

The story of Queen Esther

Do these actions when you hear their names:

Haman: boo, hiss, stamp your feet and use your noisemakers.

Esther: cheer, clap

Mordecai: Say-“Uncle!”

King Xerxes: say-“make way”

Use paper masks to act out the story as it's being read

The story starts with a beauty contest in which Esther is chosen to be the new queen. *The king loved Esther more than all the other women. She won more favor and approval from him than did any of the other young women. He placed the royal crown on her head and made her queen in place of Vashti. (Esther 2:17).* During that time, the Jews lived peacefully in the Persian land. Mordecai was a descendent of King Saul, and advisor to the king and Esther's cousin. Esther was raised by Mordecai. He advised Esther not to tell the king she was of Hebrew descent.

The villain of the story is Haman, an arrogant, treacherous advisor to the king. Haman demanded all the king's servants bow down to him. But Mordecai refused. Haman was jealous and bitter of Mordecai. A descendant of the Jew-hating tribe of Amalek, Haman devised a scheme to solve the Jewish “problem” once and for all by annihilating every Jew. Haman told the king *“There is one ethnic group, scattered throughout the peoples in every province of your kingdom, yet living in isolation. Their laws are different from everyone else's and they do not obey the king's laws. It is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them”* (Esther 3:8). Haman convinced Ahasuerus (Xerxes) that the Jews did not keep his laws and they needed to be gone.

By lottery, the day was chosen for the Jews to die. Haman suggested that anyone who killed a Jew would be rewarded by keeping the victim's property. People responded well to this idea. It was decided that all Jews, both young and old, in one day were to be annihilated.

Mordecai clothed himself in sackcloth and ashes and went out into the city. He turned to repentance and urged the rest of the Jews to do the same. Then he sent Esther to come go before the King to beg him and plead with him to save her people. First, Esther told Mordecai to *“Go and assemble all the Jews who can be found in Susa and fast for me. Don't eat or drink for three days, day or night. I and my female servants will also fast in the same way. After that, I will go to the king even if it is against the law. If I perish, I perish.”* (Esther 4:16) On the third day Esther was invited to the king's royal throne. Queen Esther found grace and favor in his sight. The king asked Esther, *“What is it, Queen Esther? Whatever you want, even to half the kingdom, will be given to you.”* (Esther 5:3) Esther replies *“If it*

pleases the king, may the king and Haman come today to the banquet I have prepared for them."
The king agreed and commanded Haman be told.

That day, Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate. Again, Mordecai did not bow down to Haman. Haman became very angry. He gave instructions for a special fallow to be made just for Mordecai.

At the evening of the banquet the king again asked Esther *"Whatever you ask will be given to you. Whatever you want, even to half the kingdom, will be done."* (Esther 5:6) Esther replied *"This is my petition and my request: If the king approves of me and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and perform my request, may the king and Haman come to the banquet I will prepare for them. Tomorrow I will do what the king has asked."*

That evening the king could not sleep. He sent for his court records to be read and found out that Mordecai had never been repaid for saving his life. The king decided to honor Mordecai.

The king and Haman came to the second banquet with Esther the queen. And the king said again *"Queen Esther, whatever you seek, even to half the kingdom, will be done."* Esther then exposed Haman as the king's adversary and enemy and asked the king to spare the Jewish people. The king was full of rage. He commanded Haman be hanged not he very gallows he made for Mordecai.

The law decreeing the Jews to be killed could not be canceled, so the king gave a new decree that the Jews were allowed to defend themselves when attacked. Therefore, the day that was to be destruction became a day of deliverance. Mordecai and Esthers faith saved the entire Jewish nation.