

Book Study on Esther
Esther Informed of Haman's Plan
Esther 4:1-4

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Introduction

- Review books of the Bible: Genesis – Esther
- Haman's Plan declared to the whole kingdom

Let's pick up here in chapter 4 and verse 1

Bible

Est 4:1 When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry;

Est 4:2 And came even before the king's gate: for none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.

Est 4:3 And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

Est 4:4 So Esther's maids and her chamberlains came and told it her. Then was the queen exceedingly grieved; and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him: but he received it not.

Lets look a little deeper into these verses:

Est 4:1 When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry;

- *Rent –*
 - *we express grief in our culture by*
 - *wearing black*
 - *widow wears a veil over her face*
 - *Black armbands*
 - *Police wear a black band over their badge*
 - *Fly a flag at half-mast*
 - *In Ancient cultures*
 - *Tear their cloths – clothes were valuable and by tearing them and rendering them useless it showed the depth of grief.*
 - *They had a limited wardrobe – it was time intensive to make clothes*
 - *It was a picture of how they felt inside – ripped apart – the depth of their pain*
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This idea was magnified when people chose to put on "sackcloth" after tearing their regular clothes. Sackcloth was a coarse and scratchy material that was very uncomfortable. As with tearing their garments, people put on sackcloth as a way to externally display the discomfort and pain they felt inside.¹

- *ASHES –*
 - *Sitting in ashes or sprinkling them on one self was a token of grief, humiliation, penitence, is often used to signify worthlessness, insignificance*
 - *It was a sign of mourning for the dead*
 - *It was a sign of humiliation*

¹ <https://www.learnreligions.com/why-people-in-the-bible-tore-their-clothes-363391>

- *It was a sign of penitence – abasing one self to show regret or remorse for ones actions or deeds*
- Sackcloth –
 - cloth used in making sacks or bags, a coarse fabric, of a dark color, made of goat's hair,
 - It, was used also for making the rough garments used by mourners, which were in extreme cases worn next the skin.

The latter Targum, Mordecai's behaviour upon this sad occasion: "He made his complaint in the midst of the streets, saying, What a heavy decree is this, which the king and Haman have passed, not against a part of us, but against us all, to root us out of the earth! Whereupon all the Jews flocked about him, and, having caused the book of the law to be brought to the gate of Shushan, he, being covered with sackcloth, read the words of Deuteronomy 4:30-31 and then exhorted them to fasting, humiliation, and repentance, after the example of the Ninevites."²

Deu 4:30 When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice;

Deu 4:31 (For the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them.

Est 4:2 And came even before the king's gate: for none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.

- HE may have been trying to communicate with Esther,
- They kept all sorrow, sickness, death away from the king as not to spoil his mood or cause him emotional stress.

Est 4:3 And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

- FASTING - The Bible describes three main forms of fasting:
 - 1) The Normal Fast, involving the total abstinence of food. Luke 4:2
 - 2) In Acts 9:9 we read of an Absolute Fast where for three days He "neither did eat nor drink."
 - 3) The Partial Fast-in Daniel 10:3 the emphasis is upon the restriction of diet rather than complete abstinence.³
- *Mourning - H56; lamentation:—mourning.*⁸
- *Weeping - H1058; a weeping; by analogy, a dripping:—overflowing, × sore, (continual) weeping, wept.*⁴
- *Wailing - H5594; a lamentation:—lamentation, one mourneth, mourning, wailing.*⁸

Est 4:4 So Esther's maids and her chamberlains came and told it her. Then was the queen exceedingly grieved; and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him: but he received it not.

- So Esther's maids and her chamberlains might have observed, by some incident or another, that there was some connection between Mordecai and Esther, and that she had a peculiar respect for him: They then communicated with her what Mordecai was doing.
- then was the queen exceedingly grieved; **she might not know the whole of the matter; but perceiving whatever it was it greatly affected Mordecai, with whom she sympathized:**
- she sent Mordecai cloths to replace the ones that where rent, this showed compassion and concern for him that she knew something was wrong.
- but he received it not; refusing to be comforted, or appear cheerful under such melancholy circumstances.⁵

² Coke, Thomas. "Commentary on Esther 4:1". Thomas Coke Commentary on the Holy Bible.

³ Fausset, Andrew Robert M.A., D.D., "Definition for 'fasting' Fausset's Bible Dictionary". Fausset's; 1878.

⁴ "Strong's Definitions" Greek and Hebrew words and their definitions from the Old and New Testament, organized by Dr. James Strong in 1890.

⁵ Gill, John. "Commentary on Esther 4:4". "The New John Gill Exposition of the Entire Bible".