

Esther

Chapter 1

The kingdom of King Ahasuerus stretched from India to Ethiopia.

Ahasuerus gave a banquet for all his leading people. But Queen Vashti refused to join the banquet.

The king therefore decided to replace Vashti as queen.

Dear God, please bless all kings and queens in the world

Chapter 2

A selection process was begun to find a woman to replace Vashti as queen.

Esther was a beautiful Jewish orphan girl who had been brought up by her cousin Mordecai.

After the long selection process was finished, Esther was chosen to be queen.

No one in the palace knew she was Jewish.

Dear God, again I ask you,
please bless all kings and queens

Chapter 3

About this time Haman from the land of Agag was promoted by King Ahasuerus to a top position. All other officials were to bow and prostrate themselves before Haman.

Mordecai refused to bow to Haman.

This made Haman very angry.

Haman found out that Mordecai was a Jew.

Haman decided to kill Mordecai and all Jews in the kingdom.

Ahasuerus agreed to Haman's plan
and a decree to this effect was announced:
all Jews were to be killed on the 14th day of the 12th month.

Dear God, please protect poor people
from people like Haman

Chapter 4

When Mordecai heard about Haman's plan,
Mordecai asked Esther to appeal to Ahasuerus for help.
Mordecai and Esther both knew that to approach the king
without an invitation was a crime punishable by death,
unless the king saw fit to welcome an uninvited person.
So they prayed to God to move the heart of Ahasuerus
to welcome Esther.

Dear God, please move the hearts of rulers
to care for their people

Chapter 5

After Esther prayed to God for a long time,
she went to the palace and presented herself to the king.
At first the king was angry that Esther came without being
invited, but then his heart softened and he welcomed her.
When King Ahasuerus saw that Esther was distressed,
he asked her what was wrong.
He promised to do anything for her.
Esther asked that there be two special banquets for herself,
the king and Haman.
The king agreed and the banquets were arranged.
Haman meanwhile was making his own arrangements:
a high gallows on which to hang Mordecai.

Dear God, please move the hearts of rulers
to be kind to their people

Chapters 6 – 8

On the night between the two banquets,
the king could not sleep.
To induce sleep
he started reading the history of his kingdom.

He read how some years ago two of his eunuchs planned
to assassinate him, but the plot was foiled by Mordecai.

The king asked Haman how to honor a man
whom the king wished to honor.

Haman thought the king was talking about himself, Haman,
so he suggested royal clothes, a royal horse
and a royal parade.

The king agreed and told Haman to honor Mordecai
in this way. This was a great humiliation for Haman.

And it got even worse for Haman.
At the second banquet,
Esther told the king that she was Jewish
and that Haman planned to kill all Jews.

The result: Haman was hanged on the gallows
which he had prepared for Mordecai,
and the Jews were not only spared annihilation
- they were given places of honor in the kingdom.

The Jews praised God for all his help through Mordecai.

Dear God, please stop people like Haman
from committing injustice