

Story of Esther: Part 1

Esther 1-3



There was a king of Persia named Xerxes who ruled over 127 provinces, from India down to Ethiopia.



He threw a huge party that lasted 6 months for all the princes and military officials! Then he threw a 7 day party for his palace servants and officials. In the meantime, Queen Vashti was holding her own party for the women of the kingdom.



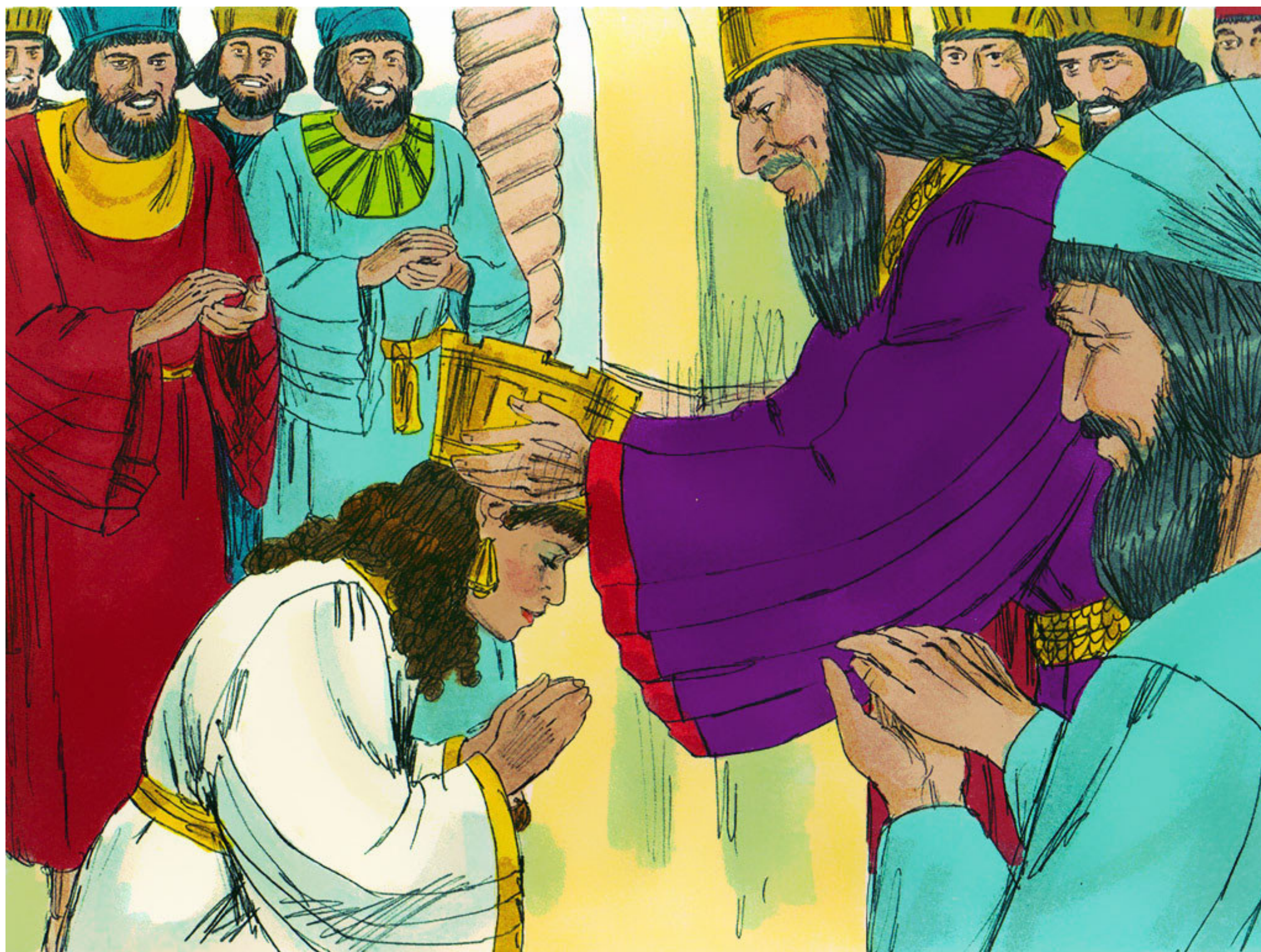
On the seventh day of the party, the drunk king summoned Queen Vashti so he could show off her beauty in front of all the other men. Queen Vashti refused to attend and the King was furious.



The king's advisors told him to banish Queen Vashti and replace her with someone more worthy. 'We will hold a beauty contest and whoever you choose will become the next queen of Persia!' The king liked the idea and the servants were dispatched to find the most beautiful young women in all the empire.



Now there was a Jewish man named Mordecai who lived very close to the palace. He had a cousin named Esther, who was very beautiful. Esther was spotted by the King's servants and taken off to be in the beauty contest.



For a year Esther was pampered with beauty treatments and given expensive clothing and jewelry. The women were presented to the king one by one. When the King Xerxes met Esther he was so taken with her that he placed the crown on her head right then and there!



So Esther became queen and Mordecai became a palace official. All the while they kept Esther's Jewish nationality a secret. One day while Mordecai was on duty, he overheard two of the guards plotting to kill the King. Mordecai quickly passed this information to Esther who told the king about it and gave Mordecai credit for unearthing the plot. The two plotters were found guilty and executed.



Meanwhile, the king promoted a man named Haman to Prime Minister - the second most powerful position in the Empire. Haman was a descendant of Agag, king of the Amalekites, who were sworn enemies of the Jews. Everyone was expected to bow down before Haman as he passed by, but Mordecai refused to bow down to anyone but his God.



This made Haman very angry, and when he found out that Mordecai was a Jew, it made him furious! Right then and there, Haman decided that it was time to get rid of not only Mordecai, but all the Jews in Persia.



Haman approached King Xerxes, 'There is a race of people called the Jews, scattered throughout your kingdom and their laws are different to ours. Sooner or later, they will cause big problems so we must eliminate them completely. I have 375 tons of silver I'd like to donate to the royal treasury if this can be done.'



The decree was written in the name of King Xerxes and sealed with the king's signet ring. Messengers were dispatched giving the order that all Jews must be annihilated on a single day the following year – the 13th day Adar (March 7th). The date was decided by drawing lots called 'Purim'.



When Mordecai found out he and all Jews were going to face annihilation, he put on sackcloth and ashes and stood outside the gate of the palace wailing and crying bitterly. News of the king's decree swept through the kingdom and soon there was great mourning among the Jews.



Mordecai got a message to Queen Esther to let her know what was happening. 'You need to stand up for your people,' he said, 'it is possible that you have been raised to royalty for such a time as this.'



When Esther got the message she realised that Mordecai was right! 'Go throughout the kingdom and ask all the Jews to fast and pray,' she replied. 'My maids and I will do the same. Then, even though it is against the law, I will approach the king ... and if I die ... I die.'



To go into the King's court without being summoned was punishable with death. Three days later, Esther put on her royal gown and entered the inner court – would the king welcome her or execute her? The king held out his gold sceptre to let her enter his presence.



‘What is your request my queen?’ he asked. Esther responded, ‘If it please the king, let your Majesty and Haman come to a special banquet I have prepared.’



1 The banquet was arranged and the King asked Esther once again what she wanted. 'I would like the King and Haman to come to another banquet tomorrow. At that time I will explain everything.'



Haman was delighted the king and queen had included him in their inner circle! The only thing that upset him was that as he left the palace Mordecai refused to bow down to him.



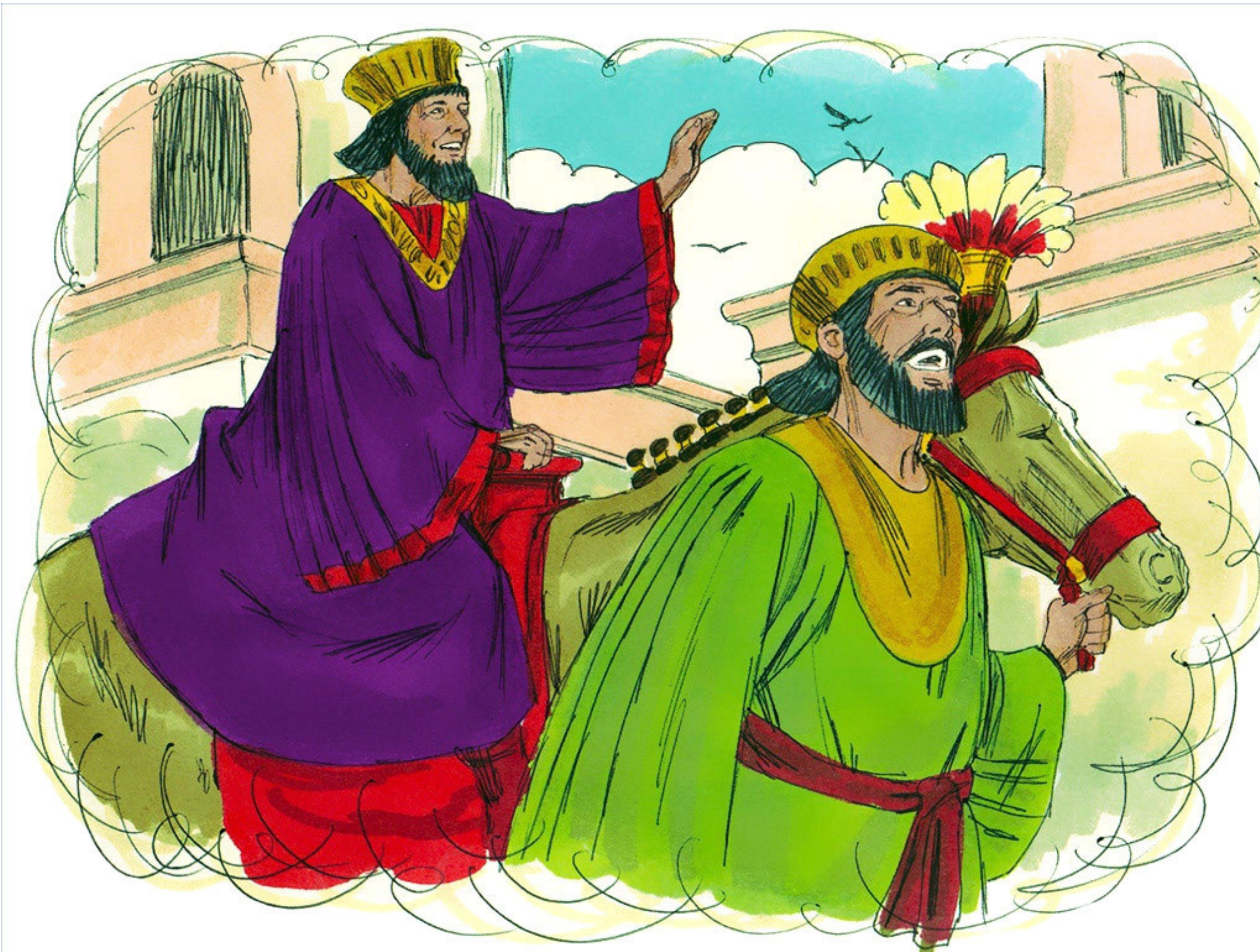
One of Haman's friends spoke up. 'Go and build a gallows that stands seventy-five feet tall tonight, and in the morning, you can ask the king to hang Mordecai.'



So that night Haman ordered the gallows to be built. Meanwhile the King could not sleep and asked for the records of his reign to be read to him. The account of how Mordecai exposed the assassination plot of two palace guards was read and the king realised he had not rewarded Mordecai for his loyalty.



The next morning Haman arrived at the palace to ask the king to hang Mordecai. But the King spoke first, 'What should be done for a man that pleases me?'



Thinking that he was going to be honored Haman suggested, 'Bring out one of the king's royal robes and the king's own horse. Instruct one of the king's most noble men to place the robe on the honoured person and then lead him through the city square announcing, "This is what happens to the man the king wishes to honour!"'



‘Great idea,’ said the king. ‘I want you to go and do all this for Mordecai the Jew. Haman was totally humiliated, as he had to lead Mordecai through the streets shouting his praise.’



That evening, the king and Haman went to the banquet that Queen Esther had prepared for them. After a while the king asked Esther, 'So what is it you want?' 'Please spare me and my people,' Esther begged. 'A decree has been sent out to kill me and my people.' 'Who would dare touch you?' the King demanded. 'It is the evil Haman, my lord. He is our enemy.'



Haman grew pale with fright, he did not know Esther was a Jew.

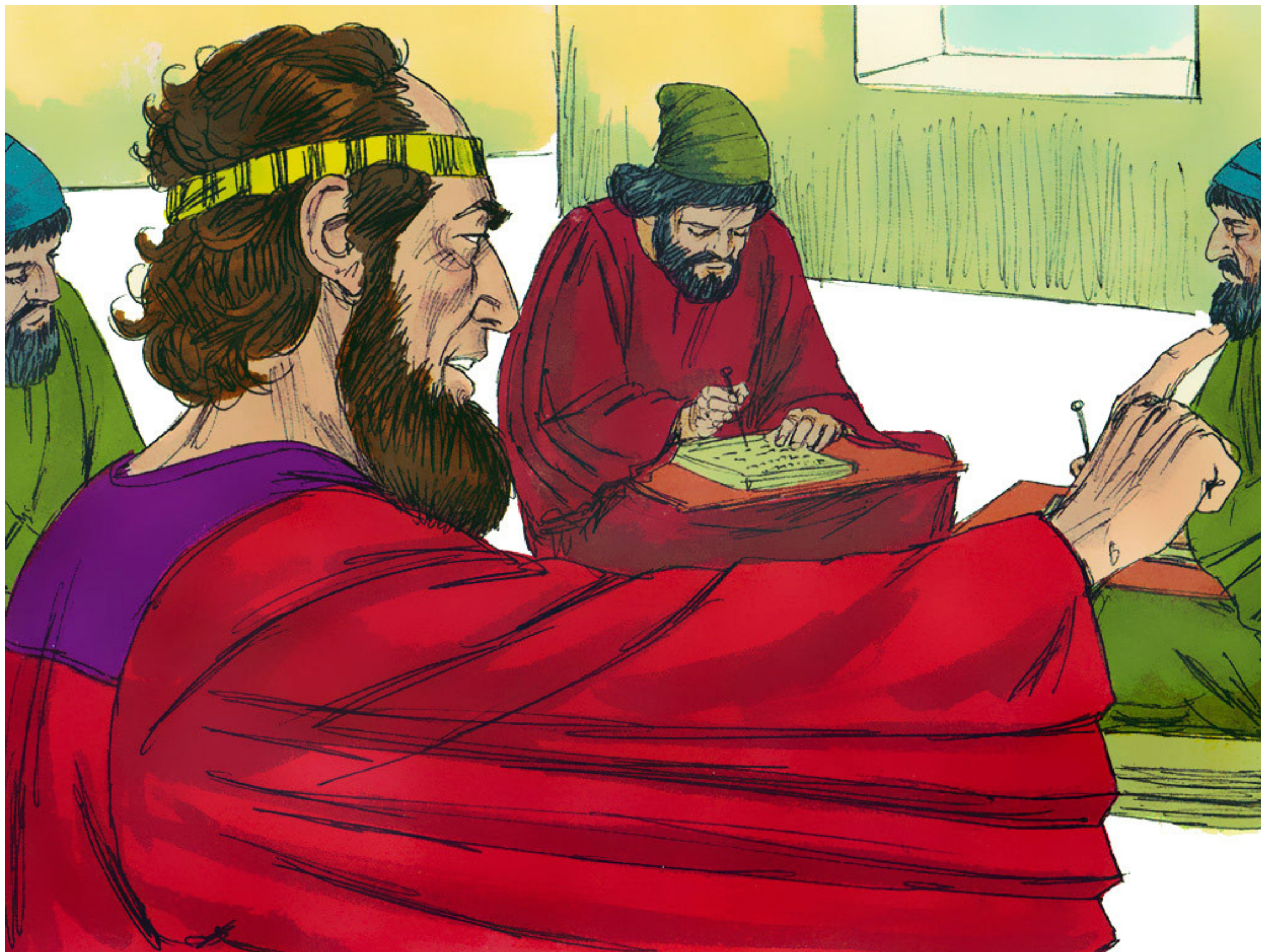


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The king jumped to his feet in a rage and stormed into the palace garden. Haman begged Esther for mercy but fell on the couch where Esther was reclining.



Just at that moment the king returned and shouted, 'Will this evil man even assault the queen right before my very eyes?' Guards were called to arrest Haman then the King ordered that he be hanged on the very gallows he had prepared for Mordecai.



The story was not over however, the decree that Haman issued was sealed with the signet ring of the king. No one could over-rule the law of the Medes and Persians. Not even the king himself. So the date was still set for the annihilation of all the Jews. Mordecai was promoted to be prime minister in Haman's place.



Mordecai was smart. He wasn't able to stop Haman's law into going into effect. But he was able to make a new law that said all the Jews could band together and fight to protect their families. The new law was signed with the King's signet ring.



The Jews prepared to defend themselves. On the day set for them to be killed, anyone who attacked them was defeated, including Haman's sons. The fighting went into a second day but the Jews were victorious.



Mordecai sent out a decree that these two days should be celebrated every year with a large festival and gifts given to each other and to the poor. The Jews agreed to celebrate the Festival of Purim every year and have done so every year since.

**Let's Talk About
The Story...**

Q

A

**Who was the young
Jewish girl who was
chosen to be queen?**



**Who was Esther's
cousin?**



**What did Haman try to
do to Mordecai?**



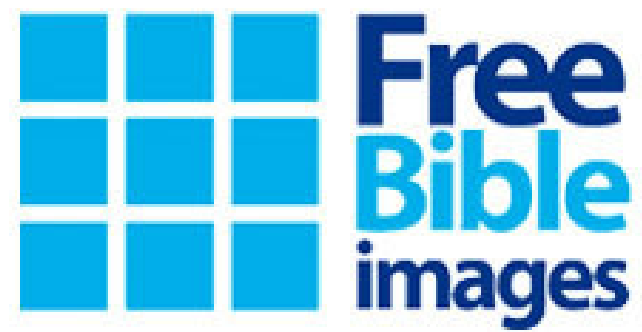
**When Esther
approached the king,
what did he point at
her?**



**Who did Haman have to
lead through the streets
in honour?**



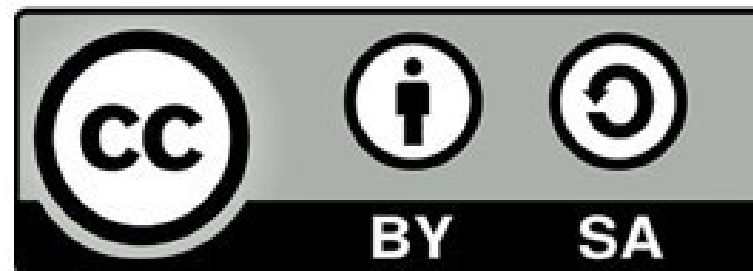
**What finally happened
to Haman?**



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