

The Powerful Story of An Exiled Orphan Who Became a Courageous Queen in the Hands of a Providential God (Esther)

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(1) These events happened in the days of King Xerxes, who reigned over 127 provinces stretching from India to Ethiopia. (2) At that time Xerxes ruled his empire from his royal throne at the fortress of Susa. (3) In the third year of his reign, he gave a banquet for all his nobles and officials. He invited all the military officers of Persia and Media as well as the princes and nobles of the provinces. (4) The celebration lasted 180 days--a tremendous display of the opulent wealth of his empire and the pomp and splendor of his majesty.... (9) At the same time, Queen Vashti gave a banquet for the women in the royal palace of King Xerxes. (10) On the seventh day of the feast, when King Xerxes was in high spirits because of the wine, he told the seven eunuchs who attended him... (11) to bring Queen Vashti to him with the royal crown on her head. He wanted the nobles and all the other men to gaze on her beauty, for she was a very beautiful woman. (12) But when they conveyed the king's order to Queen Vashti, she refused to come. This made the king furious, and he burned with anger. [Esther 1:1-4, 9-12 NLT]

(5) At that time there was a Jewish man in the fortress of Susa whose name was Mordecai son of Jair. He was from the tribe of Benjamin and was a descendant of Kish and Shimei. (6) His family had been among those who, with King Jehoiachin of Judah, had been exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. (7) This man had a very beautiful and lovely young cousin, Hadassah, who was also called Esther. When her father and mother died, Mordecai adopted her into his family and raised her as his own daughter... (9) Hegai was very impressed with Esther and treated her kindly. He quickly ordered a special menu for her and provided her with beauty treatments. He also assigned her seven maids specially chosen from the king's palace, and he moved her and her maids into the best place in the harem. (10) Esther had not told anyone of her nationality and family background, because Mordecai had directed her not to do so... (15) Esther was the daughter of Abihail, who was Mordecai's uncle. (Mordecai had adopted his younger cousin Esther.) When it was Esther's turn to go to the king, she accepted the advice of Hegai, the eunuch in charge of the harem. She asked for nothing except what he suggested, and she was admired by everyone who saw her. (16) Esther was taken to King Xerxes at the royal palace in early winter of the seventh year of his reign. (17) And the king loved Esther more than any of the other young women. He was so delighted with her that he set the royal crown on her head and declared her queen instead of Vashti... (21) One day as Mordecai was on duty at the king's gate, two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthana and Teresh--who were guards at the door of the king's private quarters--became angry at King Xerxes and plotted to assassinate him. (22) But Mordecai heard about the plot and gave the information to Queen Esther. She then told the king about it and gave Mordecai credit for the report. (23) When an investigation was made and Mordecai's story was found to be true, the two men were impaled on a sharpened pole. This was all recorded in [The Book of the History of King Xerxes' Reign.] [Esther 2:5-7, 9-10, 15-18, 20-23 NLT]

(1) Some time later King Xerxes promoted Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite over all the other nobles, making him the most powerful official in the empire. (2) All the king's officials would bow down before Haman to show him respect whenever he passed by, for so the king had commanded. But Mordecai refused to bow down or show him respect. (3) Then the palace officials at the king's gate asked Mordecai, "Why are you disobeying the king's command?" (4) They spoke to him day after day, but still he refused to comply with the order. So they spoke to Haman about this to see if he would tolerate Mordecai's conduct, since Mordecai had told them he was a Jew. (5) When Haman saw that Mordecai would not bow down or show him respect, he was filled with rage. (6) He had learned of Mordecai's nationality, so he decided it was not enough to lay hands on Mordecai alone. Instead, he looked for a way to destroy all the Jews throughout the entire empire of Xerxes. (7) So in the month of April, during the twelfth year of King Xerxes' reign, lots were cast in Haman's presence (the lots were called [purim]) to determine the best day and month to take action. And the day selected was March 7, nearly a year later. (8) Then Haman approached King Xerxes and said, "There is a certain race of people scattered through all the provinces of your empire who keep themselves separate from everyone else. Their laws are different from those of any other people, and they refuse to obey the laws of the king. So it is not in the king's interest to let them live. (9) If it please the king, issue a decree that they be destroyed, and I will give 10,000 large sacks of silver to the government administrators to be deposited in the royal treasury." (10) The king agreed, confirming his decision by removing his signet ring from his finger and giving it to Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews... (13) Dispatches were sent by swift messengers into all the provinces of the empire, giving the order that all Jews--young and old, including women and children--must be killed, slaughtered, and annihilated on a single day... [Esther 3:1-10, 13 NLT]

(1) When Mordecai learned about all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on burlap and ashes, and went out into the city, crying with a loud and bitter wail. (2) He went as far as the gate of the palace, for no one was allowed to enter the palace gate while wearing clothes of mourning. (3) And as news of the king's decree reached all the provinces, there was great mourning among the Jews. They fasted, wept, and wailed, and many people lay in burlap and ashes. (4) When Queen Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her about Mordecai, she was deeply distressed. She sent clothing to him to replace the burlap, but he refused it... (8) Mordecai gave Hathach a copy of the decree issued in Susa that called for the death of all Jews. He asked Hathach to show it to Esther and explain the situation to her. He also asked Hathach to direct her to go to the king to beg for mercy and plead for her people... (11) "All the king's officials and even the people in the provinces know that anyone who appears before the king in his inner court without being invited is doomed to die unless the king holds out his gold scepter. And the king has not called for me to come to him for thirty days."... (13) Mordecai sent this reply to Esther: "Don't think for a moment that because you're in the palace you will escape when all other Jews are killed. (14) If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance and relief for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die. Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?" (15) Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: (16) "Go and gather together all the Jews of Susa and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will do the same. And then, though it is against the law, I will go in to see the king. If I must die (perish), I must die." [Esther 4:1-4, 8, 11, 13-16 NLT]

(1) On the third day of the fast, Esther put on her royal robes and entered the inner court of the palace, just across from the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne, facing the entrance. (2) When he saw Queen Esther standing there in the inner court, he welcomed her and

held out the gold scepter to her. So Esther approached and touched the end of the scepter. (3) Then the king asked her, "What do you want, Queen Esther? What is your request? I will give it to you, even if it is half the kingdom!" (4) And Esther replied, "If it please the king, let the king and Haman come today to a banquet I have prepared for the king."...

...(9) Haman was a happy man as he left the banquet! But when he saw Mordecai sitting at the palace gate, not standing up or trembling nervously before him, Haman became furious... (14) So Haman's wife, Zeresh, and all his friends suggested, "Set up a sharpened pole that stands seventy-five feet tall, and in the morning ask the king to impale Mordecai on it. When this is done, you can go on your merry way to the banquet with the king." This pleased Haman, and he ordered the pole set up. [Esther 5:1-4, 9, 14 NLT]

(1) That night the king had trouble sleeping, so he ordered an attendant to bring the book of the history of his reign so it could be read to him. (2) In those records he discovered an account of how Mordecai had exposed the plot of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the eunuchs who guarded the door to the king's private quarters. They had plotted to assassinate King Xerxes. (3) "What reward or recognition did we ever give Mordecai for this?" the king asked. His attendants replied, "Nothing has been done for him." (4) "Who is that in the outer court?" the king inquired. As it happened, Haman had just arrived in the outer court of the palace to ask the king to impale Mordecai on the pole he had prepared. (5) So the attendants replied to the king, "Haman is out in the court." "Bring him in," the king ordered. (6) So Haman came in, and the king said, "What should I do to honor a man who truly pleases me?" Haman thought to himself, "Whom would the king wish to honor more than me?" (7) So he replied, "If the king wishes to honor someone, (8) he should bring out one of the king's own royal robes, as well as a horse that the king himself has ridden--one with a royal emblem on its head. (9) Let the robes and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble officials. And let him see that the man whom the king wishes to honor is dressed in the king's robes and led through the city square on the king's horse. Have the official shout as they go, 'This is what the king does for someone he wishes to honor!'" (10) "Excellent!" the king said to Haman. "Quick! Take the robes and my horse, and do just as you have said for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the gate of the palace. Leave out nothing you have suggested!" (11) So Haman took the robes and put them on Mordecai, placed him on the king's own horse, and led him through the city square, shouting, "This is what the king does for someone he wishes to honor!" [Esther 6:1-11 NLT]

(3) Queen Esther replied, "If I have found favor with the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my request, I ask that my life and the lives of my people will be spared. (4) For my people and I have been sold to those who would kill, slaughter, and annihilate us. If we had merely been sold as slaves, I could remain quiet, for that would be too trivial a matter to warrant disturbing the king." (5) "Who would do such a thing?" King Xerxes demanded. "Who would be so presumptuous as to touch you?" (6) Esther replied, "This wicked Haman is our adversary and our enemy." Haman grew pale with fright before the king and queen. [Esther 7:3-6 NLT]

(1) On that same day King Xerxes gave the property of Haman, the enemy of the Jews, to Queen Esther. Then Mordecai was brought before the king, for Esther had told the king how they were related. (2) The king took off his signet ring--which he had taken back from Haman--and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther appointed Mordecai to be in charge of Haman's property. (3) Then Esther went again before the king, falling down at his feet and begging him with tears to stop the evil plot devised by Haman the Agagite against the Jews...
...(10) The decree was written in the name of King Xerxes and sealed with the king's signet ring. Mordecai sent the dispatches by swift messengers, who rode fast horses especially bred for the king's service. (11) The king's decree gave the Jews in every city authority to unite to defend their lives... (15) Then Mordecai left the king's presence, wearing the royal robe of blue and white, the great crown of gold, and an outer cloak of fine linen and purple. And the people of Susa celebrated the new decree. (16) The Jews were filled with joy and gladness and were honored everywhere. (17) In every province and city, wherever the king's decree arrived, the Jews rejoiced and had a great celebration and declared a public festival and holiday. And many of the people of the land became Jews themselves, for they feared what the Jews might do to them. [Esther 8:1-3, 10-11, 15-17 NLT]

(4) For Mordecai had been promoted in the king's palace, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces as he became more and more powerful... (22) He told them to celebrate these days with feasting and gladness and by giving gifts of food to each other and presents to the poor. This would commemorate a time when the Jews gained relief from their enemies, when their sorrow was turned into gladness and their mourning into joy. (23) So the Jews accepted Mordecai's proposal and adopted this annual custom. [Esther 9:4, 22-23 NLT]

(2) His great achievements and the full account of the greatness of Mordecai, whom the king had promoted, are recorded in [The Book of the History of the Kings of Media and Persia.] (3) Mordecai the Jew became the prime minister, with authority next to that of King Xerxes himself. He was very great among the Jews, who held him in high esteem, because he continued to work for the good of his people and to speak up for the welfare of all their descendants. [Esther 10:2-3 NLT]

(33) We may throw the dice, but the LORD determines how they fall. [Proverbs 16:33 NLT]

(1) The king's heart is like a stream of water directed by the LORD; he guides it wherever he pleases. [Proverbs 21:1 NLT]

(28) ...we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. [Romans 8:28 NLT]

Big idea: God loves women. He has been using them for His glory to accomplish His plans and purposes since the beginning of human history. It takes a loving, wise, courageous, gritty, and strong woman to be a good mother. The story of Esther in the Bible is the story of a Queen who actually mothers and delivers an entire nation. But things did not start that way for her. She began as an exile in a foreign land, an orphan, a woman who was seen as inferior, and a woman who faced many injustices in her day. But God... We can all find comfort in the providence and sovereignty of God.