

ESTHER SAVES HER PEOPLE

Esther 1-8

Vashti Is Removed From Her Position as Queen

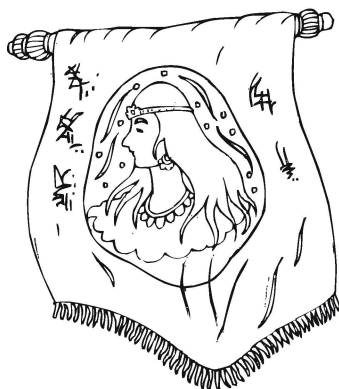
King Xerxes ruled over the 127 territories in his kingdom. They reached from India all the way to Cush. Here is what happened during the time Xerxes ruled over the whole Persian kingdom. He was ruling from his royal throne in the safest place in Susa.

In the third year of his rule King Xerxes gave a big dinner. It was for all of his nobles and officials. The military leaders of Persia and Media were there. So were the princes and the nobles of the territories he ruled over. Every day for 180 days he showed his guests the great wealth of his kingdom. He also showed them how glorious his kingdom was.

When those days were over, the king gave another big dinner. It lasted for seven days. It was held in the garden of the king's courtyard. It was for all of the people who lived in the safest place in Susa. Everyone from the least important person to the most important was invited.

Royal wine was served in gold cups. Each cup was different from all of the others. There was plenty of wine. The king always provided as much as his guests wanted. He commanded that they should be allowed to drink as much or as little as they wished. He directed all of his servants to give them what they asked for.

Queen Vashti also gave a big dinner. Only women were invited. It was held in the royal palace of King Xerxes.



On the seventh day Xerxes was in a good mood because he had drunk a lot of wine. So he gave a command to the seven officials who served him. He told them to bring Queen Vashti to him. He wanted her to come wearing her royal crown. He wanted to show off her beauty to the people and nobles. She was lovely to look at.

The attendants told Queen Vashti what the king had ordered her to do. But she refused to come. So the king became very

angry. In fact, he burned with anger.

By royal order, the king declared that Vashti be sent away and her position as queen be given to someone else.

Esther Becomes Queen of Persia

There was a Jew living in the safest place in Susa. He was from the tribe of Benjamin. His name was Mordecai. Nebuchadnezzar had forced Mordecai to leave Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylonia.

Mordecai had a cousin named Esther. He had brought her up in his own home. She didn't have a father or mother. She was very beautiful.

After the king's order and law were announced, many women were brought to the safest place in Susa. Esther was also taken to the king's palace.

Esther hadn't told anyone who her people were. She hadn't talked about her family. That's because Mordecai had told her not to.

The king liked Esther more than he liked any of the other women. So he put a royal crown on her head. He made her queen in Vashti's place.

Mordecai Uncovers a Plan to Kill the King

At that time Mordecai was sitting at the palace gate.

Bigthana and Teresh were two of the king's officers. They guarded the door of the royal palace. They became angry with King Xerxes. So they decided to kill him. They made their evil plans while Mordecai was sitting at the palace gate.

So he found out about it. And he told Queen Esther. Then she reported it to the king. She told him that Mordecai had uncovered the plans against him. Some people checked Esther's report. And they found out it was true. All of that was written in the official records.

Haman Plans to Destroy the Jews

After those events, King Xerxes honored Haman. The king gave Haman a higher position than he had before. He gave him a seat of honor. It was higher than the

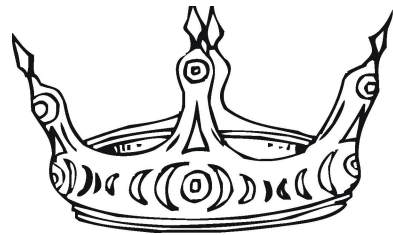
positions any of the other nobles had. All of the royal officials at the palace gate got down on their knees. They gave honor to Haman.

But Mordecai refused to get down on his knees. He wouldn't give Haman any honor at all. He would bow to no one except the Lord.

The royal officials at the palace gate questioned Mordecai about his refusal to bow had told them he was a Jew.

Haman burned with anger. But he had found out who Mordecai's people were. So he decided not to kill just Mordecai. He also looked for a way to destroy all of Mordecai's people. They were Jews. He wanted to kill all of them everywhere in the kingdom of Xerxes.

Then Haman said to King Xerxes, "Certain people are scattered among the nations. They live in all of the territories in your kingdom. Their practices are different from the practices of all other people. They don't obey your laws. It really isn't good for you to put up with them.



"If it pleases you, give the order to destroy them. I'll even add 375 tons of silver to the royal treasures. You can use it to pay the men who take care of the matter."

"Keep the money," the king said to Haman. "Do what you want to with those people."

Mordecai Talks Esther Into Helping the Jews

Mordecai found out about everything that had been done. He sobbed out loud. He cried bitter tears.

All of the Jews were very sad. They didn't eat anything. They sobbed and cried.

Mordecai sent a message to Esther. He said, "You live in the king's palace. You must help us."

Then Esther sent a reply to Mordecai. She said, "Go. Gather together all of the Jews who are in Susa. And fast for my benefit. Don't eat or drink anything for three days. Don't do it night or day. I and my attendants will fast just as you do.

Then I'll go to the king. I'll do it even though it's against the law. And if I have to die, I'll die."

Esther Invites the King and Haman to a Big Dinner

On the third day Esther put her royal robes on.

The king asked, "What is it, Queen Esther? What do you want? I'll give it to you. I'll even give you up to half of my kingdom."

Esther replied, "King Xerxes, if it pleases you, come to a big dinner today. I've prepared it for you. Please have Haman come with you."

"Bring Haman at once," the king said to his servants. "Then we'll do what Esther asks."

So the king and Haman went to the big dinner Esther had prepared. As they were drinking wine, the king asked Esther the same question again. He said, "What do you want? I'll give it to you. What do you want me to do for you? I'll even give you up to half of my kingdom."

Esther replied, "Here is what I want. Here is my appeal to you. I hope you will show me your favor. I hope you will be pleased to give me what I want. And I hope you will be pleased to listen to my appeal. If you are, I'd like you and Haman to come tomorrow to the big dinner I'll prepare for you. Then I'll answer your question."

Haman Brags About Being Invited to Esther's Dinner

That day Haman was happy. So he left the palace in a good mood. But then he saw Mordecai at the palace gate. He noticed that Mordecai didn't stand up when he walked by. In fact, Mordecai didn't have any respect for him at all. So he burned with anger against him.

Haman called his friends and his wife Zeresh together. He bragged to them about how rich he was. He talked about how many sons he had. He spoke about all of the ways the king had honored him. He bragged about how the king had given him a higher position than any of the other nobles and officials had. "And that's not all!" Haman added. "I'm the only person Queen Esther invited to come with the

king to the big dinner she gave. Now she has invited me along with the king tomorrow.

"But even all of that doesn't satisfy me. I won't be satisfied as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the palace gate."

Haman's wife Zeresh and all of his friends spoke up. They said to him, "In the morning, ask the king to have Mordecai put to death. Then go to the dinner with the king. Have a good time."

The King Honors Mordecai

That night the king couldn't sleep. So he ordered the official records of his rule to be brought in. He ordered someone to read them to him. It was written there that Mordecai had uncovered the plans of Bigthana and Teresh against the king. They had been two of the king's officers who guarded the door of the royal palace. They had decided to kill King Xerxes.



"What great honor has Mordecai received for doing that?" the king asked.

"Nothing has been done for him," his attendants answered.

The king asked, "Who is in the courtyard?"

Haman had just entered the outer courtyard of the palace. He had come to speak to the king about putting

Mordecai to death.

The king's attendants said to him, "Haman is standing in the courtyard."

"Bring him in," the king ordered.

Haman entered. Then the king asked him, "What should be done for the man I want to honor?"

Haman said to himself, "Is there anyone the king would rather honor than me?" So he answered the king. He said, "Here is what you should do for the man you want to honor. Have your servants get a royal robe you have worn. Have them bring

a horse you have ridden on. Have a royal crest placed on its head. Then give the robe and horse to one of your most noble princes. Let the robe be put on the man you want to honor. Let him be led on the horse through the city streets. Let people announce in front of him, 'This is what is done for the man the king wants to honor!' "

"Go right away," the king commanded Haman. "Get the robe. Bring the horse. Do exactly what you have suggested. Do it for the Jew Mordecai. He's sitting out there at the palace gate. Make sure you do everything you have suggested."

So Haman got the robe and the horse. He put the robe on Mordecai. And he led him on horseback through the city streets. He walked along in front of him and announced, "This is what is done for the man the king wants to honor!"

After that, Mordecai returned to the palace gate. But Haman rushed home. He covered his head because he was very sad.

Esther Saves her people

Later, the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther. The king again asked, "What do you want, Queen Esther? I'll give it to you. What do you want me to do for you? I'll even give you up to half of my kingdom."

Then Queen Esther answered, "King Xerxes, I hope you will show me your favor. I hope you will be pleased to let me live. That's what I want. Please spare my people. That's my appeal to you.

"My people and I have been sold to be destroyed."

King Xerxes asked Queen Esther, "Who is the man who has dared to do such a thing? And where is he?"

Esther said, "The man hates us! He's our enemy! He's this evil Haman!"

The king got up. He was burning with anger. Haman was punished and God's people were saved!