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ESTHER – PART 2  
THE EVIL ORDER

The Persian King Ahasuerus (Xerxes, Artaxerxes) threw a long party for his princes and servants. He called for his queen Vashti at the end of the party so that he could show off her beauty. Twice she refused the king's order. Because it made him look bad to those at the party he listened to their advice, and he deposed her as queen.

According to some scholars he then went on a three-year military campaign. Upon his return he called for beautiful virgins from all his 127 provinces to be brought to his palace in Shushan which was 200 miles east of Babylon. A young Jewess named Hadassah was among them. To conceal her Jewish identity, she was given the name of Esther. These women were put through 12 months of purification after which each one was given a day and night with the king to determine who would be his next queen. Esther (Hadassah) was chosen.

Hadassah was an orphan who was raised by her cousin Mordecai (Esther 2:15) as his own daughter. Her selection as queen gave Mordecai favor to sit at the king's gate, a position of honor that allowed him to know what was going on.

Mordecai learned that two of the king's chamberlains were plotting to assassinate him. He passed this information to the king through Esther, and the plot was averted. In the meantime, the king made Haman the second in command over Babylon next to only himself. The king commanded everyone to bow to Haman just as if he were the king. Day after day Mordecai refused to bow to Haman. When Haman found out Mordecai was a Jew, his hatred grew strong towards him and all Jews. With a bribe to the king of ten thousand talents of silver, he convinced King Ahasuerus to allow him, in the king's name, to order the people in all 127 provinces, (which included all Israel) to kill all Jews on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month (Adar), (Esther 3:13) and take their spoil (possessions).

Mordecai learned of it, rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth and ashes in mourning. He informed Esther of the order. We continue the story tomorrow