

Esther 4:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.

Analysis

Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish. Esther's response demonstrates both spiritual dependence and courageous resolve. She calls for corporate fasting—all Shushan's Jews joining her and her maidens in three days of total fasting (no food or water). Fasting signals desperate prayer and appeal to God, though again His name isn't mentioned. The phrase "fast ye for me" indicates vicarious intercession—the community appeals to God on Esther's behalf. After three days of fasting, she will approach the king "which is not according to the law"—acknowledging the risk. Her famous declaration "if I perish, I perish" (ve-ka'asher avadeti avadeti, וְכַאֲשֶׁר אָבָדָתִי אָבָדָתִי) expresses resolute commitment despite mortal danger. This models faithful obedience: discerning God's call, preparing through prayer and fasting, then acting courageously while entrusting outcomes to Him.

Historical Context

Three-day fasts appear throughout Scripture marking extreme crisis and desperate prayer (Exodus 19:11; 1 Samuel 30:12; Jonah 1:17). Total fasting (no food or

water) for three days represents life-threatening austerity, possible only for limited duration. The corporate nature—all Shushan's Jews participating—created community solidarity and combined spiritual appeal to God. Esther's personal participation ("I and my maidens") demonstrated she shared the community's sacrifice rather than merely directing it from safety. Approaching the king unbidden risked immediate execution unless he extended the golden scepter (v. 11). Esther's decision to proceed after fasting showed both spiritual preparation and willing self-sacrifice for her people.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does Esther's combination of fasting (spiritual preparation) and courageous action model faith that both prays and acts?
2. What does 'if I perish, I perish' teach about faithful obedience that trusts God with outcomes rather than demanding guaranteed success?

Interlinear Text

לְגַתֵּן	וְסַבֵּב	אֶת	כָּל	כָּל יְהוּדָה	כָּל יְהוּדָה	בְּשׁוֹשָׁן
H1980	gather together	H853	H3605	all the Jews	that are present	in Shushan
	H3664			H3064	H4672	H7800
וְאַל	עַל	אַל	תֹאכֵל	וְאַל	תְשַׁת	שֶׁל
and fast	H5921	H408	ye for me and neither eat	H408	nor drink	three
	H6684		H398		H8354	H7969
יְמִינָה	וְיְלָה	וְיְמִינָה	וְיְמִינָה	וְיְמִינָה	וְיְמִינָה	וְיְמִינָה
days	night	days	H1571	H589	I also and my maidens	and fast
H3117	H3915	H3117			H5291	H6684
וְיְמִינָה	וְיְמִינָה	וְיְמִינָה	וְיְמִינָה	וְיְמִינָה	וְיְמִינָה	וְיְמִינָה
likewise and so	likewise and so	will I go	אַל	אַב וְאַבָּבָב	בְּמִלְחָמָה	אַשְׁר
H3651	H3651	H935	H413		H4428	H3808
כַּאֲשֶׁר	אַבְדָּתִי	וְכַאֲשֶׁר	אַבְדָּתִי			
which is not according to the law	H1881	H834	I perish	I perish		
			H6	H6		

Additional Cross-References

Acts 20:24 (Parallel theme): But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

2 Chronicles 20:3 (Parallel theme): And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.

Luke 9:24 (Parallel theme): For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

Genesis 18:19 (Parallel theme): For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

Joshua 24:15 (Parallel theme): And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

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