



Day 1


 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today's study.


Esther Agrees to Help the Jews

¹ 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. ² But he went only as far as the king's gate, because no one clothed in sackcloth was allowed to enter it. ³ In every province to which the edict and order of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing. Many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

Q1. Mordecai tore his clothes and then dressed in sackcloth and ashes. What do these actions signify?

 **When Mordecai learned of all that had been done:** “Relying on the irrevocable nature of a Persian monarch's decree . . . Hamman made it known as soon as the royal sanction had been obtained; and Mordecai was, doubtless, among the first to hear of it. On his own account, as well as on that of his countrymen, this astounding decree must have been indescribably distressing. The acts described in this passage are, according to the Oriental fashion, expressive of the most poignant sorrow; and his approach to the gate of the palace, under the impulse of irrepressible emotions, was to make an earnest though vain appeal to the royal mercy. Access, however, to the king's presence was, to a person in his disfigured state, impossible: ‘for none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.’ ” [©1882, A Commentary, Critical, Practical, and Explanatory on the Old and New Testaments by Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/esther/4-1.htm>]

 **Mordecai . . . tore his clothes:** “Tearing one’s clothes was a public and powerful expression of grief in ancient times.” [Source: <https://www.gotquestions.org/tear-clothes-Bible.html>]

 “Sackcloth and ashes were used in Old Testament times as a symbol of debasement, mourning, and/or repentance. Someone wanting to show his repentant heart would often wear sackcloth, sit in ashes, and put ashes on top of his head. Sackcloth was a coarse material usually made of black goat’s hair, making it quite uncomfortable to wear. The ashes signified desolation and ruin. When someone died, the act of putting on sackcloth showed heartfelt sorrow for the loss of that person . . . Very simply, sackcloth and ashes were used as an outward sign of one’s inward condition. Such a symbol made one’s change of heart visible and demonstrated the sincerity of one’s grief and/or repentance. It was not the act of putting on sackcloth and ashes itself that moved God to intervene, but the humility that such an action demonstrated (see 1 Samuel 16:7). God’s forgiveness in response to genuine repentance is celebrated by David’s words: “You removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy” (Psalm 30:11).” [Source: <https://www.gotquestions.org/sackcloth-and-ashes.html>]

Lesson 4: Esther 4:1-17

Ezra 9:3 [NIV-1984]

When I heard this, I tore my tunic and cloak, pulled hair from my head and beard, and sat down appalled.

Job 2:11-12 [NIV-1984]

¹¹ When Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon [Job], they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him.

¹² When they saw [Job] from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads.

Daniel 9:3 [NIV-1984]

So, I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.

Jonah 3:5-6 [NIV-1984]

⁵ The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. ⁶ When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust.

Q2. Verse 1: Mordecai's reaction seems 'over-the-top'. Speculation: was he also trying to get Queen Esther's attention?

Q3. Verse 2: Why were people dressed in sackcloth barred from entering the palace?

⁴ When Esther's maids and eunuchs 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.


Q4. Can we infer that Queen Esther had confided to those attending to her that Mordecai was her stepfather?

Lesson 4: Esther 4:1-17


Q5. What did Queen Esther observe about Mordecai?

Q6. Why did Mordecai refuse to accept Queen Esther's gift?

Day 2

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⁵ Then Esther summoned Hathach [Hä-thatch], one of the king's eunuchs assigned to attend her, and ordered him to find out what was troubling Mordecai and why.

 This was probably a confidential inquiry that Queen Esther asked one of her most trusted male servants to undertake.

Q7. After all, Esther was queen. Why didn't she simply demand a meeting with Mordecai?

Lesson 4: Esther 4:1-17

⁶ So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king's gate. ⁷ Mordecai told him everything that had happened to him, including the exact amount of money Haman had promised to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews. 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 urge her to go into the king's presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people.

Q8. In verse 7: What facts did Mordecai share that supported his demeanor and accusations?

(1) \$?

.....
(2) Who?

.....
(3) Into what?

.....
(4) For what?

.....
Q9. In verse 8: What evidence did Mordecai share that supported his demeanor and accusations?


.....
Q10. In verse 8: What action did Mordecai request of Hathach?

.....
Q11. In verse 8: What action did Mordecai request of Queen Esther?

.....
Q12. Thinking about Mordecai's request, what would be the typical outcome for someone to boldly go before the king and ask that the king overturn a decree?

Lesson 4: Esther 4:1-17

Day 3

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⁹ Hathach went back and reported to Esther what Mordecai had said.

¹⁰ Then she instructed him to say to Mordecai, ¹¹ "All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that he be put to death. The only exception to this is for the king to extend the gold scepter to him and spare his life. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king."


Q13. What was Queen Esther's fear?

¹² When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, ¹³ he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape.

Q14. Esther was queen. Was Mordecai justified in reminding Esther that her life was also threatened by this decree? Why?

Lesson 4: Esther 4:1-17

Day 4

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^{14a} For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, ^{14b} but you and your father's family will perish. ^{14c} And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?"

 This verse implies God's watchful eye over His chosen people.

Q15. Verse 14a: does this phrase indicate that Mordecai had faith in God's deliverance of His people, despite the decree of threatened annihilation?

Q16. Verse 14b: why would Esther's family perish? And would this include Mordecai?

Q17. Verse 14c: God plans for the long-term. Do you believe that God orchestrated events to place a Jewess in the position of queen for this time?


Yes? } Why?
No? }

Psalm 139:16b [NIV-1984]

All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Lesson 4: Esther 4:1-17

Day 5

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¹⁵ Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: ¹⁶ "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."

¹⁷ So, Mordecai went away and carried out all of Esther's instructions.

Q18. Was this faith-in-action? Why?

Q19. How would you describe Esther's attitude: "if I perish, I perish"?

Q20. Should we fast, today? And if yes, when?

Yes? }
No? } Why?

When?

Exodus 34:28 [English Standard Version (ESV)]

So, he [Moses] was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights. He neither ate bread nor drank water [i.e., he fasted]. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.

Ezra 8:23 [English Standard Version (ESV)]

So, we fasted and implored our God for this, and he listened to our entreaty.

Daniel 9:3 [English Standard Version (ESV)]

Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.

Lesson 4: Esther 4:1-17

Joel 2:12-13 [English Standard Version (ESV)]

“Yet even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments.” Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.


Jonah 3:5-9 [English Standard Version (ESV)]

And the people of Nineveh believed God.

They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.

The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, “By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish.”

Day 6

 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today’s study.

 Please reread Esther, chapter 4.

Q21. Is there any verse(s) that stands out to you?

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