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## THE STORY OF ESTHER

There was once a Persian King named Ahasuerus who, in order to display the wealth of his kingdom, gave a banquet which lasted seven days. His wife, Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women of the palace. However when he summoned her so that others might admire her beauty, she refused to obey the command of the king. Her defiance enraged him and he banished her from his presence. On the seventh day, when he had had more than his share of wine, he ordered that beautiful young women be brought from all the provinces of the kingdom so that the one which pleased him the most would become Queen.

Esther was among the lovely young women taken into custody under edict of the king. When it came her turn to appear before the king he loved her more than all the other women. He set the crown on Esther's head and made her queen.

Now Esther's father who often sat outside the king's gate one day overheard some men plotting to assassinate the king. He told Esther who told the king and the men were duly hung on the gallows.

However Esther's father being a Jew always refused to bow down before any of the court officials. This irked one official so much that he planned to kill Esther's father and destroy all the Jewish people throughout the kingdom. Esther's father pleaded for her to use her position to intercede with the king on behalf of the Jews who he reminded her, were her own people.

Esther knew she risked death to go into the presence of the king without being summoned. But after preparing herself by prayer and fasting, she positioned herself so that she met the king as he came out of his chambers. The king, because he loved her so much, listened to Esther and did not order her to be killed. The king remembered that Esther's father had once saved his own life and agreed to her request to save the Jewish people. Instead he ordered the official who had complained to be put to death.

There was much rejoicing and even to this day Jews celebrate this event at the festival of Purim (little girls dress up as Queen Esther).

### POINTS FOR REFLECTION:

Reflect on your experience (especially in relation to the story of Esther) of one of the following:

- Identity
- Power / powerlessness
- Trust in God
- Maintaining integrity
- Strategies for overcoming racism / discrimination



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