? votes immediately for the greatest possible mark of honour, and says, v. 7f.: "As for the man in whose honour the king delighteth, let them bring the royal apparel with which the king has been clothed, and a horse on which the king has ridden, and the king's crown upon his head, and let them deliver this apparel and horse to one of the chief princes of the king, and let them array (i.e., with the royal apparel) the man in whose honour the king delighteth, and cause him to ride upon the horse through the streets of the city, and proclaim before him: Thus shall it be done to the man in whose honour the king delighteth." *wgw' 'asher* (OT:834) *'iysh* (OT:376), v. 7,

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precedes absolutely, and the predicate does not follow till *w^ahil^abiyshuw* (OT:3847), v. 9, where the preceding subject is now by an anacoluthon taken up in the accusative (*'et-haa'iysh*).

Several clauses are inserted between, for the purpose of enumerating beforehand all that appertains to such a token of honour: a royal garment, a royal steed, a crown on the head, and one of the chief princes for the carrying out of the honour awarded. The royal garment is not only, as Bertheau justly remarks, such a one as the king is accustomed to wear, but, as is shown by the perf. *laabash* (OT:3847), one which the king has himself already put on or worn. Hence it is not an ordinary state-robe, the so-called Median apparel which the king himself, the chief princes among the Persians, and those on whom the king bestowed such raiment were wont to appear in (Herod. 3.84, 7.116; Xenoph. *Cyrop.* 8.3.1, comp. with the note of Baehr on Her. 3.84), but a costly garment, the property of the sovereign himself. This was the highest mark of honour that could be shown to a subject. So too was the riding upon a horse on which the king had ridden, and whose head was adorned with a royal crown. *nitan* (OT:5414) is perf.

Niph., not 1st pers. pl. imperf. Kal, as Maurer insists; and *b^aro'show* (OT:7218) *'asher* (OT:834) refers to the head of the horse, not to the head of the man to be honoured, as Clericus, Rambach, and most ancient expositors explain the words, in opposition to the natural sense of - *b^aro'show* (OT:7218) *nitan* (OT:5414) *'asher* (OT:834). We do not indeed find among classical writers any testimony to such an adornment of the royal steed; but the circumstance is not at all improbable, and seems to be corroborated by ancient remains, certain Assyrian and ancient Persian sculptures, representing the horses of the king, and apparently those of princes, with ornaments on their heads terminating in three points, which may be regarded as a kind of crown. The *infin. absol.* *w^anaatown* (OT:5414) is a continuation of the preceding jussive *yaabiy'uw* (OT:935): and they shall give, let them give the garment-to the hand of a man, i.e., hand or deliver to him. The garment and horse are to be delivered to one of the noblest princes, that he may bring them to the individual to be honoured, may array him in the garment, set him on the horse, and proclaim before him as he

rides through the city, etc. On *hapar^amiym* (OT:6579), comp. Est 1:4, and on the matter itself, Gen. 40:43. *r^achowb* (OT:7339) is either an open square, the place of public assemblage, the forum, or a collective signifying the wide streets of the city. *yee`aaseh* (OT:6213) *kaakaah* (OT:3602) as in Deut 25:9 and elsewhere.

Verse 10-11. This honour, then, the haughty Haman was now compelled to pay to the hated Jew. The king commanded him: "Make haste, take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said," i.e., in the manner proposed by thee, "and do even so to Mordochai the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate; let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken," i.e., carry out your proposal exactly. How the king knew that Mordochai was a Jew, and that he sat in the king's gate, is not indeed expressly stated, but may easily be supplied from the conversation of the king with his servants concerning Mordochai's discovery of the conspiracy, vv. 1-3. On this occasion the servants of the king would certainly give him particulars concerning Mordochai, who by daily frequenting the king's gate, Est 2:19; 5:9, would certainly have attracted the attention of all the king's suite. Nor can doubt be cast upon the historical truth of the fact related in this verse by the question: whether the king had forgotten that all Jews were doomed to destruction, and that he had delivered them up to Haman for that purpose (J. D. Mich.). Such forgetfulness in the case of such a monarch as Xerxes cannot surprise us.

Esther 6:12-13

And Mordecai came again to the king's gate. But Haman hasted to his house mourning, and having his head covered.

After this honour had been paid him, Mordochai returned to the king's gate; but Haman hasted to his house, "sad

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After this honour had been paid him, Mordochai returned to the king's gate; but Haman hastened to his house, "sad and with his head covered," to relate to his wife and friends all that had befallen him. A deeper mortification he could not have experienced than that of being obliged, by the king's command, publicly to show the highest honour to the very individual whose execution he was just about to propose to him. The covering of the head is a token of deep confusion and mourning; comp. Jer 14:4; 2 Sam 15:30. Then his wise men, and Zeresh his wife, said to him: "If Mordochai, before whom thou hast begun to fall, be of the seed of the Jews, thou wilt not prevail against him, but wholly fall before him." *low* (OT:3807a) *tuwkal* (OT:3201) *lo'* (OT:3808), *non praevaleris ei*, comp. Gen 32:26. *tipowl* (OT:5307) *naapowl* (OT:5307) with an emphatic *infin. absol.*: wholly fall.

Instead of the *chakaamaayw* (OT:2450) *'ohabaayw* (OT:157) are here named, or to speak more correctly the friends of Haman are here called his wise men (magi). Even in Est 5:14 Haman's friends figure as those with whom he takes counsel concerning Mordochai, i.e., as his counsellors or advisers; hence it is very probable that there were magi among their number, who now "come forward as a *genus sapientum et doctorum* (Cicero, *divin.* i. 23)" (Berth.), and predict his overthrow in his contest with Mordochai. The ground of this prediction is stated: "If Mordochai is of the seed of the Jews," i.e., of Jewish descent, then after this preliminary fall a total fall is inevitable. Previously (5:14) they had not hesitated to advise him to hang the insignificant Jew; but now that the insignificant Jew has become, as by a miracle, a man highly honoured by the king, the fact that the Jews are under the special protection of Providence is pressed upon them. *Ex fato populorum*, remarks Grotius, *de singulorum fati judicabant. Judaei gravissime oppressi a Cyri temporibus contra spem omnem resurgere caeperant.* We cannot, however, regard as well founded the further remark: *de Amalecitis audierant oraculum esse, eos Judaeorum manu perituros*, which Grotius, with most older expositors, derives from the Amalekite origin of Haman. The revival of the Jewish people since the times of Cyrus was sufficient to induce, in the minds of heathen who were attentive to the signs of the times, the persuasion that this nation enjoyed divine protection.

Esther 6:14

And while they were yet talking with him, came the king's chamberlains, and hastened to bring Haman unto the banquet that Esther had prepared.

During this conversation certain courtiers had already arrived, who hastily brought Haman to the banquet of the queen, to which he would certainly go in a less happy state of mind than on the preceding day.

Ch. 7. Haman's Downfall and Ruin.

At this second banquet the king again inquired of the queen what was her petition, when she entreated that her life and that of her people might be spared, for that she and her people were sold to destruction (vv. 1-4). The king, evidently shocked at such a petition, asked who was the originator of so evil a deed, and Esther named the wicked Haman as the enemy (vv. 5, 6). Full of indignation at such a crime, the king rose from the banquet and went into the garden; Haman then fell down before the queen to entreat for his life. When the king returned to the house, he saw Haman lying on the couch on which Esther was sitting, and thinking that he was offering violence to the queen, he passed sentence of death upon him, and caused him to be hanged on the tree he had erected for Mordochai (vv. 7-10).

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Esther 7:1-6

So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen.

Verse 1-6. The king and Haman came to drink (*lish^atowt* (OT:8354)), i.e., to partake of the *mish^ateh* (OT:4960), in the queen's apartment.

Verse 2-4. At this banquet of wine the king asked again on the second day, as he had done on the first (Est 5:6): What is thy petition, Queen Esther, etc.? Esther then took courage to express her petition. After the usual introductory phrases (v. 3 like 5:8), she replied: "Let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request." For, she adds as a justification and reason for such a petition, "we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. And if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had been silent, for the enemy is not worth the king's damage." In this request *'amiy* (OT:5971) is a short expression for: the life of my people, and the preposition *b^a*, the so-called *b^a pretii*. The request is conceived of as the price which she offers or presents for her life and that of her people. The expression *nim^akar^anuw* (OT:4376), we are sold, is used by Esther with reference to the offer of Haman to pay a large sum into the royal treasury for the extermination of the Jews, 3:9; 4:7. *'iluw* (OT:432), contracted after Aramaean usage from *luw* (OT:3863) *'im* (OT:518), and occurring also Eccl 6:6, supposes a case, the realization of which is desired, but not to be expected, the matter being represented as already decided by the use of the perfect.

The last clause, *wgw' hatsaar* (OT:6862) *'eeyn* (OT:369) *kiy* (OT:3588), is by most expositors understood as a reference, on the part of Esther, to the financial loss which the king would incur by the extermination of the Jews. Thus Rambach, e.g., following R. Sal. ben Melech, understands the meaning expressed to be: *hostis nullo modo aequare, compensare, resarcire potest pecunia sua damnum, quod rex ex nostro excidio patitur*. So also Cler. and others. The confirmatory clause would in

this case refer not to *hecherash^atiy* (OT:2790), but to a negative notion needing completion: but I dare not be silent; and such completion is itself open to objection. To this must be added, that *shaawaah* (OT:7737) in Kal constructed with *b^a* does not signify *compensare*, to equalize, to make equal, but to be equal; consequently the Piel should be found here to justify the explanation proposed. *shaawaah* (OT:7737) in Kal constructed with *b^a* signifies to be of equal worth with something, to equal another thing in value.

Hence Gesenius translates: the enemy does not equal the damage of the king, i.e., is not in a condition to compensate the damage. But neither when thus viewed does the sentence give any reason for Esther's statement, that she would have been silent, if the Jews had been sold for slaves. Hence we are constrained, with Bertheau, to take a different view of the words, and to give up the reference to financial loss. *neezeq* (OT:5143), in the Targums, means not merely financial, but also bodily, personal damage; e.g., Ps 91:7; Gen 26:11, to do harm, 1 Chron 16:22. Hence the phrase may be understood thus: For the enemy is not equal to, is not worth, the damage of the king, i.e., not worthy that I should annoy the king with my petition. Thus Esther says, v. 4: The enemy has determined upon the total destruction of my people. If he only intended to bring upon them grievous oppression, even that most grievous oppression of slavery, I would have been silent, for the enemy is not worthy that I should vex or annoy the king by my accusation.

Verse 5. The king, whose indignation was excited by what he had just heard, asks with an agitation, shown by the repetition of the *wayo'mer* (OT:559): "Who is he, and where is he, whose heart hath filled him (whom his heart hath filled) to do so?" Evil thoughts proceed from the heart, and fill the man, and impel him to evil deeds: Isa 44:20; Eccl 8:11; Matt 15:19.

Verse 6. Esther replies: "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman." Then was Haman afraid before the

Verse 6. Esther replies: "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman." Then was Haman afraid before the king and the queen. *nib^aat* (OT:1204) as in 1 Chron 21:30; Dan 8:17.

Esther 7:7-10

And the king arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath went into the palace garden: and Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen; for he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king.

The king in his wrath arose from the banquet of wine, and went into the garden of the house (*qaam* (OT:6965) is here a pregnant expression, and is also combined with '*el-ginat*); but Haman remained standing to beg for his life to Queen Esther ('*al* (OT:5921) *bigeesh* (OT:1245) as in Est 4:8), "for he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king" (*kaalaah* (OT:3617), completed, i.e., determined; comp. 1 Sam 20:7,9; 25:17, and elsewhere); and hence that he had no mercy to expect from him, unless the queen should intercede for him.

Verse 8. The king returned to the house, and found Haman falling (*nopeel* (OT:5307) as in Josh 8:10; Deut 21:1, and elsewhere) at or on the couch on which Esther was (sitting), i.e., falling as a suppliant at her feet; and crediting Haman in the heat of his anger with the worst designs, he cried out: "Shall also violence be done to the queen before me in the house?" The *infin. lik^abowsh* (OT:3533) after the interrogatory particle signifies: Is violence to be done, i.e., shall violence be done? as in 1 Chron 15:2 and elsewhere; comp. Ewald, §237, c. *kaabash* (OT:3533), to tread under foot, to subdue, used here in the more general sense, to offer violence. Without waiting for an explanation, the king, still more infuriated, passes sentence of death upon Haman. This is not given in so many words by the historian, but we are told immediately that: "as the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face." *hadaabaar* (OT:1697) is not the speech of the king just reported, but the judicial sentence, the death warrant, i.e., the word to punish Haman with death. This is unmistakably

shown by the further statement: they covered Haman's face. The subject is indefinite: the attendants present. To cover the face was indeed to begin to carry the sentence of death into execution. With respect to this custom, expositors appeal to Curtius, vi. 8. 22: *Philetam-capite velato in regiam adducunt*; and Cicero, *pro C. Rabirio* iv. 13: *I lictor, colliga manus, caput obnubito, arbori infelici suspendito*.

Verse 9-10. Then said Harbonah (already mentioned Est 1:10), one of the eunuchs before the king, i.e., who held office before the king: "Behold also the tree which Haman made (comp. 5:14) stands in the house of Haman." *gam* (OT:1571) points to the fact that the other eunuchs had already brought forward various particulars concerning Haman's crime. Mordochai, who had spoken good for the king, viz., when he gave information of the conspiracy, 2:22; 6:2. On this tree the king ordered that Haman should be hanged, and this sentence was executed without delay. - "And the king's wrath was pacified." With this remark the narrative of this occurrence is closed, and the history pursues its further course as follows.

Ch. 8. Mordochai Advanced to Haman's Position. Counter-Edict for the Preservation of Jews.

The king bestowed the house of Haman on Esther, and advanced Mordochai to Haman's place of prime minister

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(vv. 1 and 2). Esther then earnestly besought the king for the abolition of the edict published by Haman against the Jews, and the king permitted her and Mordochai to send letters in the king's name to all the Jews in his kingdom, commanding them to stand for their life, and to slay their enemies, on the day appointed for their own extermination (vv. 3-14). These measures diffused great joy throughout the kingdom (vv. 15-17).

Esther 8:1,2

On that day did the king Ahasuerus give the house of Haman the Jews' enemy unto Esther the queen. And Mordecai came before the king; for Esther had told what he was unto her.

Verse 1,2. By the execution of Haman, his property was confiscated, and the king decreed that the house of the Jews' enemy should be given to Esther. The "house of Haman" undoubtedly means the house with all that pertained to it. "And Mordochai came before the king, for Esther had told him what he was to her," viz., her kinsman and foster-father, Est 2:7. This information effected Mordochai's appearance before the king, i.e., his reception into the number of the high dignitaries who beheld the face of the king, i.e., were allowed personal access to him; comp. 1:10,14; 7:9.

Verse 2. And the king took off his seal-ring which he had taken from Haman (comp. Est 3:10), and gave it to Mordochai. *min* (OT:4480) *he`ebiy* (OT:5674), to cause to go from some one, i.e., to take away. By this act Mordochai was advanced to the post of first minister of the king; comp. Gen 41:42, 1 Macc. 6:15. The king's seal gave the force of law to royal edicts, the seal taking the place of the signature. See rem. on v. 8 and Est 3:10.

Esther 8:3-4

And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews.

The chief enemy of the Jews was now destroyed; but the edict, written in the king's name, sealed with the royal seal, and published in all the provinces of the kingdom, for the destruction of all the Jews on the 13th day of the twelfth month, was still in force, and having been issued in due legal form, could not, according to the laws of the Persians and Medes, be revoked. Queen Esther therefore entreated the king to annul the designs of Haman against the Jews. Vv. 3 and 4. "Esther spake again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and wept, and besought him to do away with (*he`ebiyr* (OT:5674), to cause to depart) the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he devised against the Jews. And the king held out his golden sceptre towards Esther, and Esther arose and stood before the king." This verse gives a summary of the contents of Esther's speech, which is reported verbally in vv. 5 and 6, so that we must translate the imperfects *watit^achaneen* (OT:2603) *wateeb^ak^a* (OT:1058) - *watipol* (OT:5307): She spoke before the king, falling at his feet and beseeching him with weeping, that he would do away with *haamaan* (OT:2001) *raa`at* (OT:7451), the evil that Haman had done, and his device against the Jews. The king stretched out his sceptre (comp. Est 4:11) as a sign that he would graciously grant her petition; whereupon she arose, stood before the king, and made known her request.

Esther 8:5-6

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Esther 8:5-6

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, 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:

The introductory formula are in part similar to those used Est 1:19; 5:4,8; 7:3; but the petition referring to a great and important matter, they are strengthened by two new phrases: "If the thing is advisable (*kaasheer* (OT:3787), proper, convenient, advantageous, a later word occurring again only Eccl 11:6; 10:10 - in 2:21; 4:4-5,10 of the same book, *kish^arown* (OT:3788)) before the king, and if I be pleasing in his eyes, let it be written (let a writing be used, like Est 3:9), to frustrate (*l^ahaashiyb* (OT:7725), i.e., to put out of force) the letters, the device of Haman...which he wrote to destroy the Jews, who are in all the provinces of the king." *haamaan* (OT:2001) *machashebet* (OT:4284), the device, the proposal of Haman, is added to *hac^apaariym* (OT:5612), briefly to characterize the contents of the letters. On the matter itself, comp. 3:8f. and 12f. "For how shall I endure to see the destruction of my people?" The verbs *w^araa'iytiy* (OT:7200) *'uwkal* (OT:3201) are so combined that the second is governed by the first, *w^ari'iytiy* standing instead of the infinitive; comp. Ew. §285, c. *raa'aah* (OT:7200) cons. *b^a* denotes an interested beholding, whether painful or joyous, of something; comp. Gen 44:34. *mowledet* (OT:4138) in parallelism with *`aam* (OT:5971) denotes those who are of like descent, the family, members of a tribe.

Esther 8:7-8

Then the king Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand upon the Jews.

The king could not simply revoke the edict issued by Haman in due legal form, but, ready to perform the request of the queen, he first assures her of his good intentions, reminding her and Mordochai that he has given the house of Haman to Esther and hanged Haman, because he laid hand on the Jews (*taaluw* (OT:8518) '*otow* (OT:853), him they have executed); and then grants them permission, as he had formerly done to Haman, to send letters to the Jews in the king's name, and sealed with the king's seal, and to write *b^aeeyneeykem* (OT:5869) *kaTowb* (OT:2896), "as seems good to you," i.e., to give in writing such orders as might in Esther's and Mordochai's judgment render the edict of Haman harmless. "For," he adds, "what is written in the king's name and sealed with his seal cannot be reversed." This confirmatory clause is added by the king with reference to the law in general, not as speaking of himself objectively as "the king." *l^ahaashiyb* (OT:7725) '*eeyn* (OT:369) refers to Esther's request: *l^ahaashiyb* (OT:7725) *yikaateeb* (OT:3789) (v. 5). *w^anach^atowm* (OT:2856), *infin. abs.* used instead of the *perfect*.

Esther 8:9-14

Then were the king's scribes called at that time in the third month, that is, the month Sivan, on the three and twentieth day thereof; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded unto the Jews, and to

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the lieutenants, and the deputies and rulers of the provinces which are from India unto Ethiopia, an hundred twenty and seven provinces, according to their language.

These letters were prepared in the same manner as those of Haman (Est 3:12-15), on the 23rd day of the third month, the month Sivan, and sent into all the provinces. "And it was written according to all that Mordochai commanded." They were sent to the Jews and to the satraps, etc., of the whole wide realm from India to Ethiopia (see 1:1), while those of Haman had been issued only to the satraps, etc. The rest coincides with Est 3:12. *wayik^atob* (OT:3789), and he (Mordochai) wrote. To show the speed with which the letters were despatched, (messengers) "on horseback, on coursers, government coursers, the sons of the stud," is added to *haaraatsiym* (OT:7323) *b^ayad* (OT:3027). *rekesh* (OT:7409) is a collective, meaning swift horses, coursers; comp. 1 Kings 5:8. *'achash^araaniym* (vv. 11 and 14) answers to the Old-Persian *kschatrana*, from *kschatra*, government, king, and means government, royal, or court studs.

So Haug in Ewald's *bibl. Jahrb.* v. p. 154. The older explanation, mules, on the other hand, is founded on the modern Persian *estar*, which, to judge from the Sanscrit *açvatara*, must in ancient Persian have been *açpatara*. *ramaakiym* (OT:7424), *hap leg* from *ramaak^a* (OT:7424), answering to the Syriac *remakaa'*, herd, especially a herd of horses, and to the Arabic *ramaka*, stud, is explained by Bertheau as a superlative form for the animal who excels the rest of the herd of stud in activity, perhaps the breeding stallion, while others understand it of the stud in general. The contents of the edict follow in vv. 11 and 12: "that the king allows the Jews in every city to assemble and to stand for their life (i.e., to fight for their lives, comp. Dan 12:1), to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish all the power (*chayil* (OT:2428), military power) of the people and province that should assault them, children and women, and to plunder their property, upon a certain day," etc. The appointed time is thus stated as in Est 3:13. The Jews were thus authorized to attack and destroy all enemies who should assault them on the day appointed for their extermination. V. 13 coincides with Est 3:14b, with this difference, that the Jews are to be ready on this day to avenge themselves on their enemies. V. 14 also is similar to Est 3:15, except

that the expression is strengthened by an addition to *haaraatsiym* (OT:7323) as in v. 10, and by that of *d^achuwpiym* (OT:1765), urged on, to *m^abahaliym* (OT:926), hastened, to point out the utmost despatch possible.

Esther 8:15-17

And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad.

The joy experienced throughout the kingdom at these measures. V. 15. After transacting with the king this measure so favourable to the Jews, Mordochai went out from the king in a garment of deep blue and white material (comp. Est 1:6), and with a great crown of gold, and a mantle of byssus and purple. *tak^ariyk^a* (OT:8509), *hap leg*, in the Aramaean *tak^ariykaa'*, a wide mantle or covering. The meaning is not, as Bertheau remarks, that he left the king in the garment which had been, according to Est 6:8f., presented to him, nor that he left him with fresh tokens of his favour, clothed in a garment, crown, and mantle just bestowed on him, but that he left him in a magnificent state garment, and otherwise festally apparelled, that he might thus show, even by his external appearance, the happiness of his heart. Of these remarks, the first and last are quite correct; the second, however, can by no means be so, because it affords no answer to the question how Mordochai had obtained crown and mantle during his stay with the king and in the royal palace. The garments in which Mordochai left the king are evidently the state garments of the first minister, which Mordochai received at his installation to his office, and, as such, no fresh token of royal favour, but only his actual induction in his new dignity, and a sign of this induction to all who saw him issue from the palace so adorned. "The city of Susa rejoiced and was glad," i.e., rejoiced for

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gladness. The city, i.e., its inhabitants on the whole.

Verse 16. The Jews (i.e., in Susa, for those out of the city are not spoken of till v. 17) had light and gladness, and delight and honour." *'owraah* (OT:219) (this form occurs only here and Ps 109:12), light, is a figurative expression for prosperity. *y^aqaar* (OT:3366), honour-in the joy manifested by the inhabitants of Susa at the prevention of the threatened destruction.

Verse 17. And in every province and city...there was joy and a glad day, a feast day, comp. Est 9:19,22, while Haman's edict had caused grief and lamentation, Est 4:3. "And many of the people of the land (i.e., of the heathen inhabitants of the Persian empire) became Jews, for the fear of the Jews fell upon them." *mit^ayahadiym* (OT:3054), to confess oneself a Jew, to become a Jew, a denominative formed from *y^ahuwdiy* (OT:3064), occurs only here. On the confirmatory clause, comp. Ex 15:16; Deut 11:25. This conversion of many of the heathen to Judaism must not be explained only, as by Clericus and Grotius, of a change of religion on the part of the heathen, *ut sibi hoc modo securitatem et reginae favorem pararent, metuentes potentiam Mardechai*. This may have been the inducement with some of the inhabitants of Susa. But the majority certainly acted from more honourable motives, viz., a conviction, forced upon them by the unexpected turn of affairs in favour of the Jews, of the truth of the Jewish religion; and the power of that faith and trust in God manifested by the Jews, and so evidently justified by the fall of Haman and the promotion of Mordochai, contrasted with the vanity and misery of polytheism, to which even the heathen themselves were not blind. When we consider that the same motives in subsequent times, when the Jews as a nation were in a state of deepest humiliation, attracted the more earnest-minded of the heathen to the Jewish religion, and induced them to become proselytes, the fact here related will not appear surprising.

Ch. 9. The Jews Avenged of Their Enemies. The Feast of Purim Instituted.

On the day appointed by both edicts, the Jews assembled in the towns and provinces of the kingdom to slay all who sought their hurt, and being supported by the royal officials, inflicted a great defeat upon their enemies (vv. 1-10). At the queen's desire, the king granted permission to the Jews in Susa to fight against their enemies on the following day also (vv. 11-15), while in the other towns and districts of the kingdom they fought for their lives only on the 13th of Adar; so that in these places they rested on the 14th, but in Susa not till the 15th, and consequently kept in the latter the one day, in the former the other, as a day of feasting and rejoicing (vv. 16-19). The observance of this day of resting as a festival, under the name of Purim, by all the Jews in the Persian monarchy, was then instituted by Esther and Mordochai (vv. 20-32).

Esther 9:1-10

Now in the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, (though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them;)

Verse 1-10. **The Jews avenged of their enemies.** - V. 1. In the twelfth month, on the thirteenth day of the same-the Jews gathered themselves together in their cities, etc. Several parenthetical clauses succeed this definition of time, so that the statement of what then took place does not follow till *niq^ahaluw* (OT:6950), v. 2. These parenthetical clauses state not only the meaning of the day just named, but also give a general notice of the

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conflict between the Jews and their enemies. The first runs: "when the word of the king drew nigh and his decree to be done," i.e., when the execution of the royal decree approached. The second is: "on the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have the mastery of them, and it was changed (i.e., the contrary occurred), that the Jews had the mastery over them that hated them." *b^a shaalaT* (OT:7980), to rule, to have the mastery over. *nahapowk^a* (OT:2015) is *infin. abs.*, used instead of the *imperf. huw'* (OT:1931) is referred by Bertheau to *yowm* (OT:3117): the day was changed from a day of misfortune to a day of prosperity for the Jews, alluding to v. 22; but it is not a change of the day which is here spoken of, but a change of the hope of the enemies into its opposite; hence we must regard *huw'* (OT:1931) as neuter: it was changed, i.e., the contrary occurred. The pronoun *heemaah* (OT:1992) serves to emphasize the subject; comp. Ewald, §314, *a*, who in this and similar cases takes *huw'* (OT:1931) *heemaah* (OT:1992) in the sense of *ipse, ipsi*.

Verse 2-3. *b^a aareeyhem* (OT:5892), in their cities, i.e., the cities in which they dwelt in all the dominions of the king. *yaad* (OT:3027) *lish^aloach* (OT:7971), to stretch out the hand (as also in Est 2:21; 3:6, for the purpose of killing) against those who sought their hurt, i.e., sought to destroy them. "And no one stood before them (*bip^aneey* (OT:6440) *aamad* (OT:5975), like Josh 10:8; 21:42, and elsewhere), because the fear of them fell upon all people (see rem. on Est 8:17). And all the rulers of the provinces, and the satraps and governors (comp. 8:9), and those that did the king's business (*ham^alaa'kaah* (OT:4399) *oseey* (OT:6213), see rem. on 3:9), supported the Jews (*nisaa'* (OT:5375) like Ezra 1:4), because the fear of Mordochai fell upon them."

Verse 4. "For Mordochai was great in the king's house (was much esteemed by the king), and his fame went through all the provinces (*shaam^aow* (OT:8085) as in Josh 6:27; 9:9; Jer 6:24); for this man Mordochai became continually greater;" comp. 2 Chron 17:12, where the partic. *gaadeel* (OT:1432) stands instead of the inf. abs. *gaadowl* (OT:1419).

Verse 5. Thus supported, the Jews inflicted defeat upon their enemies with the sword, and with slaughter and destruction. *hikaah* (OT:5221) with *b^a*, to deal a blow upon or against some one, to cause or bring about upon enemies a defeat; comp. e.g., 2 Sam 23:10; 24:17; Num 22:6. The notion is strengthened by *wgw' makat-cherib*, literally, to strike a stroke of the sword, and of slaughter, and of destruction, in accordance with the decree, Est 8:11. "And did according to their will to those that hated them," i.e., retaliated upon their enemies at their discretion.

Verse 6. In the citadel of Susa they destroyed (in round numbers) 500 men.

Verse 7-10. Also they slew the ten sons of Haman, whose names are given, 7-9;

(Note: The peculiar position of the names of the sons of Haman in editions of the Bible, grounded as it is upon the ancient mode of writing, must originally have been intended merely to give prominence to the names, and facilitate their computation. The later Rabbis, however, have endeavoured to discover therein some deeper meaning. This mode of writing the names has been said to be *signum voti, ut a ruina sua nunquam amplius resurgant*, or also a sign *quod sicut hi decem filii in linea perpendiculari, unus supra alterum, suspensi fuerint*. Comp. Buxtorf, *Synagoga jud.* pp. 157-159 of the Basle edit. 1580. What is indicated by the smaller forms of the letters *t*, *sh* (OT:7716), and *z*, in the first, seventh, and tenth names, is not known; the larger *w* in the tenth may have been meant to give prominence, by the character employed, to this name as the last.) but on the spoil they laid not their hand, though this was allowed to them, Est 8:11, as it had been commanded to their enemies by Haman's edict, 3:13, *ut ostenderent, se non aliud quam vitae suae incolumitatem quaerere; hanc enim perdere volebant ii qui occidebantur*. C. a Lapide.

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Esther 9:11-12

On that day the number of those that were slain in Shushan the palace was brought before the king.

When on the same day an account was given to the king of the result of the conflict, and the number of those slain in Susa reported, he announced to Queen Esther: the Jews have slain in the citadel of Susa 500 men and the ten sons of Haman; "what have they done in the rest of the king's provinces?" i.e., if they have killed 500 men in Susa, how many may they not have slain in other parts of the kingdom? and then asked her what else she wished or required. With respect to the words, comp. Est 5:6, and 7:2.

Esther 9:13

Then said Esther, If it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews which are in Shushan to do to morrow also according unto this day's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows.

Esther requested: "let it be granted to the Jews which are in Susa to do to-morrow also according to the decree of to-day (i.e., exactly as to-day), and let the ten sons of Haman be hanged upon the tree," i.e., their dead bodies nailed on crosses - *majoris infamiae causa*, according to Hebrew and Persian custom; comp. Deut 21:22 and the explanation of Ezra 6:11. On the motive for this request, see above, p. 194.

Esther 9:14

And the king commanded it so to be done: and the decree was given at Shushan; and they hanged Haman's ten sons.

The king commanded it so to be done. "Then was a decree given at Susa, and they hanged the ten sons of Haman." The decree given in Susa does not refer to the hanging of the sons of Haman, but to the permission given to the Jews to fight against their enemies on the morrow also. This is required not only by a comparison of Est 8:13, but also by the connection of the present verse; for in consequence of this decree the Jews assembled on the 14th Adar (comp. *wayiqaaahaluw* (OT:6950), then they assembled themselves, v. 15), while the hanging of the sons of Haman, on the contrary, is related in an accessory clause by a simple perfect, *taaluw* (OT:8518).

Esther 9:15-17

For the Jews that were in Shushan gathered themselves together on the fourteenth day also of the month

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Adar, and slew three hundred men at Shushan; but on the prey they laid not their hand.

On this second day the Jews slew 300 more; comp. v. 10. - V. 16. The rest of the Jews in the provinces, i.e., the Jews in the other parts of the kingdom, assembled themselves and stood for their lives, and had rest from their enemies, and slew of their foes 75,000, but upon the spoil they laid not their hand. *`al* (OT:5921) *`aamad* (OT:5975) like Est 8:11. The *mee'oy^abeeyhem* (OT:341) *w^anowach* (OT:5118) inserted between *n'* (OT:4994) *`al* (OT:5921) *w^aaamod* (OT:5975) and *w^ahaarowg* (OT:2026) is striking; we should rather have expected the resting or having rest from their enemies after the death of the latter, as in vv. 17 and 18, where this is plainly stated to have taken place on the day after the slaughter. The position of these words is only explained by the consideration, that the narrator desired at once to point out how the matter ended. The narrative continues in the *infin. abs.* instead of expressing this clause by the *infin. constr.*, and so causing it to be governed by what precedes. Thus-as Ew. §351, *c*, remarks-all the possible hues of the sentence fade into this grey and formless termination (viz., the use of the *infin. absol.* instead of the *verb. fin.*). This inaccuracy of diction does not justify us, however, in assuming that we have here an interpolation or an alteration in the text. The statement of the day is given in v. 17, and then the clause following is again added in the *inf. absol.*: "and they rested on the 14th day of the same (of Adar), and made it a day of feasting and gladness."

Esther 9:18-19

But the Jews that were at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth day thereof; and on the fourteenth thereof; and on the fifteenth day of the same they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

The Jews in Susa, on the other hand, who were both on the 13th and 14th Adar still fighting against their enemies, and did not rest till the 15th, made this latter their day of rejoicing. - In v. 19 it is again stated that the Jews in the country towns and

villages made the 14th their day of gladness, and this statement is appended by *`al-keen* to make this appear the result of what precedes. The *Chethiv hap^arowziym* is perhaps an Aramaic expression for *p^araaziym* (OT:6521), Deut 3:5 and 1 Sam 6:18. *p^arowziy* means the inhabitants of the open, i.e., unfortified, towns and villages of the plains in contrast to the fortified capital; see on Deut 3:5. On *p^araazowt* (OT:6519), compare Ezek 38:11; Zech 2:8. *wgw' maanowt* (OT:4490) *mish^alowach* (OT:4916), and of mutual sending of gifts, i.e., portions of food; comp. Neh 8:10,12.

Esther 9:20-22

And Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews that were in all the provinces of the king

Ahasuerus, both nigh and far,

The feast of Purim instituted by letters from Mordochai and Esther. V. 20. Mordochai wrote these things, and sent letters to all the Jews, etc. *haa'eeleh* (OT:428) *had^abaariym* (OT:1697) does not mean the contents of the present book but the events of the last days, especially the fact that the Jews, after overcoming their enemies, rested in Susa on the 15th, in the other provinces on the 14th Adar, and kept these days as days of rejoicing. This is obvious from the object of these letters, v. 21: *wgw' `aleeyhem* (OT:5921) *l^aqayeem* (OT:6965), to appoint among them "that they should keep the 14th day of the month Adar and the 15th day of the same yearly, as the

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days on which the Jews rested from their enemies, and as the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a glad day, that they should keep them as days of feasting and joy, and of mutual sending of portions one to another, and gifts to the poor." *yowm* (OT:3117) *`aasaah* (OT:6213), to keep, to celebrate a day. The *`osiyim* (OT:6213) *lih^ayowt* (OT:1961), v. 21, is after long parentheses taken up again in *'owtaam* (OT:853) *la`asowt* (OT:6213). *qayeem* (OT:6965), to establish a matter, to authorize it, comp. Ruth. Est 4:7. Both the 14th and 15th Adar were made festivals because the Jews on them had rest from their enemies, and celebrated this rest by feasting, some on the former, some on the latter day.

Esther 9:23

And the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto them;

And the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordochai had written to them. They had begun, as v. 22 tells us, by keeping both days, and Mordochai wrote to them that they should make this an annual custom. This they agreed to do in consequence of Mordochai's letters. The reason of their so doing is given in vv. 24 and 25, and the name of this festival is explained, v. 26, by a brief recapitulation of the events which gave rise to it. Then follows, v. 26b and 27, another wordy statement of the fact, that it was by reason of this letter, and on account of what they had seen, i.e., experienced, that the annual celebration of this feast was instituted for a perpetual memorial to all Jews at all times (vv. 28 and 29).

Esther 9:24

Because Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that is, the lot, to consume them, and to destroy them;

For Haman, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them (comp. Est 3:1,6f.), and had cast Pur, that is the lot (see on 3:7), to consume them and to destroy them. *haamam* (OT:2000), mostly used of the discomfiture with which God destroys the enemies, Ex 14:24; Deut 2:15, and elsewhere.

Esther 9:25

But when Esther came before the king, he commanded by letters that his wicked device, which he devised against the Jews, should return upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.

uwb^abo'aah (OT:935), and when it (the matter), not when she, Esther, came before the king-for Esther is not named in the context-he commanded by letters (Est 8:8), i.e., he gave the written order: let the wicked device which he devised against the Jews return upon his own head; and they hanged him and his sons upon the tree.

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Esther 9:26-27

Wherefore they called these days Purim after the name of Pur. Therefore for all the words of this letter, and of that which they had seen concerning this matter, and which had come unto them,

Wherefore they called these days Purim after the name Pur. This first *`al-keen* refers to what precedes and states the reason, resulting from what has just been mentioned, why this festival received the name of *Purim*. With the second *`al-keen* begins a new sentence which reaches to v. 28, and explains how it happened that these feast-days became a general observance with all Jews; namely, that because of all the words of this letter (of Mordochai, v. 20), and of what they had seen concerning the matter (*`al-kaakaah*, concerning so and so), and what had come upon them (therefore for two reasons: (1) because of the written injunction of Mordochai; and (2) because they had themselves experienced this event), the Jews established, and took upon themselves, their descendants, and all who should join themselves unto them (proselytes), so that it should not fail (i.e., inviolably), to keep (to celebrate) these two days according to the writing concerning them and the time appointed thereby year by year.

Esther 9:28

And that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed.

And that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and these days of Purim are not to pass away among the Jews, nor their remembrance to cease among their seed. The participles *w^ana`asiym* (OT:6213) *niz^akaariym* (OT:2142) still depend on *lih^ayowt*

(OT:1961), v. 27. Not till the last clause does the construction change in *ya`ab^aruw* (OT:5674) *lo'* (OT:3808) to the *temp. finit. ya`abowr* (OT:5674) *w^alo'* (OT:3808) is a periphrasis of the adverb: imperishably, inviolably. *kik^ataabaam* (OT:3789), *secundum scriptum eorum*, i.e., as Mordochai had written concerning them (v. 23). *kiz^amanaam* (OT:2165), as he had appointed their time. *min* (OT:4480) *cuwp* (OT:5488), to come to an end from, i.e., to cease among their descendants.

Esther 9:29-32

Then Esther the queen, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote with all authority, to confirm this second letter of Purim.

A second letter from Queen Esther and Mordochai to appoint fasting and lamentation on the days of Purim. V. 29.

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And Esther the queen and Mordochai the Jew wrote with all strength, that is very forcibly, to appoint this second letter concerning Purim, i.e., to give to the contents of this second letter the force of law. *hazo't* (OT:2063) refers to what follows, in which the contents of the letter are briefly intimated. The letter is called *hasheeniya* (OT:8145) with reference to the first letter sent by Mordochai, v. 20f.

Verse 30-32. And he (Mordochai) sent letters, i.e., copies of the writing mentioned v. 29, to all the Jews in the 127 provinces (which formed) the kingdom of Ahashverosh, words of peace and truth, i.e., letters containing words of peace and truth (v. 31), to appoint these days of Purim in their portions of time according as Mordochai the Jew and Esther the queen had appointed, and as they (the Jews) had appointed for themselves and for their descendants, the things (or words = precepts) of the fastings and their lamentations. *biz^amaneyhem* (OT:2165), in their appointed times; as the suffix relates to the days of Purim, the *z^amaniyim* can mean only portions of time in these days. The sense of vv. 29-31 is as follows: According to the injunctions of Esther and Mordochai, the Jews appointed for themselves and their descendants times also of fasting and lamentation in the days of Purim. To make this appointment binding upon all the Jews in all provinces of the Persian monarchy, Esther and Mordochai published a second letter, which was sent by Mordochai throughout the whole realm of King Ahashverosh. To this is added, v. 32, that the decree of Esther appointed these matters of Purim, i.e., the injunction mentioned vv. 29-31, also to fast and weep during these days, and it was written in the book. *haceeper* (OT:5612), the book in which this decree was written, cannot mean the writing of Esther mentioned v. 29, but some written document concerning Purim which has not come down to us, though used as an authority by the author of the present book. The times when the fasting and lamentation were to take place in the days of Purim, are not stated in this verse; this could, however, only be on the day which Haman had appointed for the extermination of the Jews, viz., the 13th Adar. This day is kept by the Jews as '*ec^ateer* (OT:635) *ta`aniya* (OT:8589), Esther's fast.

(Note: According to 2 Macc. 15:36, the victory over Nicanor was to be celebrated on the 13th Adar, but, according to a note of Dr. Cassel in Grimm's *kurzgef. exeget. Handb. zu den Apokryphen*, on 2 Macc. 15:36, the festival of Nicanor is mentioned in Jewish writings, as *Megillat Taanit*, c. 12, in the

Babylonian Talmud, *tr. Taanit*, f. 18b, in *Massechet Sofrim* 17, 4, but has been by no means observed for at least the last thousand years. The book *Scheiltot* of R. Acha (in the 9th century) speaks of the 13th Adar as a fast-day in memory of the fast of Esther, while even at the time of the Talmud the "Fast of Esther" is spoken of as a three days fast, kept, however, after the feast of Purim. From all this it is obvious, that a diversity of opinions prevailed among the Rabbis concerning the time of this fast of Esther.)

Ch. 10. The Power and Greatness of Mordochai.

Esther 10:1-3

And the king Ahasuerus laid a tribute upon the land, and upon the isles of the sea.

And King Ahashverosh laid a tribute upon the land, and upon the isles of the sea. V. 2. And all the acts of his power and of his might, and the statement of the greatness of Mordochai to which the king advanced him, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia? The *Chethiv 'chshrsh* is a clerical error for *'achash^aweerosh* (OT:325). The word *mac* (OT:4522), service, here stands for tribute. As the provinces of the kingdom paid the imposts for the most part in natural produce, which they had reared or obtained by the labour of their hands, their labour (agriculture, cattle-keeping, etc.) was to a certain extent service rendered to the king. The matter of v. 1 seems extraneous to the contents of our book, which has hitherto communicated only

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such information concerning Ahashverosh as was necessary for the complete understanding of the feast of Purim. "It seems" - remarks Bertheau - "as thou the historian had intended to tell in some further particulars concerning the greatness of King Ahashverosh, for the sake of giving his readers a more accurate notion of the influential position and the agency of Mordochai, the hero of his book, who, according to Est 9:4, waxed greater and greater; but then gave up his intention, and contented himself with referring to the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia, which contained information of both the power and might of Ahashverosh and the greatness of Mordochai." There is not, however, the slightest probability in such a conjecture.

This matter may be simply explained by the circumstance, that the author of this book was using as an authority the book of the chronicles alluded to in v. 2, and is quite analogous with the mode observed in the books of Kings and Chronicles by historians both of Babylonian and post-Babylonian days, who quote from the documents they make use of such events only as seem to them important with regard to the plan of their own work, and then at the close of each reign refer to the documents themselves, in which more may be found concerning the acts of the kings, at the same time frequently adding supplementary information from these sources-comp. e.g., 1 Kings 14:30; 15:7,23,32; 22:47-50; 2 Kings 15:37; 2 Chron 12:15 - with this difference only, that in these instances the supplementary notices follow the mention of the documents, while in the present book the notice precedes the citation.

As, however, this book opened with a description of the power and glory of King Ahashverosh, but yet only mentioned so much concerning this ruler of 127 provinces as was connected with the history of the Jews, its author, before referring to his authorities, gives at its close the information contained in v. 1, from the book of the chronicles of the kingdom, in which probably it was connected with a particular description of the power and greatness of Ahashverosh, and probably of the wars in which he engaged, for the sake of briefly intimating at the conclusion whence the king derived the means for keeping up the splendour described at the commencement of the book. This book of the chronicles contained accounts not only of the power

and might of Ahashverosh, but also a *paaraashaah* (OT:6575), a plain statement or accurate representation of the greatness of Mordochai wherewith the king had made him great, i.e., to which he had advanced him, and therefore of the honours of the individual to whom the Jews were indebted for their preservation.

On this account is it referred to. For Mordochai was next to the king, i.e., prime minister of the king (*mish^aneh* (OT:4932), comp. 2 Chron 28:7), and great among the Jews and acceptable to the multitude of his brethren, i.e., he was also a great man among the Jews and was beloved and esteemed by all his fellow-countrymen (on *raatsuwy* (OT:7521), comp. Deut 23:24), seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all his race. This description of Mordochai's position with respect both to the king and his own people has, as expressive of an exalted frame of mind, a rhetorical and poetic tinge. Hence it contains such expressions as *'echaayw* (OT:251) *rob* (OT:7230), the fulness of his brethren, *Towb* (OT:2896) *daarash* (OT:1875); comp. Ps 122:9; Jer 38:4. On *shaalowm* (OT:7965) *diber* (OT:1696), comp. Ps 85:9; 35:20; 27:3. *zar^aow* (OT:2233) in parallelism with *`amow* (OT:5971) is not the descendants of Mordochai, or his people, but his race. Comp. on this signification of *zera`* (OT:2233), 2 Kings 11:1; Isa 61:9. The meaning of the two last phrases is: Mordochai procured both by word and deed the good and prosperity of his people. And this is the way in which honour and fortune are attained, the way inculcated by the author of the 34th Psalm in vv. 13-15, when teaching the fear of the Lord.

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