

The Story of Esther – Unlikely Heroine  
[Esther 7:1-6, 9-10, 20-22](#)

Our Hebrew Bible scripture for today is interesting on several levels. First, our central character is Esther, a Jewish woman who found herself in a position of some power within the kingdom of Xerxes. Second, she is put in a position to make a choice: she could risk her life to save her people, or choose not to act and attempt to save herself. Third, Esther chose to take a risk, trust God, and petition on behalf of the people of Israel.

Listen to her story:

I am Esther. My father and mother died some time ago. My cousin Mordecai took me in as his own daughter and has served as my caretaker since we arrived here. We had been in exile in Babylon and were taken captive, but Mordecai was

always there to protect and care for me, even when our future was not so certain.

I remember the day we heard about what had happened in the king's court. The king was quite taken with all the celebrations that were going on. While he was enjoying the company of his inner circle, he requested Queen Vashti to come before him and his guests. I assume he wanted to display her beauty for he commanded she be brought before him wearing her very best raiment and her royal crown. Word soon came around that the queen had actually refused the king's order! Can you imagine? I was speechless. How could she have stepped away from her duty and not followed the king's order? Well, I would soon see myself in a very similar position.

Needless to say the king was furious. The queen was stripped of her title and banished from the kingdom. Not long

after, Mordecai instructed me to go in the court to be prepared for an audience with the king. I thought, “Why me? I am a mere Jew. How could I impress the king?” But I did not question Mordecai. He was my parent in every way, and I did everything I could to please him. He told me that if I was found to be favored by the king, I would be chosen to be queen! After an entire year of preparation, receiving all the best treatments and the finest garments, I was sent before the king’s court. I was so afraid, yet God must have been with me. Everyone was pleased with me, so I was sent before the king. In spite of my doubts and fears, the king also found favor with me. Can you imagine? I was both surprised and humbled to be made queen, yet I still did not reveal my heritage as Mordecai had instructed.

Life as the queen was filled with glorious times and with tremendous difficulties. Mordecai managed to uncover a plot to

kill the king and passed that information on to me. I was grateful to have an audience with the king, and when I told him of this plot, I gave full credit to my cousin for this information as it was found to be true. For the first time I truly feared for the king's life and was relieved when this plot was alleviated.

Sometime later, Haman, a member of the king's court, was elevated to a place of honor above all the other nobles. Haman was quite taken with his own power. The king had commanded all the royal officials to kneel before Haman and show him honor, yet my people had always been taught to only bow down and pay honor to God, not to any earthly king or official. The king had allowed this freedom for my people, yet Haman became furious with Mordecai for not paying him homage.

Haman devised a plot of his own. He worked to have the king give him a measure of power, and with it Haman plotted to destroy Mordecai along with all of my people because we would

only pay homage to God. A royal decree went out to kill all Jews in one massive slaughter. I was unaware of this plot, and the royal court was still unaware that I too was a Jew.

My cousin managed to get word to me of what was happening. Mordecai actually wanted me to approach the king and plead for my people. I was terrified for myself! How could I do this? I could be put to death for such arrogance! But Mordecai convinced me that I had to do what was right to try and save my people. The burden was almost unbearable, yet I asked my people to fast with me for three days as I prepared to face the worst trial of my life.

I remember physically trembling as I prepared myself. I carefully dressed in my best robes and with my finest adornments. I took a deep breath and ventured out. I came and stood in the inner court of the palace, praying that the king

would extend his gold scepter and receive me. If not, I knew I would be put to death. I held my breath and watched and waited, until I saw the king extend the scepter toward me. With great relief, I stepped forward, yet I knew I was still in grave danger. No one knew of my Jewish heritage. I would have to reveal this in order to have any chance to save my people. I knew I needed to gain an audience with the king, and I most certainly wanted Haman to be a part of this in order to expose his horrible plot. The king graciously received me and granted my request to have the king and Haman join me for a banquet I had prepared.

The king was pleased with my banquet and asked me what I wanted in return. I was still very much afraid for my life and my people, so I requested a second banquet with the king and Haman. I had to renew my courage to face the possibility of my

death along with all my people. Ironically, the king could not sleep that night and had the chronicles read to him – this was the book of events occurring during his reign. The king was reminded of how Mordecai had saved his life by exposing a deadly plot. So the king asked, “What reward has been given to Mordecai?” As there was no record of a reward given, the king called for Haman to ask his advice on what should be done. Haman thought the king was planning to reward him, so Haman presented a noble and gracious honor. As it turns out, Haman himself had to carry out the king’s order to reward Mordecai. I am sure that only infuriated Haman even more!

The next evening, the king and Haman came for the second banquet I prepared. I knew in my heart that I had to petition for my people. If I were to die, I knew I had done everything I could to save my people. The king granted me my petition, and

I said to him, “If I have found favor with you, O king, and if it pleases your majesty, grant me my life – this is my petition.

And spare my people – this is my request,” (Esther 7:3). I would have remained silent if our very lives did not hang in the balance. The king asked me who was responsible for ordering the murder of my people, and without hesitation I named Haman.

The king’s response was swift and just. Haman had actually built a gallows 50 cubits high specifically for Mordecai. The king ordered Haman to be hung on those gallows for his crime of conspiring to kill all the Jews in the kingdom. I was relieved, but I had one further task to fulfill. The dark night was not over for my people, for the decree Haman had sent out was still in effect – my people were going to be senselessly slaughtered! Once again, I had to risk my life and petition the

king. Again, the king took immediate action and put an end to this horrible threat. My people were commanded to defend themselves against any who would threaten them, including Haman's own sons. After two days of fighting, the enemies of the Jews were eliminated. In one instant, my people were relieved of their despair and blessed with great joy.

I was completely overwhelmed with gratitude. Great celebrations were organized in every province. Our night of mourning turned into a time of great joy. God was truly with us in our darkest hour. The feast of Purim is celebrated every year as we remember this victory.

So, what message are we to take from the story of Esther? Can one person make a difference? Can one person be the light of God in a dark world? With God, all things are possible. With God, there is always a way. With God, each one of us can make

a difference in the lives of those around us who are hurting and in need of comfort and strength. Thanks be to God who gives us the victory over despair. We are the people of God – we can make a difference. Let us go from this place as the children of God, ready to share God’s love with others while extending the hand of caring to our neighbors. Amen.