
Esther 4:1

NIV *When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly.*

KJV *When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry;*

Amplified *NOW WHEN Mordecai learned all that was done, [he] rent his clothes and put on sackcloth with ashes and went out into the midst of the city and cried with a loud and bitter cry.*

Knuth *When Mordecai heard the news, he tore his clothes into shreds, wrapped himself in coarse burlap, covered himself with ashes, and walked into the middle of the city, wailing loudly and bitterly.*

1 Introduction to Esther

Summary of Esther:

- Queen Vashti would not follow a command from Xerxes, so he took away her position. He then took up a search for a new queen.
- Esther was one of the girls brought to Xerxes during the search and she was selected to be the new Queen.
- Esther's father, Mordecai, sat at the king's gate in order to see Esther, when he uncovered a plot to kill Xerxes.
- Later, Xerxes elevates Haman, an Amalekite to a position of highest honor. Mordecai would not kneel down or honor Haman.
- Haman crafts a plan to annihilate all the Jews. He casts the *pur* to determine the day and month, and then gets Xerxes to buy into this plan.
- Esther risks her life to request that the king and Haman attend a banquet she is putting on for them.
- One night, Xerxes had trouble sleeping so he had the record of his reign read to him. He realized Mordecai had never been honored for helping to save the king, so he decides to honor him.
- After this, Esther holds another banquet and asks the king to spare the Jews. She tells the king that Haman is behind the plan. Haman begs Esther for his life by falling down in front of her. Xerxes thinks he's molesting her, and has him hanged.
- Xerxes then issues an edict that Jews have the right to assemble and defend themselves.
- The Jews celebrate Purim as the day after the Jews defeated their enemies.

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- An interesting feature of Esther is the complete lack of any explicit reference to God. However, it is clear from the story that the author and the people involved clearly believe that God is in control of all things.
 - Read Esther 4:12-14. **Mordecai clearly believes the deliverance will come for the Jews, presumably from God. He also speculates that there may be a reason why Esther finds herself in this unique situation.**
 - Read Esther 6:1-3. **This is the turning point for the entire story. A fortunate series of "coincidences" causes the fortunes of the Jews to take a better turn. Note that disturbed sleep is a critical part of this story, as it was with Joseph.**
 - Esther is willing to put her life on the line to protect the Jews. **Approaching the king when not summoned was punishable by death unless the king granted you an immediate pardon.**

2 Mourning

- Mordecai's mourning ritual was typical for the Near East.
 - Tore his clothes into shreds.
 - * Read Genesis 37:28-30.
 - * Read 1 Samuel 4:10-13. **Here the torn clothes indicate that the messenger is the bearer of bad news.**
 - * Read Acts 14:11-15.
 - Put on sackcloth.
 - * Read Isaiah 3:24. **Sackcloth is the opposite of fine clothing.**
 - Covered himself in ashes.
 - * Read Jonah 3:4-6.
 - * Read Luke 10:13.
 - Wailed loudly and bitterly.
 - * Read Isaiah 15:1-3. **The Moabites are showing their grief by howling from the rooftops.**
- Read Esther 3:15. Contrast this scene with the one in 4:1.