

## Rotation 8 ~ Esther

### **The Gathering Room Story**

King Xerxes ruled over the mighty land of Persia. His first wife, Vashti, disobeyed him—and in front of all his guests. He asked his trusted advisors what he should do. They told him she should be banished from the court as an example, just in case any other wives were thinking of following Vashti.

Now he wanted a new wife and his servants thought a beauty contest would be a good idea. They brought women to the palace so the king could choose a bride. A woman named Esther was chosen. She was good and wise and very beautiful. But she was secretly an Israelite. A kind relative, named Mordecai, adopted Esther as a child and raised her as his own daughter. He warned her not to tell anyone she was an Israelite.

When King Xerxes saw Esther, he was very pleased! He set the royal crown on her head, and she became his wife and Queen. Then the King gave a big party to celebrate.

Mordecai often sat by the palace gates to hear how Esther was doing. One time, he overheard men plotting to kill the king. Mordecai warned Esther, and she told the king. The bad men were arrested, and Mordecai's good deed was written in the King's Record Book.

Later on, a powerful man named Haman, the Prime minister, second in command in the kingdom, wanted everyone to bow to him when he walked by. He was vain and cruel. Mordecai refused to bow down and worship Haman because he only worshipped God. Haman knew that Mordecai was an Israelite, a Jew. He had an idea how he could get rid of him.

He encouraged King Xerxes to make it legal to kill all Israelites. "They are different and follow their own rules. I think we should get rid of them."

"Do whatever you think is best," said King Xerxes, and then he gave the ring that was used to stamp official proclamations to Haman.

So Haman cast "pur," which is a kind of die, to determine the best day to kill all the Jewish people. He then sent out a proclamation that, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, all the Jewish people would be killed.

Esther knew that this law meant she too must die. "I will do all I can to change this," she said to Mordecai. "Even if it means that I am also killed. Please ask my people to pray for me."

When Mordecai heard the news he sent a message to Esther. "Please talk to the King. You must try to save our people."

Esther wanted to speak to the king, but she was afraid. One did not approach the king unless he held out his scepter. You had to be summoned. So, she put on her best royal robes. When King Xerxes saw her he asked, "What can I do for you, dear Queen? I will give you whatever you ask, up to half my kingdom."

"I have prepared a banquet for you and Haman, I would like you to be my guests," said Esther.

So the king and Haman came and enjoyed a delicious meal served by Esther. “Now, dear Queen, tell me what it is I can do for you,” said King Xerxes.

“If you could both come for another feast tomorrow,” said Esther, “then I will tell you my request.”

Now proud Haman was again to have dinner with the King and Queen. He told all his friends. He was still upset that Mordecai would not bow to him. His friends suggested that he have a gallows built.

Meanwhile, the King could not sleep. He ordered his Record Book be brought to him. He thought, “I never honored Mordecai for saving my life.”

The next day Haman went to the palace and the king told him that he wanted to honor someone. Of course proud Haman thought it was he that the King wanted to honor. “Bring my finest horses and robes for the person I want to honor,” said the King. “It is Mordecai that I wish to honor.” Haman then led the horse through the town telling all that this is how the King rewards good people.

The next day King Xerxes and Haman came to another fine banquet. “Now tell me, my Queen, what is your request,” said King Xerxes. “What can I give to you?”

“Dear King,” said Esther, “if you are pleased with me, I beg you to spare my life, and also to spare the lives of my people. If we were to be sold as slaves, I would not have bothered you, but it seems unfair that we must all be put to death.”

“Who dares to do this?” demanded the King.

“It is this cruel Haman,” said Esther, pointing to her enemy. He has ordered that all Jewish people are to be killed. The king ordered Haman to be hanged that very same day on the gallows that Haman had built.

Esther and her people were safe.

When Mordecai asked for Esther’s help, he assured her that God was going to bring his people through the difficulties they faced. If Esther refused, then she would receive punishment along with the people who wanted to kill the Jews. But Mordecai also challenged Esther. Perhaps this was the reason the Lord had placed her in the position of being a favored queen.

It took courage and boldness for Esther to approach the King without being invited. She was risking her life. Are we like Esther? Are we able to speak up for what is right? Can we place our lives in God’s hands and trust that things in our lives will result in good endings?

Background notes:

The Kingdom of Xerxes stretched from India to Ethiopia.

The festival to celebrate Esther’s bravery is called “Purim,” which is held in the spring.