

## Esther's Courage

*"Go and assemble all the Jews who can be found in Susa and fast for me. Don't eat or drink for three days, night and day. 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 HCSB



Hadassah was a young Benjamite girl whose name in Hebrew meant "Myrtle". When the people of Judah under King Jeconiah's leadership lost a war, King Nebuchadnezzar dragged her family (along with thousands of others) to Persia.<sup>1</sup>

Along the way or shortly thereafter, both her parents died and she was adopted by her uncle Mordecai.<sup>2</sup> At some point, she was renamed Esther which is Persian for "Star". Actually, she was named after the Persian goddess Ishtar. I personally believe that her uncle Mordecai gave her the name so that she would blend in more successfully with the goyim (Gentiles).<sup>3</sup> You see, the Persians were not known for following the Geneva Convention when it came to dealing with beautiful, willowy prisoners, if you know what I mean.

So here's a young woman whose entire life has been one long lesson in pain. She was captured, held prisoner, lost both parents and was living a double life in fear of being identified as a Jewess, only to be raped and killed.

However, God had some amazing plans for young Hadassah. The new king, King Ahasuerus,<sup>4</sup> had a falling out with his queen<sup>5</sup> and was looking for a new trophy wife. A competition was held in all 127 provinces of the vast Persian Empire. Girls from India to Cush were vying to become the next queen. Interestingly, however, though all the other girls gathered at the fortress of Susa where the final competition for "Persia's Top Model" was taking place, Esther was "taken" as if by force.<sup>6</sup> Wouldn't you know it? The only woman who didn't want to win – did!

Mordecai drilled into her again, "Don't let anyone know that you're Jewish!" So although she was queen, she still lived daily in fear of discovery.

God's trap finally closed on a man named Haman who was conspiring to massacre the Jews.<sup>7</sup> This nasty fellow was an Agagite, a descendent of King Agag who King Saul spared against God's orders.<sup>8</sup> Problems that are not faced may cause major difficulties to our descendants.<sup>9</sup>

Saul, like Esther, was also a Benjamite and was obviously royalty. However, where Saul lacked the moral courage to finish the job, Esther went against all of her early training and programming and stepped up to the task at the risk of her life. She confronted Haman in front of the king and, as a result, Haman was convicted and hanged, and her people were saved.<sup>10</sup>

God is in complete control, even of kings.<sup>11</sup> He can promote or demote anyone He wants.<sup>12</sup> He can protect us anywhere.<sup>13</sup> When desperate times come may we, like Hadassah, show moral courage.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 Chronicles 3:16; Esther 2:6; Jeremiah 24:1; 27:20

<sup>2</sup> Esther 2:5

<sup>3</sup> Esther 2:10

<sup>4</sup> Likely King Xerxes I (486-485 BC)

<sup>5</sup> Esther 1:1-22

<sup>6</sup> Esther 2:8

<sup>7</sup> Esther 3:1-10

<sup>8</sup> 1 Samuel 15

<sup>9</sup> Exodus 20:5

<sup>10</sup> Esther 7:6-10

<sup>11</sup> Proverbs 8:15-16

<sup>12</sup> Psalm 113:7-8

<sup>13</sup> Psalm 118:6-14

