

# Inspirative Story Through the Characteristics of Ester's Life: from an Outstanding to Queen

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## A R T I C L E I N F O A B S T R A C T

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©2022 Sinaga, Sinambela, Pandianga, Pelawi, Purba: This is an open-access article distributed under the termsof the <u>Creative</u> <u>Commons Atribusi 4.0</u> <u>Internasional</u>. This life seems hopeless. Through Esther's story, it becomes an inspiration for everyone that His people have hope, have a future. The purpose of this research is so that every believer does not need to despair when the environment is not good, but remains enthusiastic, full of hope, full of submission to God, like what Esther did. This study uses a qualitative literature study method, by gathering useful theories to see gaps, conceptual support for the research topic. Esther is an inspirational figure in the lives of believers. The figure of Esther who lived without hope as an outcast and an orphan can be turned into a queen. All of this happened not because of luck but because of obedience, piety, humility and self-sacrifice which made him pleasing to everyone and especially to God

## INTRODUCTION

It is not impossible that there are still believers who think wrongly about suffering. Some say that a person whose life fears God is impossible to experience suffering because God cannot possibly want suffering for believers.(Stevanus & Marbun, 2019) This can be seen from the life of the Israelites who fell into exile in a foreign land. Even though God may at times seem far away, and even though he is invisible to us, he is always invincible. This is the main lesson of the book of Esther. Although his name is not present in the pages of this special book of Jewish history, God is still present in every scene and in the movement of every event.(Ranggalodu, 2022).

Esther's story is an inspirational story that can strengthen and motivate anyone who feels their life is down. The Bible makes it clear that Esther was nothing but became a Queen. Generally when people hear the name Esther they remember a queen. But in reality Esther was not born to be a queen or someone who has the opportunity to become a queen.

The Book of Esther is a unique and interesting book. The uniqueness is visible, for example, the name of Allah is not mentioned even once in it, while the name of the king of Persia is mentioned 190 times in 167 verses. The book of Esther is quite a problem. For example, in Luther's view, it is better that this book does not exist at all. Although the existence of God's name does not appear in this book, God's provision (Providensia) is clearly seen in it, namely through the liberation of the Jews from Haman's mass murder plan. The Book of Esther proves that God remains faithful in caring for and helping His people who are in trouble and trouble, even though God's name is not mentioned, but God still declares His care and protects His people.(Ranggalodu, 2022) The absence of "name words" for God or Allah does not mean not emphasizing religious meaning. This absence is precisely the main characteristic of the wisdom tradition that developed in the Ancient Near East region, which is also one of the differentiators of the literature produced from the prophetic tradition which emphasizes religiosity quantitatively in texts.(Sukarno, 2021).

Before becoming a living person in the palace, becoming a queen, she was nothing. First, Esther was an exile, transported from Jerusalem as an exile along with Judah's king Jeconiah. At that time they were transported into exile by the King of Babylon Nebuchadnezzar (Est 2:6). Second, Esther was an orphan (Est 2:7). Esther didn't have a biological father and mother anymore, so Mordecai adopted her as a child. Being an outcast living in a foreign land, with no possessions and no father and mother anymore can be said to be far from having a future. In other words, Esther has no hope of living a better life in her days.

However, through the book of Esther, everyone can be inspired that everyone has opportunities, there is always hope, there is always a way out of adversity if you put your hope in God and have good character like what Esther brought to life. No matter how hard the challenges we must face in this pluralistic world, this does not stop the struggle for liberation in order to create justice and peace. No matter how many efforts to improve social and political orders that are unfair and oppressive into a socio-political order that is just and humane have encountered many obstacles, even those obstacles have taken away the lives of many people, this does not discourage us from continuing to work.(Ranggalodu, 2022).

Who would have thought the story of Esther from a girl with no future turning into a queen due to the loss of her queenship from Vashti. To replace the queen's position, a "miss Persia contest" was held to find a replacement for Vashti. All the beautiful girls or virgins who were in the fortress of Susan (Persian Capital) were "netted" and prepared in such a way as to be chosen by king Ahasuerus to become queen to replace Vashti (2:2-4) and Esther was in the group the beautiful virgins who were "snatched" (2:8).(Simamora, 2011).

#### METHODOLOGY

This research method uses literature study method. In this method, researchers collect as much theory and information from the literature regarding the research topic. Sources that are academically relevant and can be justified for their validity and legitimacy as scientific sources such as books, journals, magazines, monographs, research reports, and other materials. Materials from the library sources generally consist of concepts, opinions, ideas and ideas, all of which are selected based on their suitability and relevance to the research topic. These theories are useful for seeing gaps, conceptual support for research topics and of course previous theories related to research topics.(Zaluchu, 2021).

# **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Esther's Life Background**

Esther was a Jew who lived in the fortress of Susan (Persian Capital). The Bible writes another name for Esther is Hadasa (2:7a). The name Hadasa is a Hebrew name that shows the heroism of a woman. Hadasa means myrtle (myrtle plant, also means fragrance), which is a type of plant that produces very beautiful flowers. While the name Esther is a name taken from names in Persian, which means star. This harmonizes with the beautiful star-shaped shape of the myrtle flower. It seems that this name is very appropriate for an Esther and her life experience also reflects the meaning of her name, rising like a star and becoming a heroine in the history of the Israelites. For the Israelites, Esther was used by God to free them from the hands of their enemies, and Esther's personality reflected her inner and outer beauty. In Hebrew, Esther's personality is described more specifically, as a girl who has an attractive personality and character and is kind and in harmony with her physical beauty. No wonder Esther is written in the Bible as a girl who was beautiful in stature and beautiful in appearance (2:7c).(Simamora, 2011) Esther is remembered as one of the ancient icons connecting the worlds of Persia and Israel. Esther is also a Jewish Princess. he was an orphan his parents named Abihail.(Hartono, 2022).

#### The Characteristics of Ester's Life

Esther's life was filled with obedience, which can be seen in Esther 2:20, namely Esther obeying what her father Mordecai said not to reveal her family origins and nationality. At that time, Esther was no longer under Mordecai's direct supervision, but was already under the supervision of Hegai, the royal eunuch who was responsible for preparing the prospective King's companion. In this case, it can be seen that when Esther is not under the supervision of her adoptive parents, she can still take care of herself by not forgetting her parents' advice. Even though Esther was already within the scope of the palace, she did not take advantage of the opportunity not to live within the rules she had received from her parents. Esther chose to obey and follow the rules in the palace.

## Obey

Based on the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KKBI) the word obedient means first, always submit (to God, the government, and so on); obey. Second, do not cheat; faithful, Third, pious; worship strong. Based on the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KKBI) the word according is defined as walking and so on through or following (road, line, trail, is also used in a figurative sense, and so on). According to the meaning of doing what is ordered (approved, said, and so on); not against (denied or opposed); heed (advice, instructions, teachings, and so on).(*Arti Kata Turut - Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI) Online*, n.d.) The Hebrew verb to obey is "syema" which literally means to listen.(Sinaga, 2021) Obedience is submission to authority, doing what is ordered, obeying what is required, or abstaining from what is forbidden. The Hebrew word does not have a specific word in one meaning "obedience" or "obedience". Because Shema said, listening, listening, listening, from there action arises: "obey, comply, respond, pay attention.(Parulian, Tamba, 2022).

Esther's life was filled with obedience, which can be seen in Esther 2:20, namely Esther obeying what her father Mordecai said not to reveal her family origins and nationality. At that time, Esther was no longer under Mordecai's direct supervision, but was already under the supervision of Hegai, the royal eunuch who was responsible for preparing the prospective King's companion. Esther heard what was said (message) her foster father and who educated her, and there was not the slightest objection. In this case, it can be seen that when Esther is not under the supervision of her adoptive parents, she can still take care of herself by not forgetting her parents' advice. Even though Esther was already within the scope of the palace, she did not take advantage of the opportunity not to live within the rules she had received from her parents. Esther chose to obey and follow the rules in the palace.

Every believer should have an obedient character. Obedience is part of faith, like Abraham the father of believers. Abaham's obedience to God was in at least two ways. First, Abraham obeyed/obeyed when God told him to leave his hometown to the Promised Land. By faith Abraham obeyed, when he was called to leave for the land that he would receive as his inheritance, then he departed not knowing where he was going (Heb 11:8). Abraham's unquestioning obedience is one of the most outstanding evidences of faith found throughout the Bible. Second, Abraham was obedient when God told Abraham to offer his son Isaac on Mount Moriah. Abraham did not try to excuse himself for not obeying God's will.(Sunarno Sastro Atmodjo, 2022). Simple

Even though Esther has lived within the scope of the palace, full of luxury, Esther has not taken advantage of this situation in the slightest. This can be seen in the Bible verse Esther 2:15, it is written: that Esther did not want anything other than what was recommended or given by Hegai. This states that Esther did not make many requests, did not use opportunities/circumstances for her own benefit. In the opportunity in the palace indirectly Esther had the opportunity to enjoy life in luxury, beautify herself, adorn herself with various jewelery on her body and clothes, but it seems that this opportunity was not used by Esther because she chose life as it is or naturally so she did not have much demand. A simple family life that lives alone, of course, starts to form such simple characters.(Hartono, 2022).

According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KKBI) the word simple means first, modest; no exaggeration. Second, medium (in the sense of middle, not high, not low, and so on). Third, there are not many intricacies (difficulties and so on); not many knick-knacks; straightforward.(*Arti Kata Sederhana - Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI) Online*, n.d.) As a Christian, you should live in simplicity. the basis of the spirituality of simplicity is the focus on the kingdom of God. There are three dimensions of inner reality in the spirituality of simplicity which show that this focus begins to dominate the minds of spiritual practitioners. First, a person who practices the spirituality of simplicity will accept the truth that what he has is a gift from God. Second, someone who practices the spirituality of simplicity will display kindness to others.(Pambudi, 2015) As a result of the simplicity shown by Esther, she was loved by everyone who knew her and more importantly, Esther was loved by King Ahasueros (Est 2:15-17).

## Humble in Prioritizing Others

There is a tendency when someone is promoted to become a leader will change their attitude to be arrogant, arrogant, feel powerful and underestimate other people under them.(Sinaga, 2021) Many people when they have the opportunity will lift themselves higher and higher, but not so for Esther. When Esther had the opportunity to become a hero, to get a bigger name Esther didn't take the opportunity. This can be seen when an important matter regarding betrayal to the king by a king's official, when this matter was conveyed by Mordecai to Esther and Esther conveyed this to the king, he did not state that he got the information himself but by Mordecai. Based on this information, Mordecai's name was recorded in the history book. If Esther wanted she could claim the information was purely from her so that her name would be recorded in the history books and get an award, but she didn't.

Treatment that wants to put others first is treatment that does not seek self-benefit. Self-seeking can lead to greed, the word greed is defined as always wanting to get a lot for oneself; greedy; greedy. The word literally means the desire for dishonest gain. Self-gain not only leads to material gain, such as salary demands or demands for personal desires, but can also mean gaining popularity.(Prajogo, 2019).

One way to learn humility is to serve others. Servants put aside their personal interests for the sake of those served. Serving puts the interests of others above one's own. Jesus' teachings emphasized a lot about serving, 'the greatest are those who serve'.(Panjaitan, 2020) Serving means putting others first. Esther on the occasion of disclosing important information about the intent of killing the king, not in the slightest intention of taking credit for that information, but presented it in the name of Mordecai (Es 2:22). Esther did not display covetousness but humility putting others first who deserved respect. **Willing to Sacrifice** 

# Esther's life is almost at its peak as the wife of a king. Whatever he can get, his safety is maintained and he gets the right of immunity. In fact, when someone threatens her life, as the king's wife she will get special protection or she can ask the king for the safety of her life. But when there was a problem with her family and her people, Esther showed her concern even though it was her life at stake. When he had to appear before the king without being asked, the risk was the death penalty unless the king stretched out his scepter so that the king would be pleased with him (Est 4:11). But in this case Esther was willing to do it with all these risks. Esther was facing the most difficult time of her life. He had made the decision to appear before the king in order to defend the interests of his people, namely the Jewish people. Intervening in front of the

king without being asked like this could endanger his life.(Z.P, 2021). Many people are willing to do good, but not many people want to make sacrifices, especially at the risk of losing their lives. This attitude of self-sacrifice is impossible for someone to have if that person does not dare to deny himself. To deny in the sense here is to erode egoism and the willingness to bear the burden of losing something, maybe even something very valuable, because it is undeniable that sacrifice means that we lose something that perhaps we most desire.(Manurung, 2021) In this case Esther sacrificed everything when she took the wrong step and failed. He has sacrificed many things so far, he has sacrificed what he has obtained so far: enjoyment, luxury, position and the biggest thing is losing his life.

The Bible also specifically gives place the importance of sacrifice for humanity. The New Testament repeatedly describes how in His life and ministry in human form on earth the Lord Jesus performed actions that could be interpreted as an attitude of being willing to sacrifice, the culmination of which can be seen in what the Lord Jesus did through His cross work, giving an example what is perfect is self-sacrifice. Through His cross work, God shows by deeds the meaning of self-sacrifice and at the same time also sets an example for every believer.(Manurung, 2021) The Book of Esther is a book that narrates about a beautiful Jewish girl who was chosen to be queen in Persia. His story of risking his life to save his nation is a form of God's providence for His people.(Mau, 2019).

## Have Wisdom

Esther has wisdom in dealing with problems. Esther's wisdom was seen when she faced King Ahasuerus both in selecting a queen (2:15,17,18), so that with her beauty and wisdom, she was elected queen to replace Vashti. With wisdom, Esther devised a strategy to approach king Ahasuerus and tell him the problems he was facing (5:1-8; 7:3-4). Esther also faced the enemies of the Jews with wisdom (5:12; 7:4-5). Esther's ability to cover up her origins is a sign that Esther has wisdom. This includes his obedience to Mordecai's orders and advice and the strategy he uses to raise concerns with king Ahasuerus. This wisdom made Esther look more and more not only beautiful in face, but with her wisdom, increased her inner beauty and intelligence.(Simamora, 2011).

Wisdom is also shown in Esther and Mordecai's struggle against the threat of genocide of the Jews in Persia (8:1-17). Thus, chapter 8:1-17 is part of the story reversal of chapters 3:1 -4:3, namely the part that describes the tense atmosphere in the story leading to a calm atmosphere (cooling down). The story begins with the clever actions of Esther and Mordecai, resulting in and causing the issuance of a king's warrant, against the genocide of the Jews in Persia. This king's order had to be carried out quickly, before Haman succeeded in carrying out the genocide of the Jews. While the king glorified Mordecai, there was great rejoicing at Susan's court, and even throughout the Persian provinces, because the Jews in Persia were given the right to fight and defend themselves. Esther and Mordecai's actions were motivated by God's help in which they believed. The power that can cause this struggle to succeed is God's help, which has happened in the previous section.(Manasye Mahayoni, 2021).

## Pious (Believe)

Esther is a pious and devout person, this can be seen from her obedience to Esther's adoptive father Mordecai and Haggai the Palace eunuch. Esther is also seen as a pious person as seen from her submission and dependence on God. This can be compared to the story of Noah who lived a godly life amidst rampant evil. Noah was a godly man, which is where the word godly occupies an important position in biblical theology, and it is in this that the word godly is used first. Noah was a righteous man, who had the truth that comes from faith. Noah's being righteous among his contemporaries is God's judgment (the highest judgment), and expresses the emphasis that only Noah and his family were different from his contemporaries. In the midst of people who are full of evil, Noah is found as a righteous person before God.(Pane et al., 2022) Esther showed her piety when she lived with people who were not worshipers of the true God. Perhaps because of this piety endeared him to everyone (Es 2:16).

Generally, faith is understood to be in the heart, and no one knows, except God alone. Faith can also mean surrender. In short, the meaning of faith is to believe. Believe by justifying something in your heart, then say it verbally and do it with deeds.(Lusiana Sinambela et al., 2022) The application of people of faith and fear of God is a godly life. The personal Esther who prays (4:16). Esther and Mordecai were ordinary, God-fearing people. In the midst of the crisis they faced, they held a fast (4:3,16). In the Old Testament, fasting is always

associated with prayer, the goal is to ask God to act on the problem at hand. The act of fasting by Esther and the other Jews, implied that during this time of fasting, she too would wait on God in prayer. The record states people who fasted a total of three days and three nights we read in the book of Esther.(Z.P, 2021).

They fast for spiritual reasons. Thus, he gains new strength and new perspectives, and new self-control to carry out tasks that are full of challenges and risk his life. It is also a journey of faith through life experiences. Esther's journey with God was an exciting adventure, so she dared to step before the king because she had faith in God.(Simamora, 2011).

Fasting is very important because it is a statement from ourselves to God and to ourselves in building a full relationship with God. Through fasting a person expresses his dependence on Allah to provide help from what is conveyed and expected. Fasting is part of the spiritual discipline of believers which has a huge impact on spiritual life.(Florence Farida, 2020) The crisis facing Esther demands swift and serious action; both he and Mordecai realized that unless God worked mightily for their salvation, their own efforts would be fruitless. Thus Esther took time to connect with God, the source of her strength. "Go," he said instructing Mordecai, "gather all the Jews who are in Suzan and fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, neither night nor day. I and my maids will also fast that way, and then I will go before the king, even though it is against the law; if I have to die, let me die." (Verse 16).(Ellen G.White, 2011, p. 200).

## Safety Concept Overview

This book tells about the fate of a minority who are facing danger. Jews living in a foreign land (Persia) once faced a danger that threatened their survival. Haman, a high-ranking royal official who was trusted by the King, did not like the Jews and planned the ethnic cleansing of the nation. The crisis prompted Mordecai to find a way out. Through his cousin Esther, who by then had become Queen of Persia, Mordecai urged the King to thwart Haman's plot. Esther finally succeeded in carrying out the task of saving her people. In fact, he also managed to make the King eradicate the enemies of the Jewish nation. This success was marked by a celebration which has remained one of the main Jewish holidays until now. The Feast is called Purim. In the Purim celebrations which are usually filled with lively parties and carnivals, the Jews remember the services of Esther and Mordecai. Esther's story, which is brought to life through the celebration of Purim, shows how minorities can escape the dangers of extermination.(Setio, 2011).

Esther became the central figure in carrying out the mission of salvation for the Jewish people, working with Mordecai. This plot of God's rescue has similarities to the mission of Moses in the book of Exodus and the concept of salvation embodied in Jesus' mission in the New Testament. The chronological plot and narrative content in this book illustrate the concept of God's providence for His people. Apart from talking about the victory and survival of the Jewish nation, on a religious level the Book of Esther shows God's mercy in protecting His people and His power in controlling history.(Zaluchu et al., 2020).

Even though it does not have a grammatical element that refers to God's name, God's work can be read and revealed in the book of Esther. God's intervention in the history of His people is seen through the accidental placement of figures, such as Esther and Mordecai. The rescue of the Jewish people, in parallel describes the messianic action that frees humans from sin through Jesus' redemption effort on the cross.(Zaluchu et al., 2020).

Thus the Book of Esther, Jews and Christians are reminded again, to remain firm in holding on to their commitment to their faith, because even in times of persecution, help and deliverance will always come from God. Thus, in the Book of Esther the people are reminded, that "God himself appeared to act in history." So that the theme of "deliverance from the enemy" is very relevant to the situation of Christianity in persecution.(Manasye Mahayoni, 2021) The difficult experiences that befell God's people in Esther's day were not specific to that era. The Revelator, looking to the ages that extend down to the latter days, has declared, "And the dragon was angry with the woman, and went to make war against the rest of her seed, which kept the commandments of God and had the testimony of Jesus." Revelation 12:17. There are those living on the earth today who will see these words fulfilled. The same Spirit in all ages leading men to persecute the true church, will in the future walk the same path toward those who maintain their allegiance to God. Even now preparations are being made for this last great fight.(Ellen G.White, 2011, p. 201).

#### CONCLUSION

Believers cannot be separated from suffering as long as they are in a world that has fallen into sin. The fall of man into sin has made comfort disappear, discord is everywhere and suffering always arises. Even though as God's people there is no guarantee of being released from suffering / trials. But one important thing is that God's people must be able to face the twists and turns of life steadfastly, strong and full of hope. The book of Esther tells the story of the suffering that the Israelites faced by living as exiles in a foreign country full of political pressure, and specifically tells the story of Esther who lives as an outcast, lives without biological parents, and lives with simplicity while concluding life without a future. But this story tells that God is full of mercy, God does not allow His people to always be in adversity. In God there is always hope, there is always help and can turn difficulties into joy.

Esther is an inspirational figure in the lives of believers. The figure of Esther who lived without hope as an outcast and an orphan can be transformed into an extraordinary queen. All of this did not happen because of luck but because of obedience, piety, humility, and willingness to make sacrifices that made him pleasing to everyone so that everyone liked him and of course his character was pleasing to God. So that through Esther God can work to help His people get deliverance and of course make Esther get honor. In God nothing is impossible.

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