

Esther

XI. ESTHER

Iu on ealdum dagum wæs sum rice cyning, namcuð on worulde, Asuerus gehaten, 7 se hæfde cynerice east fram Indian oð Eþiopian lande (þæt is fram eastewardan
 5 þissere worulde 7 suþwardan oð to þam Silhearwum). Hundtwelftig scira he soðlice hæfde 7 seofon scira, swa swa us secgað bec, on his anwealde, ealle him gewylde.

On þam þridan geare his cynerices he het gewyrcean wundorlice feorme hundteontig daga on an 7
 10 hundeahtatig daga eallum his ealdormannum, 7 his eþelborennum þegnum, 7 eallum his folce, þe þa feorme gesohton—wolde him æteowian his welan 7 his mærdæ. Us is earfoðe to secgenne þa seldcuðan mærdæ on gyldenum beddum 7 agrafenum fatum, gyldene 7
 15 sylfrene, selcub æfre on pellum, 7 purpuran, 7 ælces cynnes gymmum, on menigfealdre þenunge þe man þær forðbær. Se cyning bebed þam gebeorum eallum þæt hi bliþe wæron æt his gebeorscipe 7 þæt ælc mann drunce þæs deorwurðan wines be þam þe he sylf
 20 wolde 7 him softost wære, 7 nan man ne moste neadian oðerne to maran dræncean þonne his mod wolde; ac þa byrlas scencton be þæs cyninges gesetnysse, ælcum men genoh, name þæt he wolde.

His cwen hatte Vasthi, seo wæs swiðe wlitig. Heo
 25 worhte eac feorme mid fulre mærdæ eallum þam wifmannum þe heo wolde habban to hire mærdæ, on þam mæran palente þær þær se cyning wæs oftost wunigende. Se cyning þa het on þam seofodan ðæge, þa

MS: M (17c transcript), and printed edition: A. 13) *secgenne*] *gesecgenne*, M with 'ge' partly erased. 15) *selcub*] *seldcubæ*, A. 27) *þær þær*] *þær þær*, M & A.

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- þa he bliþe wæs betwux his gebeorum, his seofon
30 burðenas þæt hi sceoldon gefeccan þa cwene Vasthi, [36]
þæt heo come to him mid hire cynehelme (swa swa
heora seode wæs þæt seo cwen werode cynehelm on f.141v
heafode); 7 he wolde æteowian hire wlite his þegnum,
forþan þe heo wæs swiþe wlitig on hiwe.
- 35 Ða eodon þa burðenas 7 abudon þære cwene þæs
cyninges hæse, ac heo hit forsoc 7 nolde gehersumian
him to his willan. Se cyning þa sona swiðe wearð
geyrsod þæt heo hine forseah on swylcere gegaderunge,
7 befran his witan (þe wæron æfre mid him on ælcum
40 his ræde þe he rædan wolde, 7 he ealle þing dyde æfre [48]
be heora ræde), hwæt him þuhte be þam be his
forsewennysse. Ða andwyrdon sona sume his ealdormen, of
Medan 7 of Persan, þe him mid druncon: ‘Seo cwen
witodlice, þe þin word forseah, leof, ne unwurðode na
45 þe ænne mid þan, ac ealle þine ealdormenn 7 eac þine
þegnas! Ðonne ure wif geaxiað be þisum wordum æt ham,
hu seo cwen forseah hire cynehlaford, þonne willað hi
eac us eallswa forseon! Ðonne beoð ealle Medas micclum
forsewene 7 þa Pærsican leoda swa us na ne licað. Ac,
50 gif þe swa geþincð, leof, gesette þisne dom þæt ealle [61]
Medas cweðað anmodum geþeahte, 7 eac þa Pærsican,
to þisre dæde: þæt seo cwen Vasthi ne cume næfre
heononforð into þinum pallente betwux þinum
gebeorum, ac hæbbe sum oðer wimman ealne hire
55 wurðmynt, hire ungelica seo ðe þe ungelicige.’ 7 se
cyning Asuerus þisne ræd underfeng, 7 man cydde þa

29) *betwux*] *be\̅t/wux*, M. 37) *wearð*] *wearðe*, M. 40) *his ræde*] *his ræda*, M; *rædan*] *ræde*, M. 44) *unwurðode*] *unwurðoðe*, M. 48) *eallswa*] *eall swa*, A. 50) *geþincð*] *geþeað\̅þincð/*, M with ‘heað’ crossed through; *gesette*] *gesete*, M. 51) *Pærsican*] *Persican*, M, *Persican leoda*, A. 52) *to þisre*] *to þisre to þisre* with first ‘to þisre’ crossed through, M. 55) *wurðmynt*] *wurðment*, M; *ungelicige*] *oflicige*, A.

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geond eall þæs cyninges willan, 7 Vasthi geseah þa þæt
heo forsewen wæs.

60 Hit wearþ þa gecweden, þurh þæs cyninges witan,
þæt man ofaxode on eallum his rice, gif ænig mæden [72]
ahwær mihte beon afunden, swa wlitiges hiwes þe him
wurðe wære, 7 swilcere gebyrde þe his gebedda wære,
7 seo þænne fenge to Vasthies wurðmynte; 7 se cyning
þa het embe þæt beon swiðe.

65 On þam dagum wæs an Iudeisc þegen on þære byrig
Susa, Mardocheus gehaten, se gelyfde soðlice on þone
lifigendan God, æfter Moyses æ; 7 he mid him hæfde his f.I42v
broðor dohtor. Seo hatte Ester, wlitig mædenmann on
wundorlicre fægernysse, 7 he hi geforðode on fægerum
70 þeawum, æfter Godes æ 7 his ege symle, 7 hæfde [85]
hi for dohtor, forðan þe hire dead wæs ge fæder ge moder,
þa þa heo unmaga wæs. Seo wæs ardllice þa gebroht 7
besæd þam cyninge, 7 he hi sceawode, 7 him sona
gelicode hire fægra nebwite, 7 lufode hi swiðe ofer ealle
75 þa oðre þe he ær gesceawode. Ac heo ne moste na for
Mardocheo nateshwon hire cynn ameldian ne þam
cyninge secgan hwilcere mægþe hire magas wæron.

Mardocheus þa folgode þam mædene to hirede, 7
hire gymæne hæfde holdlice symle, wolde gewitan hu
80 hire gelumpe. Heo wæs swiðe wlitig on wundorlicre [97]
gefægernysse 7 swiþe lufigendlic eallum onlociendum,
7 wislice geþeawod, 7 on wæstme cyrten; 7 se cyning hi
genam to cwene þa, 7 gesette þone cynehelm on hire
heafod sona þe Vasthi ær hæfde. He het þa gearcian to
85 heora gyftum swiðe mænigfealde mærdða swa him mihte
gerisan; 7 æfter heora gewunan he gewifode þa swa be his
witena ræde on heora gewitnysse, 7 his folc gegladode

59) *gecweden*] *gecweðen*, M. 63) *wurðmynte*] *wurðmente*,
M. 68) *Ester*] *Hester*, A. 69) *wundorlicre*] *wudorlicre*, M.
72) *wæs ardllice*] *wæsard*, M, *wearð*, A (see notes). 69)
wundorlicre] *wudorlicre*, M. 72) *gebroht*] *geborht*, M. 74)
hire] *hira*, M. 82) *se*] *seo*, M. 86) *gewifode*] *gewifod*, M.

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7 liþegode him on mislicum geswincum for ðære mærdæ.

90 Hit gelamp þa siððan æfter litlum firste, þæt twegen [110]

his burðena, mid bealuwe afyllede, woldon berædan swiðe unrihtlice heora cynehlaford, 7 hine acwellan, 7 embe þæt wæron. Þa wearð hit sona cuþ þam

Mardocheo, þære cwene fæderan, 7 he hit þa cydde

95 ardlice hire, 7 heo þam cyninge forð; 7 man afunde mid

him swutele tacna þæt hi swa woldon don (7 hi sylfe sædon þæt hi swa woldon), 7 man aheng hi begen on healicum

gealgan, 7 Mardocheus þa wearð þurh þa micclan hlyde cuð þam cyninge for ðære gecyþnysse. Hit wæs þa

100 gewunelic swiðe wislice þæt man gesette on cranice [122]

ælc þæra dæda þe gedon wæs mid him on þæs cyninges belimpum oððe his leode fæx. Þa het he awritan hu hine

gewarnode Mardocheus se þegen, þæt hit on geminde wære.

105 Sum ealdorman wæs þa, Aman gehaten, þone geuferode se cyning ofer ealle his þegnas, 7 ofer his [f.143v]

ealdormen. 7 het hi ealle sittan on cneowum to him swa swa to þam cyninge. 7 hine sylfne he asætte on

heahsetle fyrmest 7 ealle his men siððan him anum

110 abugon, buton Mardocheus for his micclum geþingþum [133]

nolde him abugan ne gebigan his cneowa to þam Amane for his upahafennysse, þy læs þe he gegremode God mid

þære dæde, gif he eorðlicne mann ofer his mæðe wurðode. Þa geseah Aman þæt he hine forseah, 7 he

115 hæfde ofaxod æt oðrum mannum ær þæt he wæs

Iudeisc, þe wurðodon symle þone heofonlican God; 7 him þa þuhte to waclicre dæde þæt he fordyde hine

ænne, ac wolde miccle swiðor eall þæt manncyn fordon Iudeisces cynnes, þæt he wræce his teonan. Aman þa

90) *firste*] *first*, M. 91) *bealuwe*] *beluwe*, M. 97) *healicum*] *heallicre*, M. 106) *þegnas*] *þegnes*, M. 115) *oðrum*] *odrum*, M. 116) *Iudeisc*] *Iudeisca*, A; *wurðodon*] *wordodon*, M. 118) *þæt*] *þa*, M.

- 120 smeade swicollice embe þæt, hu he eall Iudeisc cynn [146]
 fordyde ætgædere, þe Godes æ heoldon æfter Godes
 gesetnyssum, 7 began hi to wregenne wið þone cyning
 þuss:
 ‘An mancynn wunað, leof, wide tostenced under þinum
 125 anwealde on gehwilcum scirum, þe næfð ure þeawas,
 ne ure laga ne hylt; 7 þu wel wast, leof, þæt hit wile
 hearman þinum cynerice heora receleasnyse, gif
 him man ne gestyrð heora stuntnesse. Læt hi ealle
 fordon, 7 ic gedo þæt þu hæfst tyn þusend punda to
 130 þinum mydercum.’ [156]
 Se cyning þa sona slypte his beah of 7 forgeaf Amane,
 7 be þam mancynne cwæþ: ‘Hafa þe þæt seolfor to þines
 sylfes bricum, and gedo be þam folce swa þe best licie.’
 Aman þa, sona swa he þis gehyrde, dihte gewritu
 135 be þam Iudeiscum to ælcere scire þe hi on wunodon,
 þæt man hi ofsloge sæmtinges ealle, ealde 7 iunge,
 ealle on anum dæge; 7 him fultum gesænde to heora
 slege micelne to þam ylcan andagan þe he him gewissode.
 Mardocheus þa micclum wearð geangsumod, 7 for his
 140 agenum magum get micle swiðor þonne for him selfum, [170]
 7 gesæde hit þære cwene; bæd þæt heo gehulpe hire
 mægðe 7 hire, þæt hi ealle ne wurdon to swilcere
 wæfersyne. Ða bebead seo cwen þæt hire cynn eall
 sceolde fæstan þreo dagas on an 7 Godes fultum biddan,
 145 7 heo sylf eallswa eac swylce fæste, biddende æt Gode
 þæt he geburge þam folce 7 eallum þam manncynne on
 swa micelre frecednesse. Ða eode seo cwen æfter þam
 fæstene, swiðe fægere hiwes, ætforan þam cyninge; 7
 he swiðe bliðe bicnode hire to mid his cynegyrde 7
 150 gecwæþ þas word: [181]

120) *swicollice*] *swiclice*, M. 121) *ætgedere*] *ætgedere*, M. 122)
hi] *him*, M, *hit*, A (see notes). 125) *scirum*] om. M (see
 notes). 127) *þinum*] *þine*, M. 133) *bricum*] *brucum*, M
 (see notes).

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‘Hwæs bytst þu, la Hester? 7 þeah þu biddan wille
healfne þone anweald þe ic hæbbe under me, þu scealt
beon tīþa untweolice þæs.’ Seo cwen cwæð þa to him:
‘Leof cynehlaford, ic wille þæt þu beo æt minum
155 gebeorscipe, þu leof, 7 Aman, to þinum wurðscipe, þæt
ic þe mage secgan minne willan.’

þa het se cyning clypian Aman, 7 het þæt he wære
gehersum þære cwene to hire willan to hire gereorde, 7
Aman þa gecyrde sona to his inne. Mardocheus þa sæt
160 þær ute, 7 nolde alutan ne lyffettan þam Amane. þa
wearð he swiþe gram þam Godes þegene, 7 cwæþ to his
cnihtum þæt him forcuþlic þuhte þæt se an Iudeisca
hine forsawe. ‘Se cyning me wurðað, swa swa ge witað
ealle, 7 seo cwen ne gelaþode nænne oðerne to hire
165 butan me ænne to eacan þam cyninge. Nu þingþ me þæt
ic næbbe nænne wurðscipe on life swa lange swa
Mardocheus me nele abugan.’

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þa cwædon his magas þæt he macian sceolde ænne
heagan gealgan, 7 habban hine gearwe, 7 biddan æt his
170 hlaforde þæt he lete ahon þone Mardocheum þe his
mihte forseah; 7 he þa swa dyde be heora dyslican
ræde.

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Hit gelamp þa on þære nihte þæt se cyning læg
wæccende lange on forannihte, 7 he het þa forðberan
175 þone cranic fram his yldrena dagum 7 rædan ætforan
him, oððæt he fulge on slæpe. Man him rædde þa fela
þæs þe gefyrn gelamp, oððæt hit becom þærto hu his
burcnihtas woldon hine sylfne amyrran, 7 hu
Mardocheus hit sæde þære cwene, 7 heo cydde þa him.
180 þa befran se cyning his cnihtas 7 cwæþ: ‘Hwilce mede

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156) *mage*] *maga*, M. 163) *ge witað*] *gewitað*, A. 164) *nænne*
nænne, M & A. 168) *cwædon*] *cwædon*, M; *ænne*] *ana*, M.
169) *heagan*] *heage*, M; *hine*] *hi*, M. 170) *ahon þone*] *ahon*
\þone/, M. 171) *dyslican*] *dyslicen*, M. 178) *burcnihtas*
bur\cnihtas/ þenas with ‘þenas’ crossed through, M. 180)
Hwilce] *Hwylce*, A.

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hæfde Mardocheus for þam, þæt he swa holdlice
hogode embe me?’ His cnihtas him andwyrdon, 7
cwædon him þus to: ‘Leof cynehlaford, ne com him nan
þing to þance, þæt he swa getreowlice þæt þe
185 geopenode.’

Hwæt, þa on ærne mergen com Aman to þam
cyninge, wolde þæt he hete ahon Mardocheum. Ac se
cyning axode hine sona 7 cwæð: ‘Hwæt þingð þe, Aman,
hwæt hit mage beon þæt ic gedon þam menn þe ic
190 gemynte wurþscipes?’ Þa wende Aman to gewissan
þinge þæt se cyning wolde wurþian hine swiðor, 7 nænne
oferne, 7 he andwyrde þus: ‘Done man þe se cyning wile
wurðian mid his gife, man sceal embscrydan hraþe mid
cynelican reafe, 7 settan on his heafod sumne
195 cynehelm eac, 7 lætan hine ridan on þæs cyninges
radhorse; 7 læde sum ealdormann hine geond þas
burh, 7 secge þam burhmannum þæt þus beo gewurðod
se man þe se cyning wile wurðscipe hæbbe.’

Þa cwæþ se cyning to Amane: ‘Ic cweðe þæt ic wille
200 þæt þu genime Mardocheum 7 þisne wurðmynt him
gedo, 7 loca þu georne þæt þu ne forlæte nan þing.’
Aman þa dyde swa mid sorhfullum mode, 7 gelædde
Mardocheum mærllice gescrydne, 7 mid helme, geond
þa burh, swylce he his horscniht wære, and sæde
205 eallum mannum þæt se cyning mihte on þa wisan
mærsian þone man þe he wolde; 7 eode him ham siððan
sorhfull to his cnihtum.

Se cyning þa sende sona æfter Amane, 7 he unþances
þa com to þære cwene feorme, 7 se cyning Asuerus
210 swiþe bliðe wæs þæs dæges mid þære cwene Hester, 7
cwæð hire þus to: ‘Hwæs bytst þu, la Hester, þæt ic þe
forgife?’ Hester seo cwen þa cwæð to þam cyninge þus:

184) *getreowlice*] *getrewlice*, M. 188) *cwæð*] *cwæð*, M & A.
191) *swiðor*] *swiðor þonne* with ‘þonne’ crossed through,
M. 194) *reafe*] *reaf*, M. 195) *lætan*] *lætān*, M & A. 196)
geond] *geonde*, M; *þas*] *þæs*, M. 197) *secge*] *secgan*, M. 199)
cweðe] *cwede*, M. 200) *wurðmynt*] *wurðment*, M.

f.145v
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‘Ic bidde þe la, leof, mines agenes lifes, ⁊ mines folces
feores, ⁊ minra freonda eac. We synd ealle belewde to
215 ure lifleaste, þæt we beon toheawene mid heardum
swurdum, þæt ure gemynd beo mid ealle adilegod.’

Se cyning þa befran þa cwene þus eft: ‘Hwæt is se
manna, swilcere mihte, þe þas dæda æfre dorste
gefremman?’ Heo cwæð to andsware: ‘Us is se wyrsta
220 feond, witodlice þes Aman, þe hæfð gecweden andagan [262]
þæt he sceall acwellan mine agene mægðe for
Mardochees þingon—se þe is min fædera, se þe me
afedde.’ Þa ablicgde Aman unbliþum andwlitan, ⁊ ne
mihte na acuman þæs cyninges graman, ne he ne
225 dorste beseon to his ansyne; ⁊ se cyning aras hraþe
gehathyrt, ⁊ eode him sona ut binnon his æppeltun,
swilce for rædinge. Ac he hraþe sona eft eode him inn,
⁊ efne Aman þa niþer afeallen to þære cwene fotum,
þæt heo him gefultumode to his agenum feore.

230 Þa oflicode þam cyninge, þæt he læg hire swa [274]
gehende, ⁊ þa cnihtas oncneowon þæs cyninges micclan
graman, ⁊ gefengon þone Aman, ⁊ hine geblindfelledon,
⁊ hine fæste geheoldon to þam þe se cyning hete. Þa
cwæð an þara burcnihta to þam cyninge þus: ‘La leof
235 cynehlaford, an lang gealga stænt æt Amanes inne, þe he
gemynt hæfde Mardocheo, þinum þegene, þe þe hylde
gedyde.’ Þa cwæð se cyning to andsware: ‘Ahoh hine
þæron!’ ⁊ hi sona swa dydon, mid swiðlicum ofste,
ahengon þone Aman on þam healican gealgan þe he
240 gemynt hæfde Mardochee on ær, ⁊ þæs cyninges yrre [286]
wearð þa geliþegod.

Þa cydde seo cwen eall be hire cynne hire
cynehlaforde, hwanon heo cumen wæs, ⁊ be
Mardocheo hu he hire mæg wæs; ⁊ he eode þa inn
245 toforan þam cyninge, ⁊ se cyning him sealde sona þone

218) *swilcere*] and *hwilcere*, A (see notes). 221) *sceall*] *sc\le/*
alle, M; *acwellan*] *acwelle*, M. 222) *fædera*] *fædere*, M. 235)
Amanes] *amane*, M. 237) *andsware*] *answare*, M. 239) *þam*]
þære, M.

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beah (þe he genam of Amane) him to wurðscipe, 7 he
underfeng þone anweald þe se oðer hæfde, 7 he his
æhta betæhte þære cwene to hæbbenne. Seo cwen þa
aleat to þæs cyninges fotum mid agotenum tearum, mid
250 Godes ege onbryrd, 7 bæd hire cynehlaford þæt he lete [297]
awritan oðre gewritu to eallum þam scirum þe þa
Iudeiscan on eardedon, togeanes þam gewritum þe
Aman ær awrat, þæt þa Iudeiscan moston for his
micclan cynescipe beon ealle on friðe 7 unforhte to
255 þam dæge þe Aman him gecwæþ to heora agenum slege.
Se cyning þa andwyrde þære þus, 7 eac Mardocheo,
swiðe mildelice: ‘Aman ic aheng, 7 his æhta þe f.147v
betæhte. Hwa dear nu gedyrstlæcan þæt he derige þam
folce? Awritað nu gewrita be þam þe ge willað, þæt eall beo
260 aidlod Amanes sirwung ongean þam Iudeiscum, 7 him ne [309]
derige nan man. Ac ic swiðor wille þæt man ofslea eac
Amanes magas for his micclan swicdome.’

Þis wearð þa geforþod, 7 hi on friþe wunedon þurh
þære cwene þingunge þe him þa geheolp 7 fram
265 deaþe ahredde, þurh hire drihtnes fultum þe heo on
gelyfde on Abrahames wisan. Þa Iudeiscan eac
wundorlice blissodon, þæt hi swilcne forespræcan him
afunden hæfdon, 7 heoldon þa Godes æ þæs þe
glædlicor æfter Moyses wissunge þæs mæran heretogan.
270 Mardocheus eac miclum wæs gewurþod, 7 swiðe [321]
geuferod for his eadmodnyse, swa swa Aman wearð
gehynd for his uppahfednyse; 7 se cyning wearð
gerihtlæht þurh þære cwene geleafan Gode to
wurðmynte þe ealle þing gewylt, 7 he herode God þe
275 hine geuferode 7 to cyninge geceas ofer swilcne
anweald. 7 he wæs rihtwis, 7 rædfæst on weorcum,
7 he hæfde oþerne naman: Artarxeres.

Sy wuldor 7 lof þam welwillendan Gode se þe æfre
rixað on ecnyse! Amen.

256) *andwyrde*) *andwyrd*, M; *þære*] *þære cwene*, A (see notes). 258) *gedyrstlæcan*] *gedyrstlican*, M.

Esther