

## WOMEN OF THE BIBLE 8

### ESTHER



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### FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

4:14 "AND WHO KNOWS BUT THAT YOU HAVE COME TO ROYAL POSITION FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS?"

The stakes could not have been higher. The very existence of an entire people hung in the balance. If Haman, the ancient Hitler, had his way there would be genocide, and the Jews, would cease to exist in Persia. Everything now seemed to vector in on the lovely Esther. She was the only hope, if there was any hope. What she did with the opportunity before her, how she seized the day, would affect generations to come. Her cousin, and surrogate father, Mordeci urged her to act. "*Who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?*"

# Esther 1

**[Queen Vashti Deposed]** This is what happened during the time of Xerxes, the Xerxes who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush: At that time King Xerxes reigned from his royal throne in the citadel of Susa, and in the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for all his nobles and officials. The military leaders of Persia and Media, the princes, and the nobles of the provinces were present. ...

**Esther 2:1 [Esther Made Queen]** Later when King Xerxes' fury had subsided, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what he had decreed about her.

**Esther 2:7** Mordecai had a cousin named Hadassah, whom he had brought up because she had neither father nor mother. This young woman, who was also known as Esther, had a lovely figure and was beautiful. Mordecai had taken her as his own daughter when her father and mother died.

**Esther 2:8** When the king's order and edict had been proclaimed, many young women were brought to the citadel of Susa and put under the care of Hegai. Esther also was taken to the king's palace and entrusted to Hegai, who had charge of the harem.

**Esther 2:10** Esther had not revealed her nationality and family background, because Mordecai had forbidden her to do so.

**Esther 2:11** Every day he walked back and forth near the courtyard of the harem to find out how Esther was and what was happening to her.

**Esther 2:15** When the turn came for Esther (*the young woman Mordecai had adopted, the daughter of his uncle Abihail*) to go to the king, she asked for nothing other than what Hegai, the king's eunuch who was in

charge of the harem, suggested. And Esther won the favor of everyone who saw her.

**Esther 2:17** Now the king was attracted to Esther more than to any of the other women, and she won his favor and approval more than any of the other virgins. So he set a royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.



**Esther 2:18** And the king gave a great banquet, Esther's banquet, for all his nobles and officials. He proclaimed a holiday throughout the provinces and distributed gifts with royal liberality.

**Esther 2:20** But Esther had kept secret her family background and nationality just as Mordecai had told her to do, for she continued to follow Mordecai's instructions as she had done when he was bringing her up.

**Esther 2:22** But Mordecai found out about the plot and told Queen Esther, who in turn reported it to the king, giving credit to Mordecai.

**Esther 4:1 [Mordecai Persuades Esther to Help]** 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.

**Esther 4:4** When Esther's eunuchs and female attendants came and told her about Mordecai, she was in great distress. She sent clothes for him to put on instead of his sackcloth, but he would not accept them.

**Esther 4:5** Then Esther summoned Hathak, one of the king's eunuchs assigned to attend her, and ordered him to find out what was troubling Mordecai and why.

**Esther 4:8** He also gave him a copy of the text of the edict for their annihilation, which had been published in Susa, to show to Esther and explain it to her, and he told him to instruct her to go into the king's presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people.



**Esther 4:9** Hathak went back and reported to Esther what Mordecai had said.

**Esther 4:12** When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai,

**Esther 4:15** Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai:

**Esther 4:17** So Mordecai went away and carried out all of Esther's instructions.

**Esther 5:1 [Esther's Request to the King]** On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall, facing the entrance.

**Esther 5:2** When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand. So Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter.



**Esther 5:3** Then the king asked, “What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you.”

**Esther 5:4** “If it pleases the king,” replied Esther, “let the king, together with Haman, come today to a banquet I have prepared for him.”

**Esther 5:5** “Bring Haman at once,” the king said, “so that we may do what Esther asks.” So the king and Haman went to the banquet Esther had prepared.

**Esther 5:6** As they were drinking wine, the king again asked Esther, “Now what is your petition? It will be given you. And what is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted.”

**Esther 5:7** Esther replied, “My petition and my request is this: If the king regards me with favor and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for them. Then I will answer the king’s question.”

**WHAT ARE** we to make of a book in the Bible that doesn’t even mention God? Sometimes actions speak louder than words.

Though threatened with genocide, the Jews seem to be the luckiest people on earth when the story is over. How lucky for them that Esther was so beautiful. How fortunate that she won the Bride-for-Xerxes competition. How lucky for them that Mordecai just happened to overhear an assassination plot. Coincidences collect, one upon another, and Lo! the evil Haman ends up falling into the pit he dug for others

But maybe the Jews are just a little too lucky, like the suspicious character who keeps beating the house in roulette. Maybe there is some manipulation of the game going on somewhere. To use a line by songwriter David Wilcox, there is a chorography in these coincidences.

That is the point of a story in which the main character, God, isn't mentioned. That is the way he seems to carry out so much of his governance of the world; incognito, choreographing coincidences, working quietly behind the scenes. Or maybe it's the other way around; as G.K. Chesterton suggested, maybe we are the ones behind the scenes.

Maybe we are looking at the world from behind, and if we could get in front we would meet, face-to-face, the smiling Providence who seems so quiet. One would think that Ester would agree and would encourage us to not lose heart when our prayers seem to fall into a silent abyss.



*Janet Thomas*  
*Founder/President/CEO*  
*Bible Stories Theatre*  
[www.biblestories theatre.org](http://www.biblestories theatre.org)  
[info@biblestories theatre.org](mailto:info@biblestories theatre.org)