

# Esther 1-4 • Chapter Study

## INTRO

Esther's a great story. There's drama, suspense.

So much so, it's been the genesis of a dozen movies & a VeggieTales episode.

But the book's caused some controversy >>

Not from the usual source; critics who snipe at both the dates & authors of Bible books.

No, the ruckus comes from believers who question whether Esther ought to *be* in the Bible.

They question its inclusion because of the absence of the name of God, any mention of prayer, or worship.

Supporters of the book respond by saying while God's *name* may be missing, His *hand* isn't.

His presence *permeates* the story. In fact, the book is all about His *providence*.

Indeed; that may account for why He's NOT specifically named.

The book reveals how, even when God isn't apparent, He's at work accomplishing His will.

Esther takes place between the 1<sup>st</sup> return of exiles under Zerubbabel & the 2<sup>nd</sup> led by Ezra.

Zerubbabel (538 BC) → Esther (480 BC) → Ezra (458 BC) → Nehemiah (445 BC)

This is the time of the Persians, who'd conquered Babylon and would in turn be conquered by the Greeks.

The Persian king at this time is Xerxes; of the movie 300, & nothing like the character presented there.

Xerxes was his Greek name. His Persian name was *Khshayarsha*. In Hebrew, *Ahasuerus*.

He led his vast army against the Greek homeland.

Though victorious at the *Battle of Thermopylae*, the Persians lost some 100K while the Greeks lost only 2500, 300 of which were Spartans.

A year later, the Persians were *defeated* at the *Battle of Plataea* & returned home.

All this is part of the story before us here in Esther.

## Ch1

<sup>1</sup> Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus (this was the Ahasuerus who reigned over 127 provinces, from India to Ethiopia),

The Persian Empire at this time was massive! [map](#)

It stretched from India on the E, up into Russia in the N, S along the Red Sea, all the way down along the course of the Nile, and W'd until it ran into the Greek city-states who until the arrival of the Persians had been at war with one another.

The Persian forced the Greeks into an alliance & ultimately led to the end of Persian hegemony and the emergence of the Greek Empire under Philip, then his son, Alexander.

<sup>2</sup> in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the citadel,

Shushan; AKA Susa = *Winter* palace of the Persian kings.

They had 3 royal seats: *Ecbatana* was the *Summer* palace, *Susa* the Winter seat,

& *Babylon* = a regional center the Persians retained as a capital  
because of its grandeur & reputation.

Shushan is Iran's largest archaeological excavation.

The remains of the royal palace have been unearthed & fully explored.

<sup>3</sup> that in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of his reign = [483 BC] // he made a feast for all his officials and servants—the powers of Persia and Media, the nobles, and the princes of the provinces *being* before him— <sup>4</sup> when he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the splendor of his excellent majesty for many days, 180 days *in all*.

There was good reason for this ½ yr long festival for the political & business leaders of the Empire.

Ahasuerus was planning a campaign against the Greeks who stood in the way of advancement to the W.  
He needed to secure their support.

This 6-mn long party kept them in Susa where he could apply the screws to them.

No one could ignore the king's summons to such an affair.

To do so would have been taken as *treason*.

**<sup>5</sup> And when these days were completed, the king made a feast lasting 7 days for all the people who were present in Shushan the citadel, from great to small, in the court of the garden of the king's palace.**

When the nobles' party was over, Ahasuerus threw a week-long party for the public.

This was no doubt to encourage enlistments in the army.

**<sup>6</sup> There were white and blue linen *curtains* fastened with cords of fine linen and purple on silver rods and marble pillars; *and the couches were of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of alabaster, turquoise, and white and black marble.* <sup>7</sup> And they served drinks in golden vessels, each vessel being different from the other, with royal wine in abundance, according to the generosity of the king.**

It was a full-court press to *impress* with Persian glory & power,  
boosting people's confidence in the success of this new military venture.

The logistics for it were staggering in scope. // The challenge was daunting.

But Ahasuerus knew if he could **dazzle** his subjects with the idea of his **& their** greatness, they'd be more inclined to sign on.

**<sup>8</sup> In accordance with the law, the drinking was not compulsory; for so the king had ordered all the officers of his household, that they should do according to each man's pleasure.**

While Ahasuerus' goal was conscription, he didn't want anyone signing up who'd been *forced* to.

So he made it clear no one **HAD** to drink the copious amounts of wine he provided.

By making this rule *public*, the people would think Ahasuerus wasn't **just** trying to get men drunk so they'd enlist.

In reality, that's was exactly what he hoped! For goodness sake, that's why he threw this party.

But he didn't give the appearance of *forcing* enlistment.

So the order against compulsory drinking was made clear.

Ever seen a tankard or stein with a glass bottom?

The condition of sailors in the 1700's in the British Royal Navy were deplorable.

Survival, even without seeing any action was poor // So, men refused to enlist.

Recruitment officers went into pubs, thinking it would be easier to persuade drinkers.

As an incentive to enlist, they were offered an immediate shilling, with which they could buy more to drink.

It worked for a while, till men realized they were being swindled.

The recruiters got clever and started dropping the shilling into tankards.

When bottom's up came, men would get the coin in their mouth, then put it out.

Now in hand, they'd "taken the King's shilling" and were officially enlisted!

So, they started bringing their own tankards with glass bottoms to the pub so they could see if a shilling had been dropped in.

**<sup>9</sup> Queen Vashti also made a feast for the women *in the royal palace* which *belonged* to King Ahasuerus.**

While men were at the king's feast, women were invited to a more sedate & refined celebration hosted by the Queen.

A smart move on Ahasuerus' part; separate the men & women so when he started recruiting the men their wives wouldn't be there giving them that "Don't you dare" look.

**10 On the 7<sup>th</sup> day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine,**

IOW; smashed.

**he commanded** [7 special court officials are named], **7 eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus,** <sup>11</sup> **to bring Queen Vashti before the king, wearing her royal crown, in order to show her beauty to the people and the officials, for she was beautiful to behold.**

Ahasuerus wanted to dazzle with his glory & power.

What better way to do that than to parade his greatest treasure of all; his gorgeous wife?

But here's where he blew it; he sent his bodyguards with orders to **GET** her.

And they went with orders **commanding** her to doll herself up, *then* come.

That's not going to go over well. She is, after all a Queen!

**12 But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command brought by his eunuchs; therefore the king was furious, and his anger burned within him.**

The alcohol addling his brain didn't help; he's not thinking clearly.

Jewish commentaries say Ahasuerus' summons of Vashti was a result of a debate he had with some of his officials, over who had the most beautiful wife.

Ahasuerus thought to end it by calling Vashti //

V11 suggests Ahasuerus wanted her to show them **ALL** her beauty.

All she'd be wearing was her crown, and **THAT's** why she refused.

Though a fool, Ahasuerus was king.

In ancient Persia, **no one** refused the king without dire consequences.

**13 Then the king said to the wise men who understood the times** (for this *was* the king's manner toward all who knew law and justice, <sup>14</sup> those closest to him *being* Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the 7 princes of Persia and Media, who had access to the king's presence, *and* who ranked highest in the kingdom): <sup>15</sup> "What *shall we* do to Queen Vashti, according to law, because she did not obey the command of King Ahasuerus *brought to her by the eunuchs?*"

Defying the king was serious business.

If it had been anyone else, there'd have been no question what to do // "Off with their head."

That might have been Vashti's fate as well // But she was daughter to an important ally.

Still, *something* had to be done ...

**16 And Memucan answered before the king and the princes: "Queen Vashti has not only wronged the king, but also all the princes, and all the people who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. <sup>17</sup> For the queen's behavior will become known to all women, so that they will despise their husbands in their eyes, when they report, 'King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought in before him, but she did not come.' <sup>18</sup> This very day the noble ladies of Persia and Media will say to all the king's officials that they have heard of the behavior of the queen. Thus there will be excessive contempt and wrath.**

They reason Vashti's refusal of her husband will become *contagious*.

Wives all over the empire will deny their husbands. // “We can’t have that.”

Women had little power in the Persian world; just as today in Iran, modern Persia.

Little’s changed there in that regard.

The advisors suggest >>

**<sup>19</sup> If it pleases the king, let a royal decree go out from him, and let it be recorded in the laws of the Persians and the Medes, so that it will not be altered, that Vashti shall come no more before King Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she. <sup>20</sup> When the king’s decree which he will make is proclaimed throughout all his empire (for it is great), all wives will honor their husbands, both great and small.”**

In the Persian jurisprudence, once a royal command was entered in the official record, it couldn’t be altered.  
Even the king who made it couldn’t undo it // That’s going to be important later.

**<sup>21</sup> And the reply pleased the king and the princes, and the king did according to the word of Memucan.**

He divorced Vashti.

**<sup>22</sup> Then he sent letters to all the king’s provinces, to each province in its own script, and to every people in their own language, that each man should be master in his own house, and speak in the language of his own people.**

Historically after this, Ahasuerus left on his campaign to conquer Greece.

Which turned into a colossal failure // 4 yrs later he returned home.

## Ch2

**<sup>1</sup> After these things, when the wrath of King Ahasuerus subsided, he remembered Vashti, what she had done, and what had been decreed against her.**

He’s had plenty time to cool off, 4 years at least.

There was precious little time to miss Vashti when he was deep in a grueling military campaign.

But once back home, his ego hurting for the trouncing his supposedly unstoppable force had taken at the hands of the Greeks, he wanted for some female companionship.

**<sup>2</sup> Then the king’s servants who attended him said: “Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king; <sup>3</sup> and let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather all the beautiful young virgins to Shushan the citadel, into the women’s quarters, under the custody of Hegai the king’s eunuch, custodian of the women. And let beauty preparations be given *them*. <sup>4</sup> Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti.” This thing pleased the king, and he did so.**

The idea was to hold a ***Miss Persia Pageant*** with the winner getting a ***real*** crown.

Ahasuerus, typical male, was all for it.

Now >> a major scene-change.

**<sup>5</sup> In Shushan the citadel there was a certain Jew whose name was Mordecai** the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite. **<sup>6</sup> Kish** had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captives who had been captured with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away. **<sup>7</sup> And Mordecai** had brought up Hadassah, that *is*, Esther, his uncle’s daughter,

So, his cousin. But apparently he was much older than she →

for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman *was* lovely and beautiful. When her father and mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.

**Hadassah** was her **Hebrew** name & means **myrtle** // **Esther**, her **Persian** name means **star**.

Both Mordecai & Hadassah were members of the large Jewish community living where the Babylonians settled them, which of course was all part of Persia now.

When Hadassah's parents died, her cousin Mordecai took her in.

Because she was a beauty, she was drafted for the *Miss Persia Pageant* >>

**<sup>8</sup> So it was, when the king's command and decree were heard, and when many young women were gathered at Shushan the citadel, under the custody of Hegai, that Esther also was taken to the king's palace, into the care of Hegai the custodian of the women. <sup>9</sup> Now the young woman pleased him, and she obtained his favor;**

Something about Esther endeared her to the guy in charge of the contestants.

They were all beauties, so it must have been her character >>

**so he readily gave beauty preparations to her, besides her allowance.**

She got *more* and the *good*-stuff.

While the others got the *Wet-n-Wild* & *NYC* brands, Hegai gave Esther *Dior* & *Este Lauder*.

**Then 7 choice maidservants were provided for her from the king's palace, and he moved her and her maidservants to the best place in the house of the women.**

The coming pageant wasn't just about who **looked** best.

The winner would be the new Queen of a vast & powerful empire.

She needed to handle the duties & pressures of court; a worthy companion to the ruler of the world.

The attendants Hegai appointed Esther were tutors, teaching her etiquette & court politics.

When she appeared before Ahasuerus, she'd be able to do more than just stand there & look good.

She had to be able to *counsel* him & function as a near-equal.

Don't picture her lying around for days on end in milk-baths with cucumbers on her eyes while her nails were done.

This was a time of rigorous learning.

**<sup>10</sup> Esther had not revealed her people or family, for Mordecai had charged her not to reveal it.**

As we'll see, Mordecai was a court official // He knew how the political winds blew.

There was an anti-Semitism undercurrent among some he knew could spin up quickly.

So he counseled Esther to keep her origins secret.

**<sup>11</sup> And every day Mordecai paced in front of the court of the women's quarters, to learn of Esther's welfare and what was happening to her. <sup>12</sup> Each young woman's turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus after she had completed 12 months' preparation, according to the regulations for the women, for thus were the days of their preparation apportioned: 6 months with oil of myrrh, and 6 months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women.**

Now *that's* a spa-holiday! A full-year. Glory!

Again, this was more than endless massages & manicures.

It was a political charm-school that taught all kinds of important skills.

**<sup>13</sup> Thus prepared, each young woman went to the king, and she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the women's quarters to the king's palace.**

When it came time for each woman to have her interview with Ahasuerus, she was allowed to pick her own wardrobe >> An important test of her skill in decision-making as it related to court etiquette.

**14** In the evening she went, and in the morning she returned to the 2<sup>nd</sup> house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who kept the concubines. She would not go in to the king again unless the king delighted in her and called for her by name.

The interview each woman went thru was more than just a turn on the cat-walk & a couple of questions.

She *slept* with Ahasuerus as well. And you know what I mean by "slept."

After that, she'd went to the part of the palace where the royal harem was housed.

Even if she wasn't selected as the new queen, she became a permanent part of his harem.

**15** Now when the turn came for Esther the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his daughter, to go in to the king, she requested nothing but what Hegai the king's eunuch, the custodian of the women, advised. And Esther obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her.

When it came time for Esther's interview, she let Hegai select her wardrobe.

Smart move. Who knew better than he what Ahasuerus liked?

And Esther knew Hegai wanted her to win. So she trusted his selection of the right outfit.

**16** So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, in the 10<sup>th</sup> month, which *is* the month of Tebeth, in the 7<sup>th</sup> year of his reign. **17** The king loved Esther more than all the *other* women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. **18** Then the king made a great feast, the Feast of Esther, for all his officials and servants; and he proclaimed a holiday in the provinces and gave gifts according to the generosity of a king.

So far, so good. // But now the story turns and we're introduced to the villain.

**19** When virgins were gathered together a 2<sup>nd</sup> time, Mordecai sat within the king's gate.

Time passes after Esther's crowned.

How long we don't know, but not more than a couple years.

True to form for the power & debauchery of the Persian court, another pageant is held to enlarge Ahasuerus' harem.

What's important to the story is where *Mordecai* is; sitting in the gate; and not just any.

This is the King's Gate; a place of honor & influence. // He's an official in the Persian court.

**20** Now Esther had not revealed her family and her people, just as Mordecai had charged her, for Esther obeyed the command of Mordecai as when she was brought up by him.

Though Esther lived in the palace, she & Mordecai kept in touch.

What happens next makes that clear.

**21** In those days, while Mordecai sat within the king's gate, 2 of the king's eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh, doorkeepers, became furious and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. **22** So the matter became known to Mordecai, who told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name. **23** And when an inquiry was made into the matter, it was confirmed, and both were hanged on a gallows; and it was written in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king.

When it comes to the throne of *whatever kingdom*, there's no end to conspiracies to bump off the current guy and replace him with someone else.

Bigthan & Teresh hatched a plot to get rid of Ahasuerus.

Mordecai found out about it and told Esther, who warned Ahasuerus & the plot was foiled.

It was expected Mordecai would be ***promoted*** for this.

**For some reason**, his promotion went to the wrong guy.

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In reality: It only *seemed* to go to the wrong guy; a very wrong guy, Mordecai's mortal enemy.

God was at work *behind the scenes*, delaying Mordecai's promotion till just the right moment, when it would do the most good.

When it would accomplish far more than Mordecai could have imagined.

It's human nature to look for God to answer prayers & fulfill His promises *on our clock* when He far more often does so *on His calendar*.

He knows the end from the beginning and knows the exact right moment for everything.

God doesn't just ***do*** the right thing, He also always does it ***at the right time***.

### Ch3

**<sup>1</sup> After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman**, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him and set his seat above all the princes who *were* with him.

**Haman was a descendant of Agag**, king of the utterly brutal & wicked ***Amalekites***.

500 yrs before, God commanded Israel's King Saul to *wipe out* the Amalekites.

He didn't just fail to, he *refused* to.

Well, here's an Amalekite, a descendant of king Agag.

He's going to come close to doing to Israel what was supposed to happen to the Amalekites.

**<sup>2</sup> And all the king's servants who were within the king's gate** bowed and paid homage to Haman, for so the king had commanded concerning him. But Mordecai would not bow or pay homage.

Mordecai *would* not bow because He *could* not // He knew who Haman was and what he represented.

**<sup>3</sup> Then the king's servants who were within the king's gate said to Mordecai, "Why do you transgress the king's command?"** **<sup>4</sup> Now it happened, when they spoke to him daily and he would not listen to them, that they told it to Haman, to see whether Mordecai's words would stand; for Mordecai had told them that he was a Jew.**

Eventually Mordecai explained why he couldn't bow to Haman.

Bowing to an Amalekite would ratify Saul's error & contravene the spirit behind the command to end them.

Mordecai had no specific command to slay Haman, as Saul had been commanded.

But he knew *bowing* to him would displease God.

**<sup>5</sup> When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay him homage**, Haman was filled with wrath.

We get a clue to his overweening pride, which is going to become manifestly clear in a bit.

**<sup>6</sup> But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone**, for they had told him of the people of Mordecai. Instead, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who *were* throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus—the people of Mordecai.

*Both* Mordecai & Haman knew their history, that there was a blood feud between their peoples.

When Haman learned Mordecai was a Jew, he decided to do more than just go after Mordecai.

He'd go after him and ALL his people // He began plotting their *complete annihilation*.

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**<sup>7</sup> In the 1<sup>st</sup> month, which is the month of Nisan, in the 12<sup>th</sup> year of King Ahasuerus**, they cast Pur (that is, the lot), before Haman to determine the day and the month, until it fell on the 12<sup>th</sup> month, which is the month of Adar.

Haman gathered a group of sycophants & cronies. Together they hatched a plot to get rid of the Jews.

They cast lots, in Persian, the *pur*, to determine when they'd launch their ancient version of the Holocaust. Why not just pick a date? >> Persians were highly superstitious.

They believed the lot was a way for the gods to tell them the most auspicious time to embark on a venture. The date they set was nearly a yr away.

**<sup>8</sup> Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws *are* different from all *other* people's, and they do not keep the king's laws. Therefore it *is* not fitting for the king to let them remain.**

Though *in truth* Jews had brought great benefit to both Babylonians & Persians, Haman casts them as a dangerous threat preparing an insurrection.

But note, he didn't identify them.

No. He insinuates they've been an overlooked part of the Empire Ahasuerus need not bother himself with. He goes on ...

**<sup>9</sup> If it pleases the king, let *a decree* be written that they be destroyed, and I will pay 10,000 talents of silver into the hands of those who do the work, to bring *it* into the king's treasuries."**

Haman sweetens the offer by saying the spoils taken from them will boost the treasury.

As Ahasuerus was paying off the debt of his failed Greek campaign, that would have been quite an appeal.

**<sup>10</sup> So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. <sup>11</sup> And the king said to Haman, "The money and the people *are* given to you, to do with them as seems good to you." <sup>12</sup> Then the king's scribes were called on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the 1<sup>st</sup> month, and *a decree* was written according to all that Haman commanded—to the king's satraps, to the governors who *were* over each province, to the officials of all people, to every province according to its script, and to every people in their language. In the name of King Ahasuerus it was written, and sealed with the king's signet ring. <sup>13</sup> And the letters were sent by couriers into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in 1 day, on the 13<sup>th</sup> *day* of the 12<sup>th</sup> *month*, which *is* the month of Adar, and to plunder their possessions. <sup>14</sup> A copy of the document was to be issued as law in every province, being published for all people, that they should be ready for that day. <sup>15</sup> The couriers went out, hastened by the king's command; and the decree was proclaimed in Shushan the citadel. So the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Shushan was perplexed.**

Remember, according to Persian Law, once the royal seal was set, it couldn't be undone, even by himself.

A proclamation was drawn up & circulated to all 127 provinces of the Empire.

Every last man, woman, and child of the Jews was to be killed in 11 mns.

To encourage participation in the pogrom; attackers were free to keep whatever loot they found.

The decree caused massive distress among both Jews & Gentiles.

Everyone knew it as a politically-motivated attack on the innocent.

The Jews had been living quietly in Persian as loyal citizens & everyone knew it.

So, the plot is set // The chess pieces have been moved into position.

Satan, who knows his end is tied to Messiah coming from the Jewish people moves his pawn, Haman onto his square & says, "Check."

## Ch 4

**<sup>1</sup> When Mordecai learned all that had happened, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city. He cried out with a loud and bitter cry. <sup>2</sup> He went as far as the front of the king's gate, for**



no one *might* enter the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. <sup>3</sup> And in every province where the king's command and decree arrived, *there was* great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

Because no one who was bummed out was allowed near the king, lest *his* mood sour was well.

Mordecai went as near the palace as he could, hoping word would reach Esther and she'd come see him.

<sup>4</sup> So Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her, and the queen was deeply distressed. Then she sent garments to clothe Mordecai and take his sackcloth away from him, but he would not accept *them*.

She thought it better that he go to her – this the change of clothes.

But he wouldn't put off the outward signs of mourning.

<sup>5</sup> Then Esther called Hathach, *one* of the king's eunuchs whom he had appointed to attend her, and she gave him a command concerning Mordecai, to learn what and why this *was*. <sup>6</sup> So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the city square that *was* in front of the king's gate. <sup>7</sup> And Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries to destroy the Jews. <sup>8</sup> He also gave him a copy of the written decree for their destruction, which was given at Shushan, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her, and that he might command her to go in to the king to make supplication to him and plead before him for her people.

Mordecai impressed on the importance of relating to Esther all that was going on & to urge her to intercede on behalf of her people.

<sup>9</sup> So Hathach returned and told Esther the words of Mordecai. <sup>10</sup> Then Esther spoke to Hathach, and gave him a command for Mordecai: <sup>11</sup> "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king, who has not been called, *he has* but one law: put *all* to death, except the 1 to whom the king holds out the golden scepter, that he may live. Yet I myself have not been called to go in to the king these 30 days."

This rule of the Persian court is verified by the Greek historian Herodotus.

No one was allowed to enter the inner court where the royal throne was unless summoned by the king.

If someone wanted an audience, they sent a request that took weeks, sometimes months, to process.

The Jews didn't have that kind of time.

If anyone appeared before the king *unbidden*, it was a presumption punishable by death.

Unless on a whim the king showed mercy by extending his scepter.

That rule applied to all; even the queen.

Esther had little hope of an invitation as she'd not been called for a month.

Remember, Ahasuerus had a huge harem.

<sup>12</sup> So they told Mordecai Esther's words. <sup>13</sup> And Mordecai told *them* to answer Esther: "Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews.

Esther had kept her identity a secret from the king // But for sure, some of the palace staff knew.

Once the pogrom began, she'd most likely be outed by someone.

Maybe one of those members of the harem jealous for her position.

Esther's rags to riches, orphan to queen, fairytale dream-life has turned into a nightmare.

<sup>14</sup> For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish.

Mordecai knew the promise of God to his people.

Though Haman's conspiracy would bring death & ruin to many thousands, a remnant would survive because God promised to preserve them.

But Esther was in the **best** position to help her people.

***Dangerous*** times demand ***daring*** action.

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Then, Mordecai uttered those fate-bending words around which the entire story of Esther is spun.

**Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this?"**

Because of the import of those words – we'll save them for Sunday.

**<sup>15</sup> Then Esther told *them* to reply to Mordecai: <sup>16</sup> "Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for 3 days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which *is* against the law; and if I perish, I perish!" <sup>17</sup> So Mordecai went his way and did according to all that Esther commanded him.**

Esther realized she **HAD** to go before the king.

So she told Mordecai to rally their people to prayer & fasting on her behalf that the king's heart would be made soft toward her and give her favor.

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What will happen to her when she approaches Ahasuerus' throne?

Will he accept her or order her execution?

He's already shown his willingness to dispose of the queen.

And what of Haman?

He holds Ahasuerus in thrall, like Crima Wormtongue held Theoden, King of Rohan, in thrall.

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Tune in next week for the exciting Conclusion of Esther, Queen of Persia.