

### Mordecai's Mourning | vv. 1-3

- Verse 1 –
  - **Perceived** -The word יָדָעַ (yāda‘) is the word for to know, and does not involve any supernatural knowledge but often involves discernment that comes through age and experience.
  - **Sackcloth and ashes** –
    - The wearing of **sackcloth** in times of desperation is seen as early as Genesis 37:34, when Jacob wears sackcloth in mourning for Joseph.
    - This passage is the first use of **sackcloth with ashes**.
      - We have no indication what was done with the ashes.
      - The origins of this custom are unknown, and doing so was never prescribed by God.
      - Some believe the custom actually came from a fear that the dead were coming back, and so they would use grave-clothes and ashes to make themselves unrecognizable. Compare Dt. 14:1.
- Verse 2 –See v. 4 for Esther's response to her uncle being near the palace in this attire.
- Verse 3 –
  - It is important to note that **fasting, and weeping, and wailing** along with **sackcloth and ashes** is often seen in the Scriptures, but never commanded as a spiritual discipline.
  - One should be very careful building a doctrine of fasting by the examples of fasting, recognizing that this also opens the door (if not requires) a doctrine of sackcloth and ashes (as in Ash Wednesday).

### Mordecai's Message | vv. 4-9

- Verse 4 –
  - It is debatable whether her grief was over the edict or over Mordecai's **raiment**.
  - One would think that she had previously heard of the edict, though vv. 7-10 could argue against such an assumption, though do not prove such assumption wrong.
  - It is safest to say that Esther does not understand Mordecai's grief.
  - Since Esther surely knows that Mordecai has better clothes, she is sending the new clothes out of political sensibilities, not financial need.
- Verse 8 –

- Whether or not Esther knew of the edict, this is the first time she learns of the desire of Mordecai for her intervention.

#### Esther's Response | vv. 10-12

- Verse 11 –
  - The motive behind these words is unclear. Perhaps Esther was trying to say, "Your plan is not as easy as it sounds, as I cannot simply go before the King." Or perhaps she is saying, "It's been 30 days, and so surely he will call soon, there is no rush."

#### Mordecai's Plea | vv. 13-14

- Verse 14 –
  - **enlargement** - The Hebrew word literally means "space," but with the implication of "freedom."
  - **arise from another place** - Mordecai expresses faith in the promises of God, even while he has never overtly expressed faith in God.
  - **thou...shalt be destroyed** - Mordecai understands that the promise is to the Jews as a people, not to individuals or families among the Jews.
  - **such a time as this** - Since God, in the age of Grace in which we live, is also not working miraculously but providentially, this verse can be applicable to all of us in times of crisis or need.

#### Esther's Fast | vv. 15-17

- Verse 16 –Other questions from this passage:
  - Why just the Jews in Shushan?
  - Why three days?
  - Why the presumably Persian maidens?
  - What would happen if they did not do this?
  - *What would happen if one of them did not do this?*