

Esther





FOOTPRINTS ON A SNOWY MORNING — GOD'S PROVIDENCE IN ESTHER

My family loves the kind of sunny but snow covered mornings that the DC area gets about once a year. While we were sleeping, winter proved its existence—the ground was blanketed, and then the clouds moved on. By the time we rise, it is only snow on the ground and a bright cool sun in the sky.

On those mornings my daughters put on their boots, then venture outdoors. They make a straight line to the backyard, where their first activity is seeing who was in the yard before them. We find the deer prints, fox tracks, and even the scratch marks the squirrels leave on the surface of the snow. The animals themselves are long gone, but their prints reveal a party of sorts from the night before. The air may be perfectly crisp and still—even the birds are silent—but there is no denying that the animals are everywhere.

The book of Esther is a fantastic story played out against the backdrop of God's absolute sovereignty. It is the stuff of fairy tales. A poor refugee, doomed for destruction, finds herself as queen in the world's strongest empire. Walt, Disney has nothing on this.

But the star of the story is not Esther. It is not the politically minded uncle, or even the divorcé king who makes this Jewish sweetheart his own.

No, the star of this story is God. His fingerprints are all over it. Every verse has traces of his handiwork etched

in the words. Esther is literally written on the canvas of God's meticulous sovereignty. The God who upholds all of creation by his will, also directs all things for his glory and the good of his people. In this case, he directs a Persian king, a petulant prime minister, and an ambitious uncle. The consummate director of all things, God places the characters where he wants them, allows them a measure of personal freedom in which they all act exactly as he intends, to bring the story to pass exactly as only he planned.

To drive this point home, Esther is the only book of the Bible that does not mention God or God's name. In fact, the author goes out of his way to avoid writing it (consider the pains he took in Esther 4:14, writing an ambiguous sentence when every Jewish child would know God was the one working).

But this, too, is by design. No book of the Bible has its focus on God's sovereign direction of history to the extent that Esther does. It's masterful. It's clear. It's unambiguous. But, it's also subtly beautiful.

Only a fool would look at a backyard covered in animal tracks and declare that because the animals can't be seen now, they must not have been there at all. Similarly, only a fool would look at Esther and imagine that because God is not seen on stage that he is not there at all.

In fact, the analogy can be pressed even further. Just as the fun with animal tracks is identifying what kind of creature left them, guessing where they were going, and imagining what they were doing, so it is with Esther. The real fun in this book is to see where God has been, see where he was going, and figure out what exactly he was up to. Of course, when those questions are answered, we will be confronted with what kind of God he is.

Thus, Esther is not only a setting for God's providence to be on display, but it is also a mirror into our own lives. We, too, have lives covered in the fingerprints of God. Yet, like

Esther through most of the book, we don't know what it is exactly that God is up to. We don't know the details of his plan. We only see the world he has made, the people whom he rules, and the providence which brings his secret plan to fruition.

So, study Esther. In so doing, perhaps you will train yourself to see what God is up to in your own life.



Esther 1

GOD RULES



Esther 2

GOD ORCHESTRATES

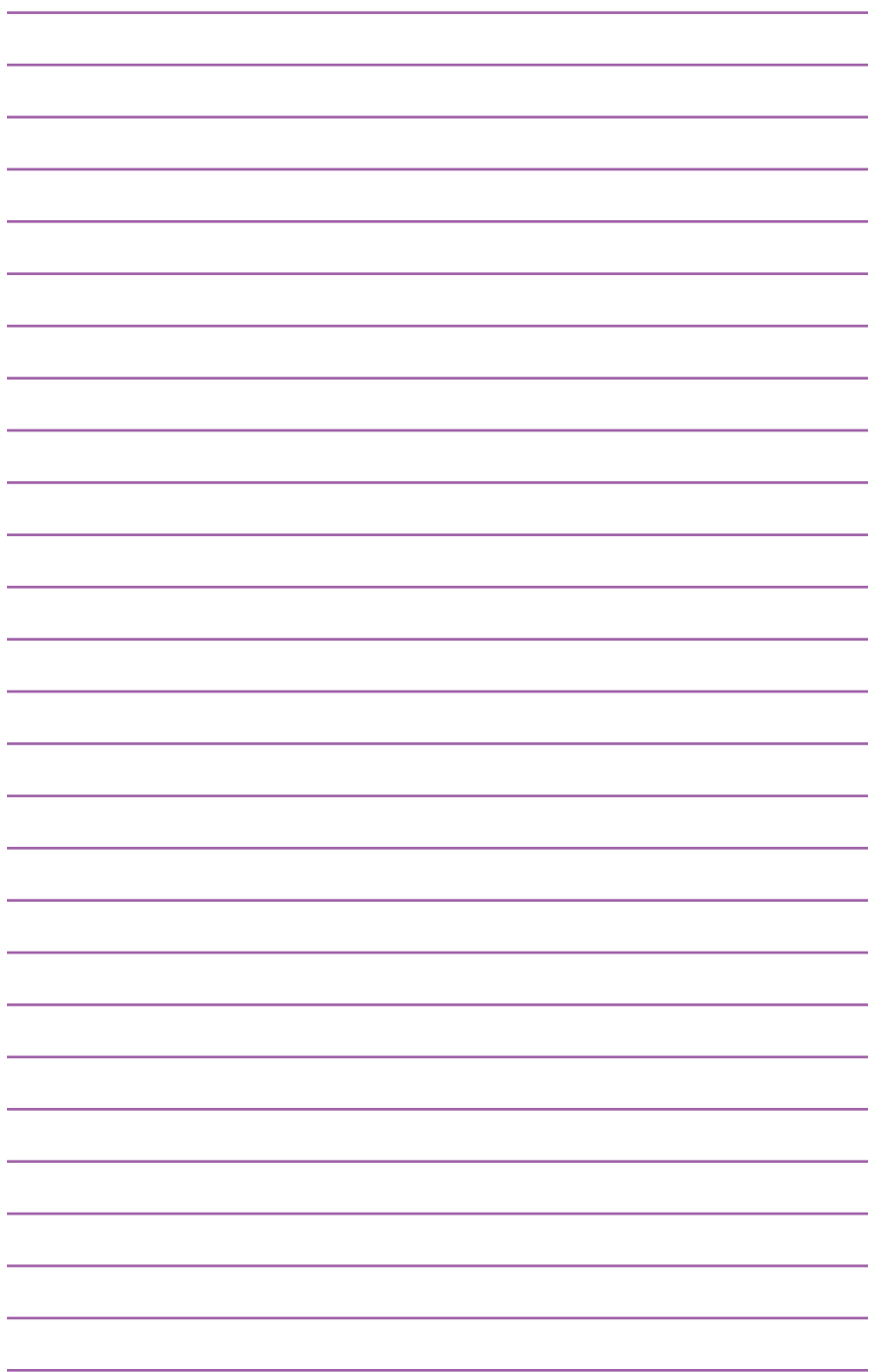
There once was a baby born under a tree,
Her dear mamma died, and nobody could see,
Her uncle knelt down by her side on his knee,
And no one but God knew, what this girl would be.
Her branches spread out and their beauty was seen,
The shade that she made was a deep Myrtle green,
An orphan and lovely as she turned eighteen,
And no one but God knew, tomorrow a Queen.

Esther, a poem by John Piper



Esther 3

GOD USES





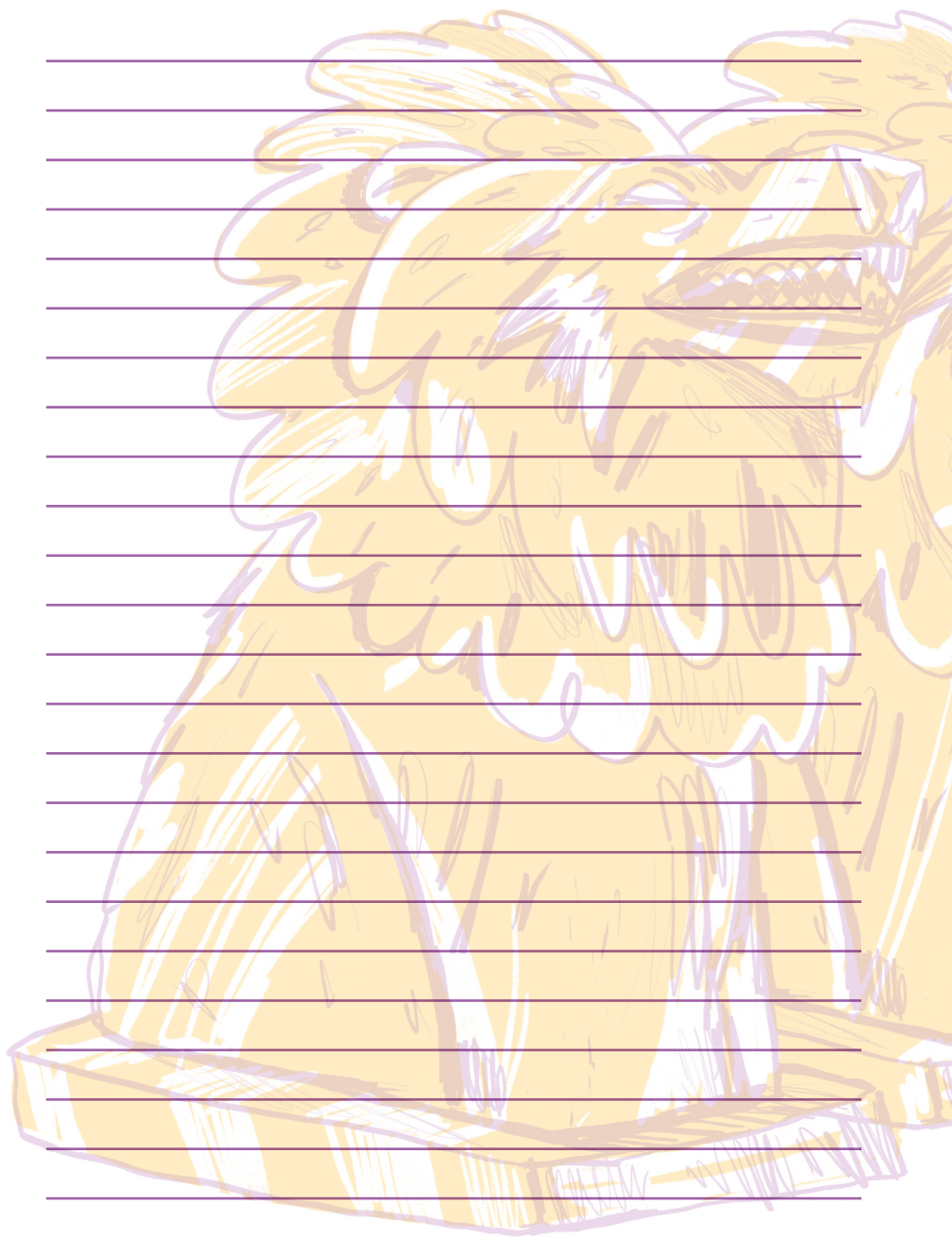
Esther 4

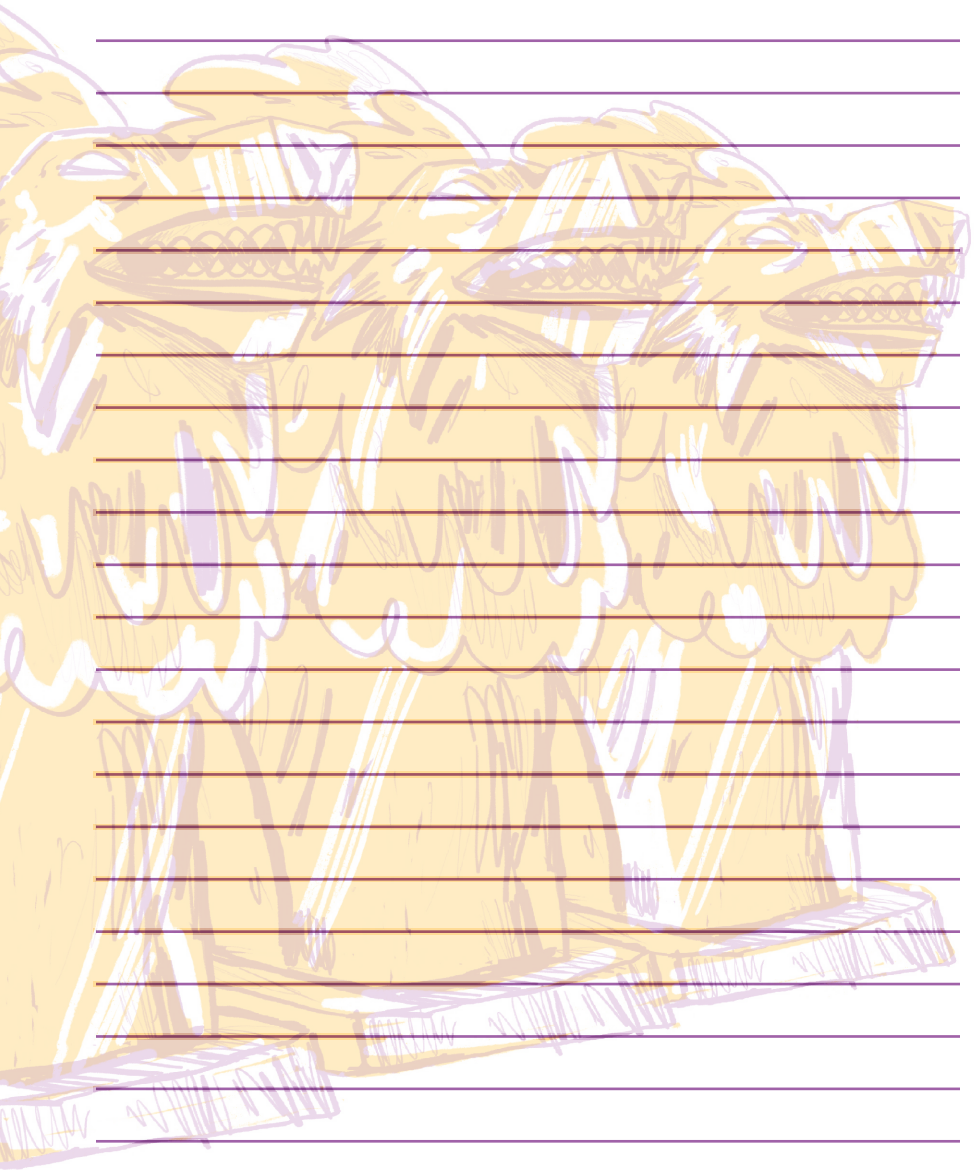
GOD COMPELS

Esther 5

GOD WAITS







“The plans of the heart
belong to man, but the
answer of the tongue is
from Yahweh.”

— Proverbs 16:1

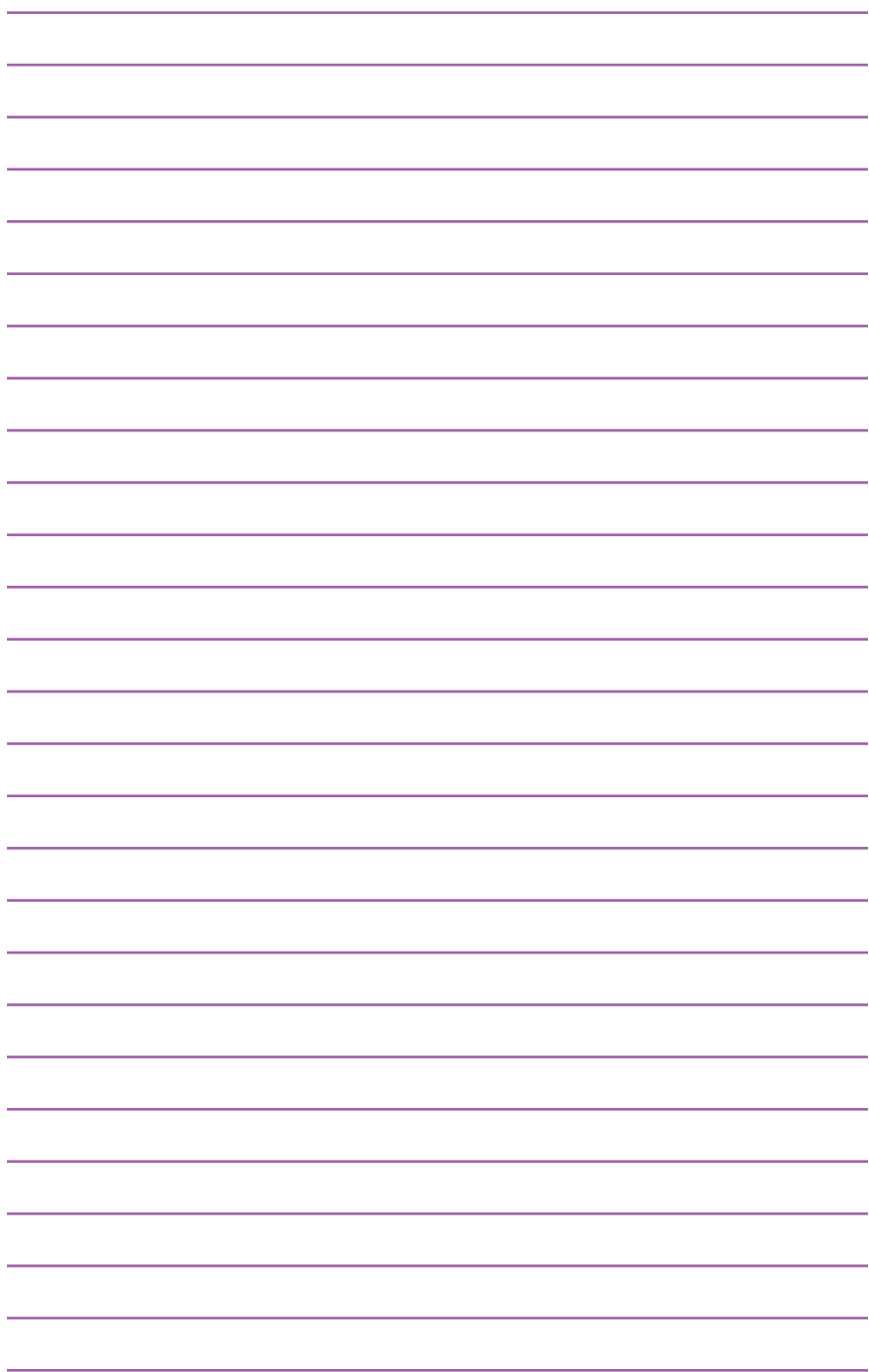
Esther 6+7

GOD REVERSES



“Yahweh makes poor and makes rich;
he brings low and he exalts.
He raises up the poor from the dust;
he lifts the needy from the ash heap
to make them sit with princes and
inherit a seat of honor.
For the pillars of the earth are Yahweh’s,
and on them he has set the world.
He will guard the feet of his faithful ones,
but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness,
for not by might shall a man prevail.

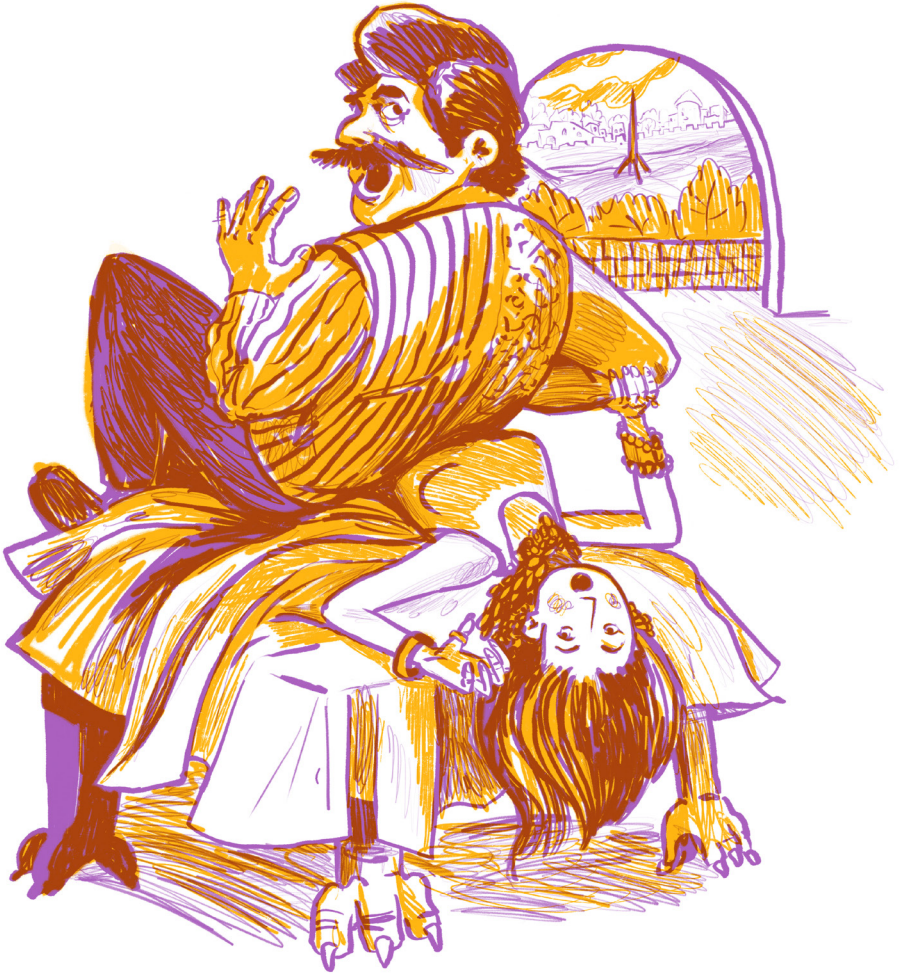
— Hannah, 1 Samuel 2



**“If you live by the sword,
you will die by the sword.”**

—Jesus







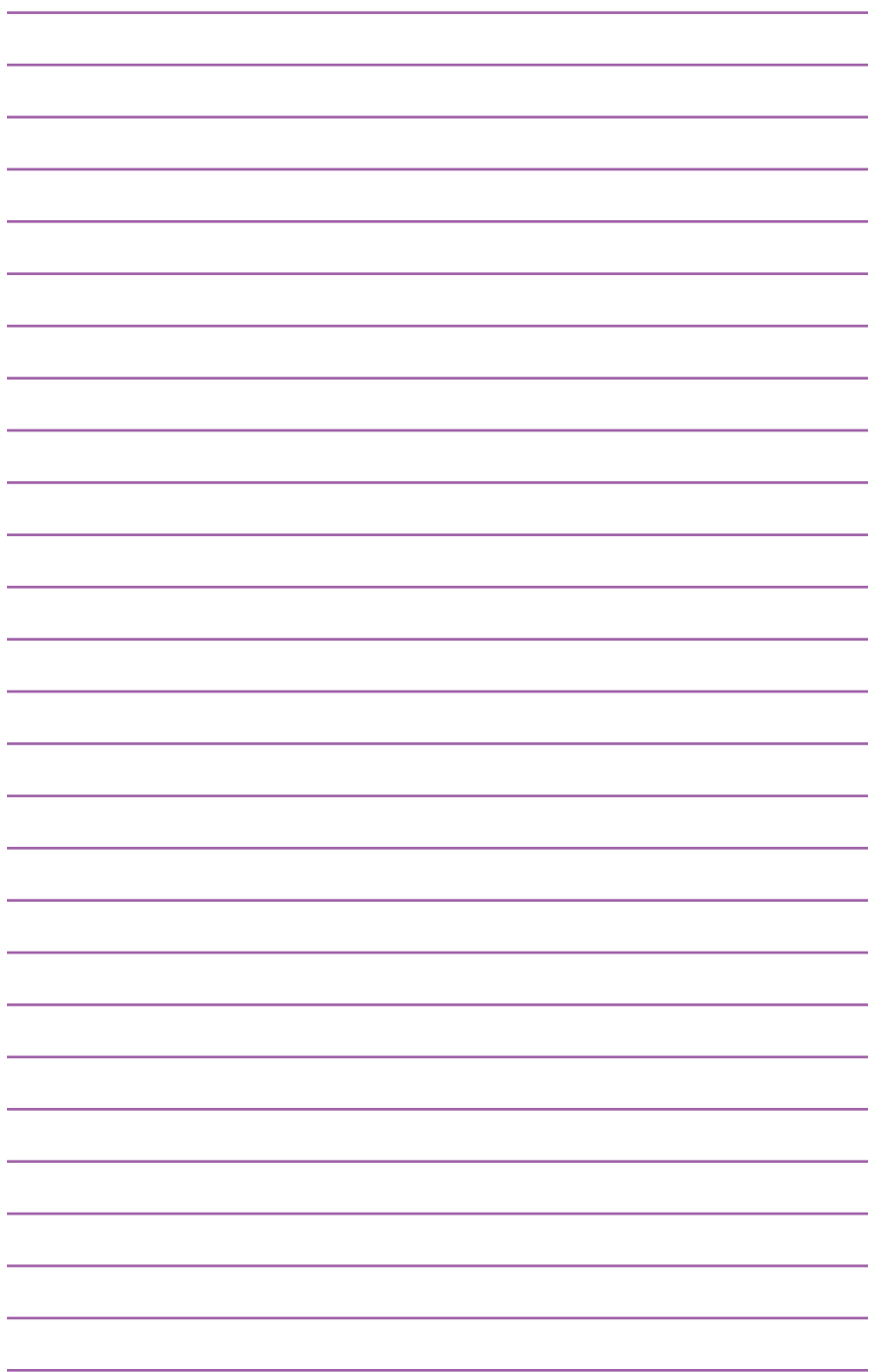
Esther 8

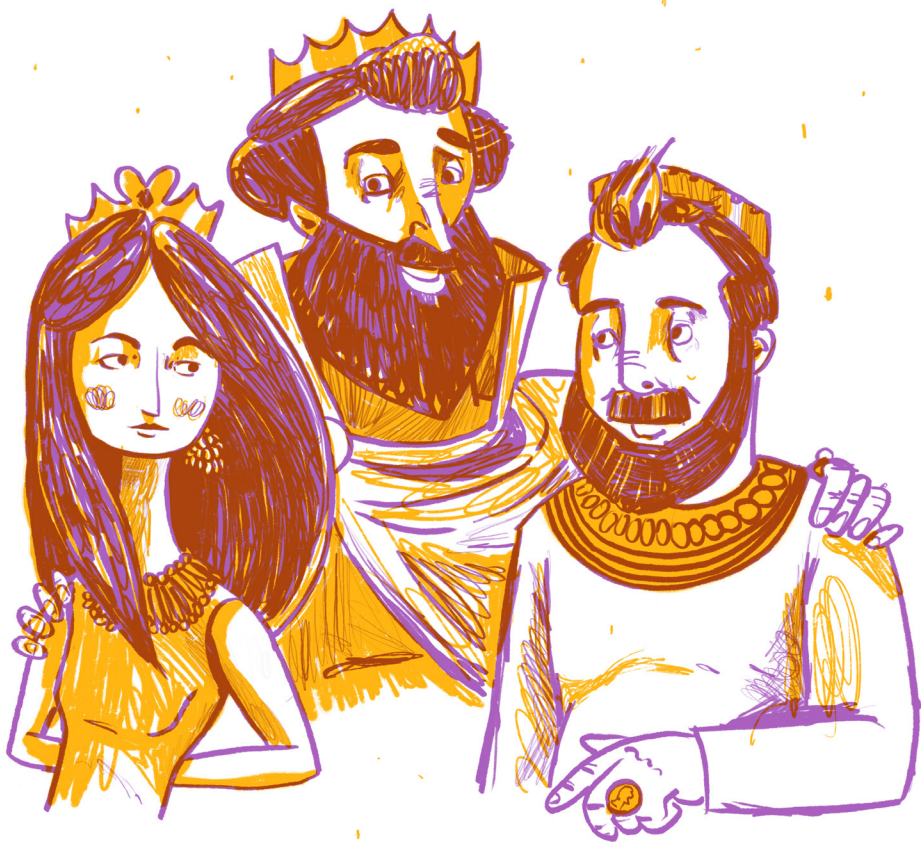
GOD SAVES



Esther 9

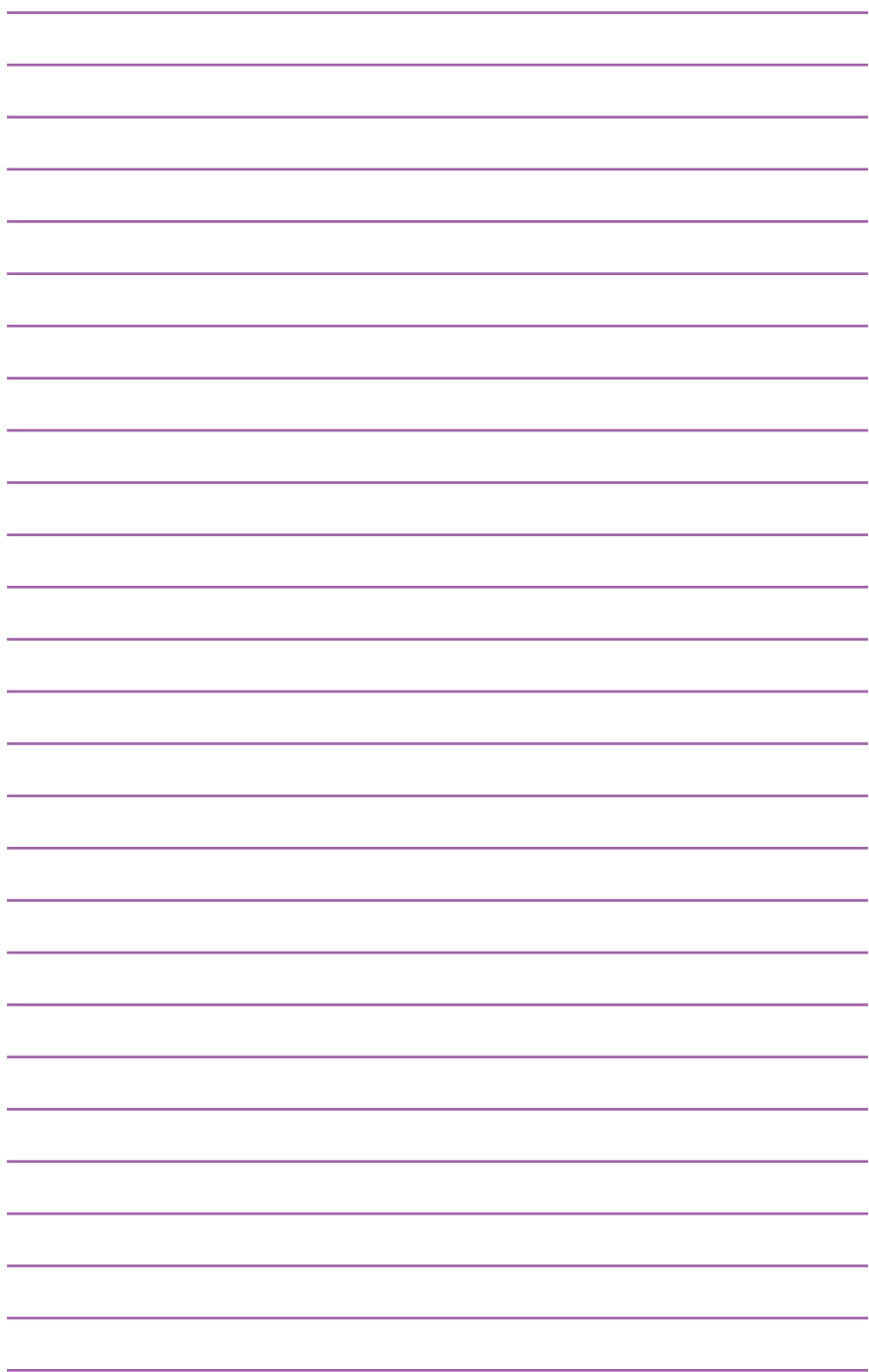
GOD PUNISHES





Esther 10

GOD HONORS





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