



# ESTHER

## ESTHER

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### Who is Esther?

Ester was a Persian name meaning “star”. Esther’s Hebrew name was “Hadassah” which meant “myrtle”. Myrtle is a symbol of love. Esther was the daughter of Abihail, the uncle of Mordecai. [*Mordecai was the son of Jair, the son of Shemei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite. Kish had been taken away during the Babylonian captivity along with the King of Judah, Jeconiah (son of Jehoiachin and also called as Jehoiakim – 1 Chronicles 3:15-17; 2 Kings 24:6)*] She was a Jewess, a lovely and beautiful young woman.

### Bible Accounts:

**Esther 2; 4; 5:1-8; 6:14; 7; 8:1-8; 9:11-32;**

***Esther 2:** After these things, when the wrath of King Ahasuerus subsided, he remembered Vashti, what she had done, and what had been decreed against her. <sup>2</sup> Then the king’s servants who attended him said: “Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king; <sup>3</sup> and let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather all the beautiful young virgins to Shushan the citadel, into the women’s quarters, under the custody of Hegai the king’s eunuch, custodian of the women. And let beauty preparations be given them. <sup>4</sup> Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti.” This thing pleased the king, and he did so.*

*<sup>5</sup> In Shushan the citadel there was a certain Jew whose name was Mordecai the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite. <sup>6</sup> Kish had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captives who had been captured with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away. <sup>7</sup> And Mordecai had brought up **Hadassah, that is, Esther**, his uncle’s daughter, for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman was lovely and beautiful. When her father and mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.*

*<sup>8</sup> So it was, when the king’s command and decree were heard, and when many young women were gathered at Shushan the citadel, under the custody of Hegai, that Esther also was taken to the king’s palace, into the care of Hegai the custodian of the women. <sup>9</sup> Now the young woman pleased him, and she obtained his favor; so*

he readily gave beauty preparations to her, besides her allowance. Then seven choice maidservants were provided for her from the king's palace, and he moved her and her maidservants to the best place in the house of the women. <sup>10</sup> Esther had not revealed her people or family, for Mordecai had charged her not to reveal it. <sup>11</sup> And every day Mordecai paced in front of the court of the women's quarters, to learn of Esther's welfare and what was happening to her.

<sup>12</sup> Each young woman's turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus after she had completed twelve months' preparation, according to the regulations for the women, for thus were the days of their preparation apportioned: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women. <sup>13</sup> Thus prepared, each young woman went to the king, and she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the women's quarters to the king's palace. <sup>14</sup> In the evening she went, and in the morning she returned to the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who kept the concubines. She would not go in to the king again unless the king delighted in her and called for her by name.

<sup>15</sup> Now when the turn came for **Esther the daughter of Abihail** the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his daughter, to go in to the king, she requested nothing but what Hegai the king's eunuch, the custodian of the women, advised. And Esther obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her. <sup>16</sup> So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, in the tenth month, which is the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. <sup>17</sup> The king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. <sup>18</sup> Then the king made a great feast, the Feast of Esther, for all his officials and servants; and he proclaimed a holiday in the provinces and gave gifts according to the generosity of a king.

<sup>19</sup> When virgins were gathered together a second time, Mordecai sat within the king's gate. <sup>20</sup> Now Esther had not revealed her family and her people, just as Mordecai had charged her, for Esther obeyed the command of Mordecai as when she was brought up by him. <sup>21</sup> In those days, while Mordecai sat within the king's gate, two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh, doorkeepers, became furious and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. <sup>22</sup> So the matter became known to Mordecai, who told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name. <sup>23</sup> And when an inquiry was made into the matter, it was confirmed, and both were hanged on a gallows; and it was written in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king.

#### **Esther 4:**

When Mordecai learned all that had happened, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city. He cried out with a

loud and bitter cry.<sup>2</sup> He went as far as the front of the king's gate, for no one might enter the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.<sup>3</sup> And in every province where the king's command and decree arrived, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

<sup>4</sup> So Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her, and **the queen was deeply distressed**. Then she sent garments to clothe Mordecai and take his sackcloth away from him, but he would not accept them.<sup>5</sup> Then Esther called Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs whom he had appointed to attend her, and she gave him a command concerning Mordecai, to learn what and why this was.<sup>6</sup> So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the city square that was in front of the king's gate.<sup>7</sup> And Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries to destroy the Jews.<sup>8</sup> He also gave him a copy of the written decree for their destruction, which was given at Shushan, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her, and that he might command her to go in to the king to make supplication to him and plead before him for her people.<sup>9</sup> So Hathach returned and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

<sup>10</sup> Then Esther spoke to Hathach, and gave him a command for Mordecai: <sup>11</sup> "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king, who has not been called, he has but one law: put all to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter, that he may live. Yet I myself have not been called to go in to the king these thirty days."<sup>12</sup> So they told Mordecai Esther's words.<sup>13</sup> And Mordecai told them to answer Esther: "Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews.<sup>14</sup> For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"<sup>15</sup> Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai: <sup>16</sup> "Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!"<sup>17</sup> So Mordecai went his way and did according to all that Esther commanded him.

### **Esther 5:1-8:**

Now it happened on the third day that **Esther put on her royal robes** and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, across from the king's house, while the king sat on his royal throne in the royal house, facing the entrance of the house.<sup>2</sup> So it was, when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, that she found favor in his sight, and the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. Then Esther went near and touched the top of the scepter.

<sup>3</sup> And the king said to her, "**What do you wish, Queen Esther?** What is your request? It shall be given to you—up to half the kingdom!"<sup>4</sup> So Esther answered, "If

*it pleases the king, let the king and Haman come today to the banquet that I have prepared for him.”<sup>5</sup> Then the king said, “Bring Haman quickly, that he may do as Esther has said.” So the king and Haman went to the banquet that Esther had prepared.*

*<sup>6</sup>At the banquet of wine the king said to Esther, “What is your petition? It shall be granted you. What is your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!”<sup>7</sup> Then Esther answered and said, “My petition and request is this:<sup>8</sup> If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, then let the king and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said.”*

**Esther 6:14** - *While they were still talking with him, the king’s eunuchs came, and hastened to bring Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared.*

### **Esther 7:**

*So the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther.<sup>2</sup> And on the second day, at the banquet of wine, the king again said to Esther, “**What is your petition, Queen Esther?** It shall be granted you. And what is your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!”*

*<sup>3</sup>Then Queen Esther answered and said, “If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request.<sup>4</sup> For we have been sold, my people and I, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. Had we been sold as male and female slaves, I would have held my tongue, although the enemy could never compensate for the king’s loss.”*

*<sup>5</sup>So King Ahasuerus answered and said to Queen Esther, “Who is he, and where is he, who would dare presume in his heart to do such a thing?”<sup>6</sup> And Esther said, “The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman!” So Haman was terrified before the king and queen.*

*<sup>7</sup>Then the king arose in his wrath from the banquet of wine and went into the palace garden; but Haman stood before Queen Esther, pleading for his life, for he saw that evil was determined against him by the king.<sup>8</sup> When the king returned from the palace garden to the place of the banquet of wine, Haman had fallen across the couch where Esther was. Then the king said, “Will he also assault the queen while I am in the house?”*

*As the word left the king’s mouth, they covered Haman’s face.<sup>9</sup> Now Harbonah, one of the eunuchs, said to the king, “Look! The gallows, fifty cubits high, which Haman made for Mordecai, who spoke good on the king’s behalf, is standing at the house of Haman.” Then the king said, “Hang him on it!”<sup>10</sup> So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king’s wrath subsided.*

### **Esther 8:1-8:**

*On that day King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had told how he was related to her.<sup>2</sup> So the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai; and Esther appointed Mordecai over the house of Haman.*

*<sup>3</sup> Now Esther spoke again to the king, fell down at his feet, and implored him with tears to counteract the evil of Haman the Agagite, and the scheme which he had devised against the Jews. <sup>4</sup> And the king held out the golden scepter toward Esther. So Esther arose and stood before the king, <sup>5</sup> and said, “If it pleases the king, and if I have found favor in his sight and the thing seems right to the king and I am pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to revoke the letters devised by Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to annihilate the Jews who are in all the king’s provinces. <sup>6</sup> For how can I endure to see the evil that will come to my people? Or how can I endure to see the destruction of my countrymen?”*

*<sup>7</sup> Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and Mordecai the Jew, “Indeed, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him on the gallows because he tried to lay his hand on the Jews. <sup>8</sup> You yourselves write a decree concerning the Jews, as you please, in the king’s name, and seal it with the king’s signet ring; for whatever is written in the king’s name and sealed with the king’s signet ring no one can revoke.”*

### **Esther 9:11-32**

*On that day the number of those who were killed in Shushan the citadel was brought to the king. <sup>12</sup> And the king said to Queen Esther, “The Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the citadel, and the ten sons of Haman. What have they done in the rest of the king’s provinces? Now what is your petition? It shall be granted to you. Or what is your further request? It shall be done.”*

*<sup>13</sup> Then Esther said, “If it pleases the king, let it be granted to the Jews who are in Shushan to do again tomorrow according to today’s decree, and let Haman’s ten sons be hanged on the gallows.” <sup>14</sup> So the king commanded this to be done; the decree was issued in Shushan, and they hanged Haman’s ten sons. <sup>15</sup> And the Jews who were in Shushan gathered together again on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and killed three hundred men at Shushan; but they did not lay a hand on the plunder.*

*<sup>16</sup> The remainder of the Jews in the king’s provinces gathered together and protected their lives, had rest from their enemies, and killed seventy-five thousand of their enemies; but they did not lay a hand on the plunder. <sup>17</sup> This was on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar. And on the fourteenth of the month they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness.*

*<sup>18</sup> But the Jews who were at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth day, as well as on the fourteenth; and on the fifteenth of the month they rested, and made*

*it a day of feasting and gladness. <sup>19</sup> Therefore the Jews of the villages who dwelt in the unwallled towns celebrated the fourteenth day of the month of Adar with gladness and feasting, as a holiday, and for sending presents to one another.*

*<sup>20</sup> And Mordecai wrote these things and sent letters to all the Jews, near and far, who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, <sup>21</sup> to establish among them that they should celebrate yearly the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar, <sup>22</sup> as the days on which the Jews had rest from their enemies, as the month which was turned from sorrow to joy for them, and from mourning to a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and joy, of sending presents to one another and gifts to the poor. <sup>23</sup> So the Jews accepted the custom which they had begun, as Mordecai had written to them, <sup>24</sup> because Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to annihilate them, and had cast Pur (that is, the lot), to consume them and destroy them; <sup>25</sup> but when Esther came before the king, he commanded by letter that this wicked plot which Haman had devised against the Jews should return on his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.*

*<sup>26</sup> So they called these days Purim, after the name Pur. Therefore, because of all the words of this letter, what they had seen concerning this matter, and what had happened to them, <sup>27</sup> the Jews established and imposed it upon themselves and their descendants and all who would join them, that without fail they should celebrate these two days every year, according to the written instructions and according to the prescribed time, <sup>28</sup> that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city, that these days of Purim should not fail to be observed among the Jews, and that the memory of them should not perish among their descendants.*

*<sup>29</sup> Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter about Purim. <sup>30</sup> And Mordecai sent letters to all the Jews, to the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, with words of peace and truth, <sup>31</sup> to confirm these **days of Purim** at their appointed time, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had prescribed for them, and as they had decreed for themselves and their descendants concerning matters of their fasting and lamenting. <sup>32</sup> So the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim, and it was written in the book.*

### **Background:**

In 3<sup>rd</sup> year of reign, the King Ahasuerus of Persia and Media held a big feast lasting for 7 days, after showing off his kingdom riches to his officials and all the people in the provinces for 180 days. On the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the feast, while the King was drunk, he asked his 7 eunuchs to bring his Queen Vashti wearing her

crown to show off her beauty to them. Queen Vashti refused to obey the command of the King. So the King sought the advise of his wise men and Memucan, one of the 7 princes asked the King to send an unalterable decree over the provinces stating that the King had authority to pass on Queen Vashti's royal status to anyone he desires because she did wrong to the King, the princes and to all the people. Moreover, it would make men master over his own house and women honour their men, both great and small.

It was during this time period, a decree for the King Ahasuerus went out looking for beautiful young virgin women in all the provinces. Esther who lost her parents and was brought up by Mordecai (was King's servant at the King's gate) as his own daughter took her into the women's quarters in the King's palace at Shushan under the custody of the King's eunuch, Hegai, the custodian of women. He had instructed her strongly not to reveal her family background.

Esther found favour of all who saw her, as she was beautiful. So, she was taken to the King Ahasuerus' palace where she had to be beautified with oil of myrrh and perfumes until her turn to go into the King arrived. It was during the 7<sup>th</sup> year of the King Ahasuerus and 10<sup>th</sup> month of the year, Esther's turn arrived and she got only advice from Hegai though she was allowed to take what she wanted to. The King Ahasuerus was pleased with her and he crowned her as a Queen in the place of Queen Vashti. He held a feast for Esther, the Feast of Esther and celebrated the crowning of Esther as a Queen by granting a remission of taxes and gave gifts.

When Mordecai was sitting in the King's gate, two of the King's eunuch, Bigthan and Teresh, the doorkeepers became angry and planned to lay hands on the King Ahasuerus. Mordecai passed the information to Queen Esther and in turn she let the King know in the name of Mordecai. Upon enquiring the matter, they found it true and hung them both on a stake. Their names were written in the book of chronicles.

King Ahasuerus appointed Haman, the Agagite, the son Hammedatha above all the princes in his provinces. While everyone at King's gate bowed to him according the King's command, Mordecai alone refused. So when this reached Haman, he sought to kill the whole of Jews in the provinces and cast lots to pick a day to kill all the Jews. It fell on the 13<sup>th</sup> of the 12<sup>th</sup> month, Adar. He went to the King and said that there were certain people who did not abide by their laws and hence had to put to death. He also planned to offer 10,000 talents of silver to the King's treasury. Upon hearing this, the King agreed to his plan and gave him his signet ring. Immediately, the decree went all over the provinces and reached all the people in the land. While the King and Haman sat down to drink, the whole city of Shushan was perplexed. (Esther 3)



On hearing the decree, Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes over him, and cried out bitterly in front of the King's gate. This distressed Queen Esther deeply and she sent her eunuch, Hathach to enquire to Mordecai. He explained everything to Hathach that had happened along with a copy of the decree sent out. Mordecai asked Esther to plead for her people to the King. In reply, Esther said that everyone in the kingdom knew that it was against the law for anyone to enter the King's inner chamber without his invite or without his golden scepter; if so they were put to death. It had been 30 days Esther had entered his chamber and hence was fearful. So Mordecai strongly instructed her if Esther was silent then, there would be help for Jews from another way but her house would perish; might be if that could be the reason why she had to come to the kingdom for time like then? In return Esther asked all the Jews to fast for her day and night for 3 days along with her and her maids, and then, she would enter the King's chamber which was against the law. She was ready to do for her people even if that destroyed her. (Esther 4)

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> day, Esther robed herself in the royal clothes and went before the King's house. When she found favour in his eyes, he asked her to come in and enquired about her petition. She invited the King and Haman for a banquet that day and he agreed. At the banquet of wine, the King asked about her petition – even if she asked for half of his kingdom would be spared for her. She replied if she found favour and pleasing in his eyes, both the King and Haman were invited to a banquet next day again. (Esther 5)

On the second day of Esther's banquet for the King and Haman, the King Ahasuerus asked Esther of her petition again. She asked for her life and her people's life to be granted as they had been sold to be destroyed, killed and to be annihilated. King Ahasuerus angrily asked who was that and she replied that it was the wicked foe, Haman. Haman's reaction added more fuel to the King's anger. King ordered him to be hung on the same stake that he had prepared for Mordecai. Thus Haman brought his own end! (Esther 7)

After that day, Queen Esther told the King Ahasuerus about her and the relationship of Mordecai. The King gave the gold signet ring that Haman had to Mordecai and gave the house of Haman to Queen Esther. She appointed Mordecai over the house of Haman and bowed respectfully to the King asking about her people's safety. So the King replied to both Queen Esther and Mordecai to make a new decree with the King's name and seal it with the King's signet ring according to what is best for the Jews, as the old decree passed can never be revoked. So, on 23<sup>rd</sup> day of the 3<sup>rd</sup> month Sivan and on Mordecai's command, the scribes wrote that on the 13<sup>th</sup> of 12<sup>th</sup> month Adar, Jews have the right to protect their little children and women from their enemies who were to kill, destroy and

annihilate them even to the plundering of their wealth. The decree went out very swiftly through swift horses to all the provinces from India to Ethiopia, 127 in total in their own languages and scribes. It brought light, gladness, joy and honour to the Jews and fear of Jews fell upon all people. (Esther 8)

Accordingly, on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month Adar, Jews defeated all their enemies all over the 127 provinces of King Ahasuerus; the Jews outnumbered their enemies everywhere and in Shushan, they killed 500 men and the 10 sons of Haman. The King Ahasuerus asked Queen Esther what else she needed to be granted? She replied that the decree might be carried out on the next day also in Shushan and the 10 sons of Haman be hung on the stake. He accepted and on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month Adar, in Shushan, Jews killed 300 men. So in total, they killed 800 men in Shushan and 75000 men in other provinces. But they didn't plunder anywhere. Hence, they rested on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month Adar.

In order to observe this, Queen Esther and Mordecai sent a letter to confirm these days of Purim (because of the Pur – casting the lots) – to celebrate the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> days of the Adar yearly as their sorrow was turned to joy and from mourning to a holiday. They established the days of feasting and joy and sending presents to one another and gifts to the poor. They had decreed this for themselves and their descendants concerning matter of their fasting and lamenting. (Esther 9)

**Lessons from Esther:**

- Esther had developed the waiting as well as the obeying attitude. It is evident when Mordecai takes her to the virgin gatherings in the King's palace.
- She had a listening ear and was growing in the knowledge of her elders' advise or counselling. It can be seen in the case of her dealings with Mordecai and Hegai.
- She was very tactful in handling a tedious and life-death situation when aroused. (when she had to reach the King Ahasuerus against the law but without breaking it)
- She sought God in the situations where she was perplexed. This shows that she must be a Godly person. Though initially she was anxious or fearful, she immediately turned towards God.
- She let her vessel to be used by God for His people's deliverance.



- Though she became a Queen, she was humble. It is evident in her listening to officials and Mordecai.
- She opened her mouth only when it was necessary and at the right time but with boldness.

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