



God Uses Esther to Protect the Jews

Esther



LESSON GOAL

Students will trust in God's plan, power, and protection of those who belong to Him.

BIBLE TRUTHS

- Esther became King Ahasuerus's queen
- God used Mordecai and Esther to help the Jews escape Haman's plot.
- God protected the Jews.

KEY VERSE

"For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this" (Esther 4:14).

APPLICATION

- Praise God, who controls every event.
- Trust God, who has the power to accomplish His will.
- Be courageous in doing the right thing.
- Repent and become part of God's family.

NEXT WEEK

God Uses Nehemiah to Rebuild Jerusalem's Wall

Read Nehemiah 1:1–4:23; 6:15–16.

Symbol Key



Craft



Finger Play



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Center



Activity



Q & A



Age Group

PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul.... You shall teach them to your children” (Deuteronomy 11:18–19).

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here to aid you in understanding the Scripture.

Bible Background

Introduction

The book of Esther records God’s protecting the Jews during the reign of the Persian emperor Ahasuerus (486–465 B.C.). God had used Ahasuerus’s father, Darius, (522–486 B.C.) to help the Jews who returned from Babylon to complete the temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 6). God would also use Ahasuerus’s son Artaxerxes (465–424 B.C.) to support the returns under Ezra, who led the second wave of exiles back to Jerusalem (Ezra 7), and Nehemiah, who led the people in rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem (Neh. 2). Like both his father before him and his son after him, Ahasuerus was used by God to protect His chosen people, the Jews.

Even though Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther all record how God used Persian kings to bless His people, the three books are quite different. Unlike Ezra and Nehemiah, which focus on events in Jerusalem and the Jews who desired to return there, Esther focuses on the Jews who chose to stay in captivity. Instead of Jerusalem, the setting is Shushan (also known as Susa), a major Persian city where kings often stayed during the winter. Perhaps the greatest difference between Esther and the other books that record Jewish history under the Persian Empire (Ezra and Nehemiah, as well as Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi) is that the name of God is not mentioned in Esther.

While Ezra and Nehemiah often praise God for working in the lives of the Jews, the book of Esther never attributes God’s blessings to God Himself. Perhaps a nonbeliever would read the book and marvel at the amazing change of fortune for the Jews. By the middle of the book, a fierce enemy of the Jews is Ahasuerus’s right-hand man and the Jews are on the verge of being slaughtered. But by the end of the book, the Jews are rescued from their enemies and a Jew is the king’s highest advisor. Although someone unfamiliar with the Bible might simply enjoy the twist of fate, anyone familiar with God’s covenant with Abraham knows that the book of Esther is an amazing testimony to God’s faithfulness. God promised Abraham that He would bless those who blessed him and curse those who cursed him (Gen. 12:3). Although God’s name is not mentioned, Esther records the outworking of God’s faithfulness to Abraham’s descendants. The book is an encouragement to trust that God’s plan, power, and protection are never thwarted, even in situations where His presence is difficult to see.

Chapter 1

The first chapter of Esther is a masterful prologue to the rest of the book. The author captures readers’ attention by describing a feast that occurred in the third year of Ahasuerus’s reign (483 B.C.). The seven-day feast, described in rich detail (1:5–8), was an appropriate ending to a 180-day display of the riches of the king’s “glorious kingdom and the splendor of his excellent majesty” (1:4). The feast may have also been a time of planning for the Persians’ upcoming war against the Greeks (481–479

B.C.). The most important aspect of the feast to the book of the Esther was that it was the occasion of a fight between Ahasuerus and his queen, Vashti. When Ahasuerus required that the queen come “show her beauty to the people and the officials,” she refused to come (1:10–12). More important than why Vashti disobeyed the king is what resulted from her disobedience. Fearing that Vashti might become an example whose disobedience wives throughout the empire would follow (1:16–18), Ahasuerus’s advisors recommended that Vashti be deposed and that the position of queen be given to another (v. 19). Ahasuerus followed this advice, dethroned Vashti, and demanded that wives throughout the empire honor their husbands (1:20–22). From luxurious feast to lovers’ quarrel, God was already working out His plan to protect His people, a people who are not even mentioned in the first chapter!

Chapter 2

Just as he had decreed, King Ahasuerus began to search for a new queen (2:1). He followed his servants’ advice and had beautiful virgins from around his empire brought to Shushan. After a year of beauty treatments, each virgin went into the king’s presence. The girl who pleased him the most would be queen (2:2–4).

One of the girls selected in Shushan was a beautiful Jew named Esther (2:7). When her parents died, Esther had been taken care of by her cousin Mordecai, a descendant of Jews who had been brought to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar (2:5–6). While Mordecai cared for Esther like his daughter, and Esther obeyed Mordecai like a father, not all their actions were exemplary. The author does not try to justify Mordecai and Esther’s willingness for her to marry a pagan king or not to follow the law’s dietary restrictions. Neither does the author justify or explain Esther keeping her Jewish identity secret (2:10). The focus of the story is instead on how God delivered His people by placing Esther in the king’s palace.

Things went well for Esther during her year of preparation. Hegai, the eunuch in charge of the young women, was pleased with Esther and gave her everything she needed. She was given the best place to live and her own servants (2:8–9). During Esther’s year of preparation, Mordecai anxiously waited outside to gather any news about his cousin (2:11). When the year was finished, Esther, like all the other girls, went to spend the night with the king (2:12–14). But unlike the other girls, Esther listened to the eunuch’s advice (2:15). King Ahasuerus “loved Esther more than all the other women” (2:17). Four years had passed since Vashti had been deposed (2:16), but the king finally had found a new queen. The Lord had placed a Jewish girl on the throne beside the most powerful man in the world. Esther’s becoming queen is not the only significant event in chapter 2. When Mordecai was sitting at the king’s gate (suggesting that he had been given a government position), he overheard two palace guards planning to assassinate King Ahasuerus (2:21). Mordecai told Esther, who in turn told the king. The plot was spoiled, and Mordecai’s name was recorded in “the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king” (2:23). This record would play an important part in God’s plan for the Jews.

Chapter 3

The tone of the book changes dramatically in chapter 3. The trouble begins with Ahasuerus promoting Haman, a descendant of the Amalekite king Agag (1 Sam. 15), to the most powerful position in Persia. Although the king commanded that all bow before Haman, Mordecai refused, for the Amalekites were ancient enemies of the Jews (3:2–4). Haman was “filled with wrath” and “sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus” (3:5–6). God once had commanded King Saul to destroy all the Amalekites. Now, Haman was going to do the same to the Jews. In the beginning of the twelfth year of Ahasuerus’s reign (474 B.C.), Haman cast lots for a day to slaughter the Jews. (By this time, Esther had been queen for five years.) Haman then went to the king, accused the Jews of disobeying

the king's laws (3:8), and requested permission to put them all to death. Haman promised to give the king in return 10,000 talents of silver (approximately 375 tons), no doubt hoping to acquire the money by plundering the prosperous Jews (3:9). The king granted Haman permission and sent a letter throughout the empire, saying that on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month "all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women" were to be exterminated (3:10–15). The Jews were in more danger than ever before.

Chapter 4

The king's decree preceded the Jews' cry throughout the empire. When Mordecai heard the dreadful report, he put on sackcloth and ashes and "cried out with a loud and bitter cry" (4:1). The rest of the Jews also fasted, wept, and wailed (4:3). After Esther learned about Haman's plan and her husband's decree (4:4–9), she sent word to Mordecai that she was afraid to follow his request that she "go in to the king to make supplication to him and plead before him for her people." Anyone who entered the king's presence without being summoned would be put to death, unless the king held out the golden scepter toward that person (4:10–12). Mordecai was confident that the Jews would be delivered, even if Esther refused to help (4:13–14). He even reasoned that perhaps Esther had become queen in order that she might rescue the people at this time. Without mentioning God's name, Mordecai appealed to God's promise to protect the descendants of Abraham and to His providence in placing Esther as queen. Esther obeyed Mordecai and agreed to go before the king after the people fasted (and most likely prayed; 4:15–17).

Chapter 5

Esther went into the king's presence on the third day of the fast. Instead of putting her to death, the king held out his scepter toward her and granted her whatever she requested, up to half his kingdom (5:1–3). Esther wisely asked for the king and Haman to come to a banquet (5:4–5). At the banquet, she requested that the king and Haman come to another banquet the next day, when the king would find out her request (5:5–8). Haman was thrilled to be included in the queen's plans. His joy quickly faded when Mordecai again refused to pay him homage (5:9). Knowing that Mordecai's punishment was soon coming, Haman restrained his anger, went home, and bragged to family and friends of his riches, his children, his promotions, and his two invitations to the queen's banquets (5:10–12). Regardless of how much he prospered, Haman would not be happy while Mordecai lived (5:13). His family recommended that he put his misery to an end and request that the king allow Mordecai to be hanged on a gallows eight stories high (5:14). Haman made the plan to first kill Mordecai and then go to Esther's banquet.

Chapter 6

Esther had planned to present her request to the king the next day, but Haman was going to request Mordecai's life in the morning. How would Mordecai escape being hanged? God saved Mordecai by giving King Ahasuerus a restless night. Unable to sleep, the king called for the annals to be read. The Lord directed just what the king heard that night. When the king learned that five years earlier a man named Mordecai had stopped a plot to take the king's life, he asked what had been done to honor Mordecai (6:1–3). Ironically, Haman was coming at that moment to ask the king for Mordecai's life, but instead, the king asked Haman what to do for someone the king wanted to honor (6:4–6). Haman assumed that he would be the recipient of the honor, but instead, Haman soon found himself dressing Mordecai, the Jew, in one of the king's robes and leading him throughout the city square on the king's horse, proclaiming as he went, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor" (6:6–11).

Haman went home humiliated. Just the night before, his wife had been encouraging Haman to kill Mordecai. Now Zeresh told him, “If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish descent, you will not prevail against him but will surely fall before him” (6:13). Haman’s family seems to have known enough of Jewish history that they could tell God was again going to rescue His people. Before they had finished discussing Haman’s downfall, the king’s eunuchs ominously arrived to take Haman to Esther’s banquet.

Chapter 7

Haman’s downfall indeed came quickly. When the king asked Esther to present her request, she humbly asked for her life and the life of her people (7:3–4). The king was shocked to discover the plot (which, ironically, he had authorized) and desired to know who had instigated the destruction of the Jews (7:5). (He apparently did not know that the Jews were the people whom Haman wanted to kill.) Esther revealed that it was Haman who was the enemy of the Jews (7:6). The king rushed off in anger while Haman pleaded for his life. When Ahasuerus returned, he took Haman’s pleas for mercy as an assault on the queen (7:7–8). Haman’s life was over. His head was covered, and he was hung on the same gallows he had prepared for Mordecai (7:9–10).

Chapter 8

The execution of Haman did not put the Jews out of jeopardy. Even though Queen Esther came and pleaded for her people, the king could not revoke the decree that authorized their annihilation (8:3–6). He did, however, give power to Esther and Mordecai (who had been promoted to Haman’s previous position) to write a new decree, which would counteract the first (8:7–8). The new decree gave the Jews throughout the Persian empire the right “to gather together and protect their lives—to destroy, kill and annihilate all the forces of any people or province that would assault them” on the same day the previous decree had sanctioned the slaughter of the Jews (8:11–12).

The welfare of the Jews changed dramatically after the decree was issued. Mordecai left the king’s presence dressed in royal robes and wearing a gold crown (8:15). (Esther had also appointed him over Haman’s property.) The Jews in Shushan naturally rejoiced at the good news (8:16). As the new decree spread throughout the empire on the fastest horses, the Jews “had joy and gladness, a feast and a holiday” in every city where the decree was read (8:17). Previously, every day had been one closer to their destruction, but now they could look forward to the day when they would be liberated from their tormentors. Even the non-Jews in Shushan rejoiced to see Mordecai replace Haman, and non-Jews throughout the empire converted and joined the Jewish religion (8:17).

Chapter 9

When the thirteenth day of the twelfth month came, the Jews had a massive victory over their enemies. Jews throughout the empire joined together and were even aided by the government officials “because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them” (9:3). In Shushan alone, 500 enemies of the Jews were killed, as well as the 10 sons of Haman (9:6–8). Unlike their enemies, the Jews did not desire to “lay a hand on the plunder” (9:16). The Jews were not motivated by greed but by protecting their families. In other cities stretching from Ethiopia to India, approximately 75,000 of the Jews’ enemies were killed. While in most cities the Jews made the next day a “day of feasting and gladness” (9:17), King Ahasuerus granted Esther’s request that the Jews have another day to ferret out their enemies and hang Haman’s 10 sons from the gallows (9:11–15). Another 300 enemies were killed in Shushan the next day. On the fifteenth of Adar, the Jews in Shushan had a day of feasting like the rest of the Jews had on the fourteenth (9:18–19).

Mordecai commanded the Jews everywhere to celebrate the Feast of Purim each year as a remembrance of how the Jews were delivered from their enemies (9:20–32). The day was called Purim “after the name Pur” (9:26), the Babylonian word for lot. The name would remind the Jews of how Haman had cast lots for a day to destroy them, but God instead intended the day for the Jews to destroy their enemies. Every generation was to remember the deliverance, “making them days of feasting and joy, of sending presents to one another and gifts to the poor” (9:22). Queen Esther confirmed the celebration of Purim (9:29–32).

Chapter 10

In some ways, the book of Esther ends as it began, with a recognition of the power of Ahasuerus (10:1). But in other ways, much has changed. At the end of the book, the second most powerful man in the empire is Mordecai, the Jew (10:2). Mordecai had faithfully sought the welfare of the Jews and had been rewarded by God with a position of power (10:3). God used Mordecai and his cousin Esther to save the Jewish people from destruction and fulfill His promise to Abraham that the Jews would be as numerous as the stars. God had placed Mordecai in Shushan at just the right time to hear a plot to kill the king and had placed Esther in the king’s palace at just the right time to plead for her people. Although the name of God is not mentioned, He was continually working to rescue His people. Even when His name is invisible, God’s power, plan, and protection are clear.

POINT TO THE TRUTH

*“Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth”
(Psalm 78:1).*

This section includes questions to review last week’s lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week’s lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



Review Questions

Use these questions to review and reinforce key truths.

Whom did God give to the Israelites to teach them the law?
God gave them scribes like Ezra to teach and interpret the Law.

Who helped Ezra to arrive in Jerusalem safely?
King Artaxerxes helped Ezra by granting his requests. He did this because the hand of the Lord was on him.

Why did the Lord bless what Ezra was doing?
Ezra was committed to understanding and teaching God’s commands to Israel. God blessed Ezra for his searching and obeying the Word.

What did the people do after Ezra read to them and taught them the Law?
The people realized their sin, confessed it, and repented from it.

How did God respond to the people’s sin?
God was merciful to the people and blessed them with the opportunity to worship Him as He desired.



Holidays

Begin by discussing modern holidays—political holidays such as Independence Day or Memorial Day, or religious holidays such as Easter or Christmas. Ask the students why we celebrate each of these holidays and what special things their families do to celebrate. Tell the students that today they will learn about a Jewish holiday. They should listen carefully during class to see if they can remember the name of this holiday and what the Jewish people remember by celebrating it.



Choice or Chance?

On a large piece of butcher paper, write various chores that need to be done during class time (straightening chairs, putting away crayons, passing out snacks, etc.). Some chores could be more fun than others. Have the students draw straws to see who will be responsible for each task. (Or you could put all the students' names in a bag and then draw out a name and assign that student to the first chore on the list, continuing until all the chores have been assigned.) Emphasize that God is in control over who gets which chore. Although it may seem like random chance, God really is the one who decides what each student should do. Tell the students that in today's lesson, they will hear about many things that seem to have happened by chance, but God was in control of them all.



5

God's Plan Unfolds

Copy a simple drawing onto the board, line by line. Have the students, one at a time, guess what you are drawing. Each student gets only one guess. The first student to guess correctly wins. When you have done this several times, explain that God often does something similar: He has a wonderful plan but reveals the plan a little at a time. While His plan is unfolding, we can try to guess what He is doing, but we often will not guess correctly until He reveals His entire plan.



Clay Wall

Materials: blank sheets of paper, crayons, clay

Directions: Give the students blank sheets of paper, and tell them to draw Jerusalem, with the temple in the middle. Talk about Ezra bringing the exiles back and rebuilding the temple. Instruct the students to form clay bricks to surround their cities. Tell them that in today's lesson, they will hear about a wall that needed to be repaired around Jerusalem.

PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

“Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done” (Psalm 78:4).

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students’ understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use during the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done directly from the Bible.

Bible Lesson

By the grace of God, many of the Jews went back to Jerusalem after being exiled during the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar. However, there also were many Jews who chose to stay where they were, in other parts of the kingdom. In the city of Susa, there was a large group of Jews whom God protected when their lives were in danger. God had shown His grace and mercy to the Jews many times and in many ways. The book of Esther tells how He used a young Jewish girl named Esther and her cousin Mordecai to save the Jews from being killed.

Esther’s mother and father died when she was very young. Her cousin Mordecai, who was much older than her, took care of her and raised her like a daughter. When she was a young woman, Esther was sent to live in the king’s palace, along with many other beautiful young girls from Shusan. They were all being prepared to visit the king because he was going to pick a new queen from among them. For one whole year, the girls went through beauty treatments and were made to look their very best so that the king would be pleased with them. Mordecai came to check on Esther every day. He wanted to be sure that she was okay and to see how things were going for her. Esther was doing well. She was a very beautiful girl, and the king had noticed. He made sure she was treated well, and when the time came for him to pick a new queen, he chose her.

Mordecai still came to the gate to find out how Esther was doing. One day while he was there, he overheard two of the king’s servants planning to kill the king! Mordecai told Esther about the plot, and Esther told the king that a man named Mordecai had revealed this to her. The king investigated what Esther had told him and found out that it was true. The two men who were planning to kill him were hanged, and this event was written down in the king’s chronicles.

After these two men were killed, the king promoted a man named Haman to a powerful position. Every day, Haman went out of the palace and through the king’s gate. Everyone was supposed to bow down when he walked by, but Mordecai refused. When Haman found out that Mordecai was not honoring him, he was very angry. And when he found out that Haman was a Jew, he decided that he wouldn’t punish just Mordecai; he would punish all the Jews.

Haman went to the king and said, “There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from all other peoples, and they do not keep the king’s laws. Therefore, it is not fitting for the king to let them remain. If it please the king, let a decree be written that they be destroyed” (3:8–9). Haman even offered to pay the king money to allow him to destroy this group of people. The king gave him permission. Haman did not tell the king that this group of people was the Jews. Unknown to the king, with this decree even Queen Esther would be killed.

Haman chose a date a few months away, and on that day, all Jews in the kingdom would be killed. A decree was sent throughout the kingdom to announce the plan. When Mordecai heard, he grieved greatly and went out into the center of the city and cried in the street. He wore only sackcloth as a sign of his grief.

When Esther heard that Mordecai was grieving in the streets, she sent some regular clothes for him to change into, but he refused to take them. Esther was very upset by this, so she sent a servant out to ask Mordecai why he was so sad. She hadn't yet heard that the Jews were all going to be killed. Mordecai gave the servant a copy of the decree that the king had issued and explained what was to happen to all the Jews. His message to Esther was that she must go to the king and beg him to save the Jews' lives.

When she received the message from Mordecai, Esther was very sad for two reasons. First, her people were all going to be killed, and she could be killed, too. Second, Mordecai had asked her to make a request of the king, and she couldn't do that because there was a law that no one could go see the king unless he was invited. If she went to the king uninvited, she would be killed unless the king chose to have mercy on her! Esther had not seen the king in a month, so she didn't think she would be asked to see him soon enough to ask for his mercy on the Jews. She sent the messenger back to Mordecai to tell him all these things.

Mordecai sent another message back to Queen Esther. He told her that she must risk her life and go to see the king, praying that he would have mercy on her. He reminded her that she likely would be killed anyway because she was a Jew. He told her that she may have been placed as queen in the palace for just this purpose, to help save the Jews. Queen Esther realized that her cousin Mordecai was right; she must go to the king. She sent word to Mordecai to gather all the Jews and pray and fast on her behalf, that the king might have mercy on her and listen to her request.

She came up with a plan. She dressed in her finest clothes and royal robes and bravely went to stand before the king. When the king saw her, he stretched out his golden scepter as a sign that she had found favor with him and would not be killed for coming into his presence uninvited. He said to her, "What do you wish, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given to you—up to half the kingdom!" (5:3). Esther answered, "If it pleases the king, let the king and Haman come today to the banquet that I have prepared for him" (5:4). Then the king said, "Bring Haman quickly, that he may do as Esther has said." So the king and Haman went to the banquet that Esther had prepared (5:5). Thankfully, the king still looked upon Esther with favor and was willing to do as she requested. He knew, though, that Esther had something more to ask, and so he asked her what it was that she wanted. Esther did not say anything about the Jews that night, but instead asked the king if he and Haman would come to another banquet the next night. They both agreed to come.

As Haman left the palace that night, he was happy. He had just spent a nice evening enjoying a meal with the king and queen. But as he passed through the palace gate, he saw Mordecai and became very angry. He didn't do anything to Mordecai, though, and went home to tell his wife and family about his day with the king and queen. He boasted that he was so powerful that he was the only one in the kingdom whom Esther had invited to dinner and that he was going back the next night. He was pleased with all that had happened, but it was not enough to make him happy. Mordecai was still alive, and Haman was still very angry that Mordecai would not bow down to him. It wasn't enough that all the Jews would be killed soon. Haman wanted Mordecai dead right away. His wife suggested that he go ahead and hang Mordecai the next day, and that he make a special, extra-tall gallows to hang him on so that everyone would see him die. Haman liked that

plan, and so he had the gallows made. He went to bed that night pleased that Mordecai would be killed the next day.

The king, on the other hand, did not sleep well. He tossed and turned and finally called for a servant to read to him. He asked that the king's chronicles be read aloud. When the king heard the account of Mordecai saving his life by reporting an assassination plot, he stopped the reader and asked, "What honor or dignity has been bestowed on Mordecai for this?" (6:3). "Nothing has been done for him," the king's servants answered (6:3). Just then, Haman entered the king's court. It was morning by this time, and Haman was there to suggest to the king that Mordecai be hanged that day. But before he could suggest this, the king asked, "What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor?" (6:6).

Assuming that the king was referring to him, Haman suggested that an appropriate honor would be that he be given royal robes, a king's horse to ride, a crown for his head, and a big parade for him throughout the city. The king liked the idea, and he sent Haman to do all these things for Mordecai. Haman did as the king said because he knew better than to disobey the king. But afterward, he went home completely embarrassed. Rather than getting the king's permission to kill Mordecai, he had to give him a parade. Haman knew that if Mordecai were killed with all the other Jews, the king would be very angry.

The queen's servants arrived at Haman's house to bring him to the banquet that Esther had prepared. When the king, Haman, and Queen Esther were all seated and enjoying their meal, the king again asked, "What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted to you. And what is your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!"

This time, Esther told the king what really was on her mind. She told him that she and her people were going to be killed. The king said, "Who is he, and where is he, who would dare presume in his heart to do such a thing?" (7:5). And Esther said, "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman!" (7:6).

The king was so angry with Haman that he stormed out of the room. Haman was terrified! He turned to the queen and begged her for mercy. When the king returned and saw that Haman was bothering the queen, he became even angrier. Haman immediately was taken away by the guards, and it was determined that he would be hanged on the very gallows that he had built to hang Mordecai on. Haman paid with his life for plotting against the Jews.

The king took Haman's house and money and gave it all to Queen Esther. He also placed her cousin Mordecai in the powerful position that Haman had held. Esther asked the king how the other Jews could be saved. Once the king had written a law, not even he could change it. So the king told Esther to write any law she wanted to help the Jews, and he would sign it.

Esther assigned this task to Mordecai, and the king signed Mordecai's law, which said that the Jews could attack and kill anyone who tried to attack them, and that they could then take all their possessions. Because of this law, the Jews were able to destroy their enemies in that land. And Mordecai became famous throughout all the land. He sent letters to the Jews in other kingdoms, telling how he and his people had been protected. He told them to have a feast every year to celebrate their protection. He called it the Feast of Purim.

God used Mordecai and his cousin Esther to save the Jewish people from destruction and to fulfill His promise to Abraham that the Jews would be as numerous as the stars. God had placed Mordecai in Susa at just the right time to hear a plot to kill the king and had placed Esther in the king's palace at just the right time to plead for her people. God continually was working to rescue His people.



Lesson Questions

How did the king find a new queen?

The king had beautiful unmarried women from around his empire brought to him, and the one who pleased him the most would be queen instead of Vashti.

Who was chosen as the new queen?

A beautiful Jewish woman named Esther was chosen as the new queen.

What did Mordecai overhear while sitting at the king's gate?

He overheard two palace guards planning to kill King Ahasuerus.

Who became the king's assistant?

A man named Haman.

What did Haman do when he discovered that Mordecai would not bow down?

Haman became very angry, and he wanted to destroy all the Jews throughout the whole kingdom.

What was Haman's plan to kill the Jews?

Haman told the king that there was a group of people who had disobeyed the king's laws. He asked permission to put them all to death.

What did Mordecai ask Esther to do?

Mordecai asked Esther to go into the presence of the king and ask him to save her people.

What did the king do when he found out what Haman had done?

The king was very angry and had Haman put to death.

Were the Jews saved from being killed?

Yes. The Jews were safe because the king protected them. God put Esther and Mordecai right where He wanted them so that they could be used to save His people.

Presentation Ideas



A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards

Use appropriate A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards with the lesson.



Betty Lukens Flannelgraph

Use appropriate flannelgraph pieces with the lesson.



A Special Presentation

Because the story of Esther is longer than some lessons, you could change the class schedule so that the lesson is taught in two parts. As the students enter the classroom, give each one a small ticket, which will allow them "admission" into a special presentation of Esther. When it is time for the students to be seated, have a teacher or assistant collect the tickets. Teach through Esther, stopping at a suspenseful halfway point. Hold up a sign that reads "Intermission," and let the students take a break. Tell them that they will have to wait to hear how God



rescued the Jews. You could use the intermission to give the students a special snack, such as small bags of popcorn.

Visual Aids

Bring in various props, and explain how each one's use changed as the story progressed. Use a crown when speaking of Vashti, but later give it to Esther. Use a rolled-up paper "scroll" to symbolize the record made of Mordecai saving the king; later, the scroll can be read when the king cannot sleep. Use a badge to symbolize Haman's authority, and later give it to Mordecai. Use a noose when you talk about Haman's plot to hang Mordecai, but later explain that Mordecai was hanged with his own noose. Use a calendar to show that a day was picked for the death of the Jews; later, that was the day when the Jews' enemies were destroyed. Use a sword when talking about Haman's plan to kill the Jews; later, the sword can symbolize the destruction of the Jews' enemies. Each time you describe a "later" use, emphasize God's sovereign plan.



Spilling the Beans

Begin the lesson by "spilling the beans." Tell the students that by the end of today's lesson, a Jew will be queen, another Jew will be the second most powerful person in Persia, and the Jews will defeat their enemies. Tell the students to listen carefully to hear how God does these amazing things, protecting His people.



One Piece at a Time

Color a copy of one of the coloring sheets, and cut it into several small squares of equal size. Before the lesson, hang up a piece of paper that is divided into the same number of blank squares. As you teach, glue the various pieces of the coloring sheet onto the appropriate squares. The picture should be completed when you reach the point in the lesson depicted in the picture. Tell the students that just as they did not know what picture you were assembling, the Jews did not know what God had planned for them. They had to watch God's plan be revealed one piece at a time.



Audience Participation

Materials: sealable containers, small objects to place inside

Directions: The students can make noisemakers by placing small items inside a sealable container. For the containers, you could use small boxes, screw-top bottles, or even two paper plates glued together. Dried beans, corn kernels, or pebbles work well inside. Have the students decorate their containers with bright colors and designs, or maybe with the face of a character from the lesson. Tell the students that it is a Jewish custom to read the book of Esther in the synagogue on the evening of Purim. Instruct them to listen quietly while you tell them the story of Esther. When Esther or Mordecai is mentioned, they should cheer and whistle. But when Haman is mentioned, they should boo, stamp their feet, and rattle their noisemakers.

Praise and Worship

Change My Heart, Oh God

He's Got the Whole World in His Hands

I Have Decided to Follow Jesus

Praise the Name of Jesus

Trust and Obey



God Protects His People

Wicked Haman had a plan
(Rub hands together deviously.)

To murder all the Jews,
(Point outward, sweeping arm around to indicate large group.)

Mordecai found out the plot
(Cup hand at ear; open mouth wide in surprise.)

And told Queen Esther, too.
(Hold hands at head like crown.)

Esther knew it could mean death
(Hang head sadly.)

But did a daring thing:
(Place hand over heart; stand up straight.)

To save her people from this fate,
(Pretend to snatch something away from danger.)

She went before the king
(Bow low.)

The Jews were saved from being killed;
(Wipe forehead and sigh in relief.)

It was a joyous day.
(Smile; clap hands.)

Through Mordecai and Esther, too,
(Point out with one hand and then with the other.)

God kept His people safe.
(Point up.)

PRACTICE THE TRUTH

“That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments” (Psalm 78:7).

Choose ideas from this section to review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



“God’s Protection”

Materials: copies of the “God’s Protection” craft pages, scissors or razor blade, glue, crayons, sequins, yarn, foil, cotton balls or cloth squares

Directions: Give the students each a copy of the craft pages, and use scissors or a razor blade to cut the shield along the solid lines for them. Then they can fold along the dotted lines to create flaps. The top flaps should open outward, and the bottom flaps should open upward. The students can color and decorate the four pictures as follows: sequins for the crown, yarn for the hangman’s noose, foil for the sword, and cotton balls or cloth squares for the pillow. Then they can glue the first page on top of the second, carefully avoiding gluing the flaps closed. Under each flap will be an explanation of how God used these various things to protect Israel in today’s lesson.



Puzzling Times

Materials: copies of a coloring sheet, cardstock, glue, crayons

Directions: Draw a puzzle grid over one of the coloring sheets, and make a copy for each student. Cut the pieces apart, and give each student a set to assemble and glue onto a piece of cardstock. Once their puzzles are complete, the students can color the picture. Use this craft to explain that sometimes we cannot see how God is using situations in our lives, just as we cannot initially see how a single puzzle piece fits into the whole. But we can always be sure that God knows that full picture and will complete it. This is exactly what He did in the story of Esther and the Israelites!



Paper-Doll Figures

Materials: copies of the paper-doll craft pages, scissors, crayons, brads, tape

Directions: Give each student a copy of the craft pages, and have him color and cut out the pieces. Use a brad to attach the king’s arm to his sleeve. The king will be able to raise and lower his scepter. Use small pieces of tape to attach the king’s crown and Esther’s crown. Attach each figure to a stand by cutting the stand’s slit and then sliding the figure on. The students can use the paper-doll figures to act out the story of Esther.

Coloring Pages

Give each student copies of the coloring sheets at the back of the lesson. Students can color the pages in class or at home.

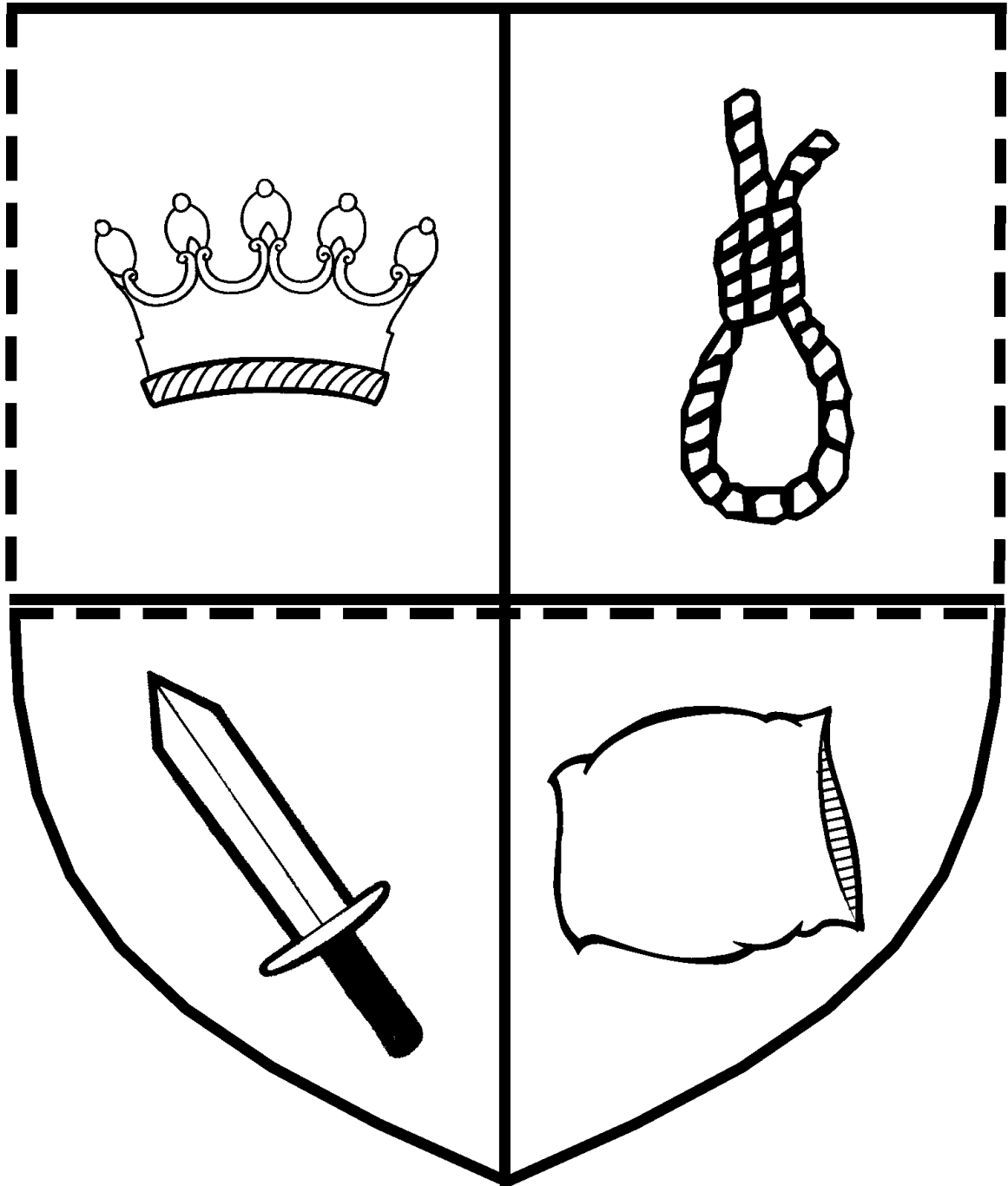


MEMORY VERSE

“The fear of man brings a snare, But whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe” (Proverbs 29:25).

God's Protection

God worked through the people and circumstances in the book of Esther to fulfill His promise to protect the Israelites.



God's Protection

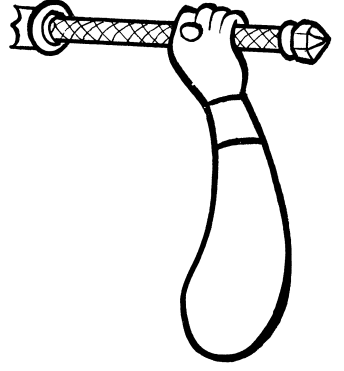
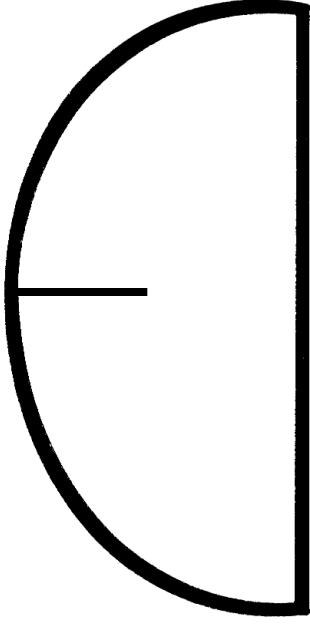
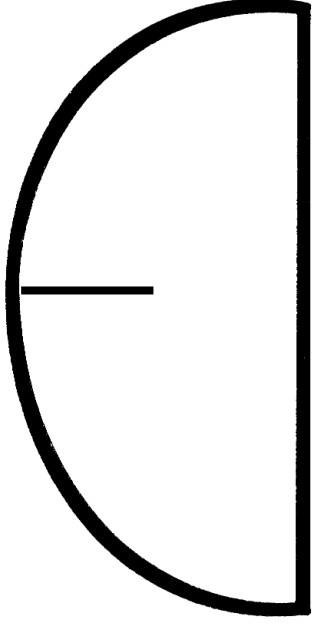
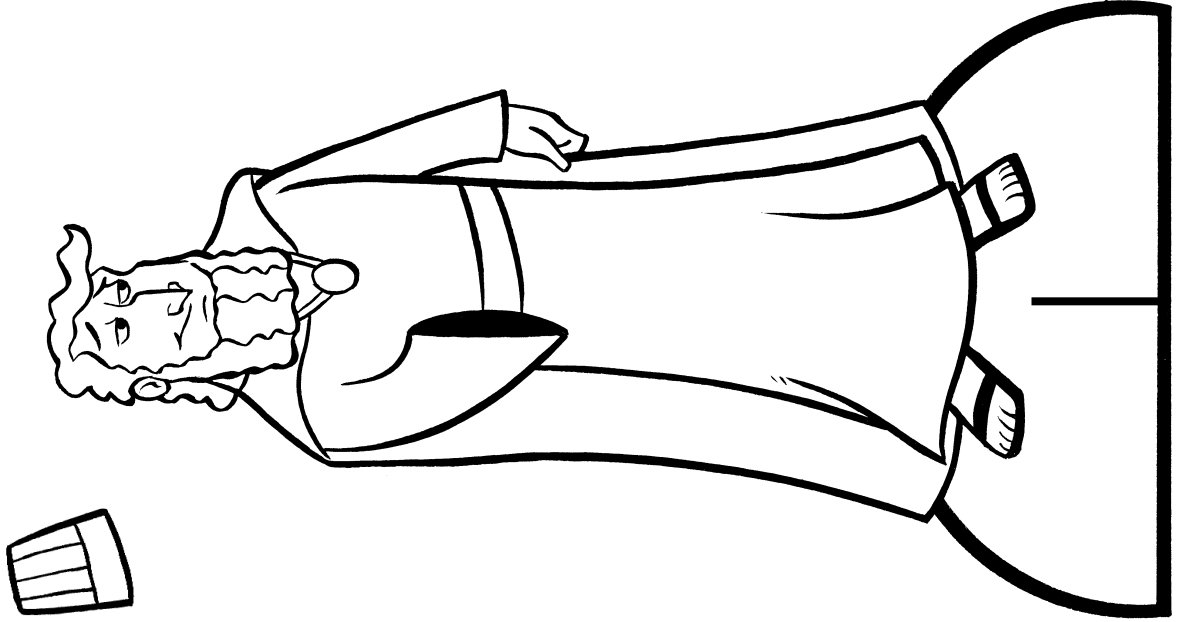
God caused the crown to be taken from Vashti and given to Esther, a Jew, who would one day help the Israelites.

Haman built the gallows to hang Mordecai, but God caused Haman to die there after he wrote a wicked letter to kill all the Jews.

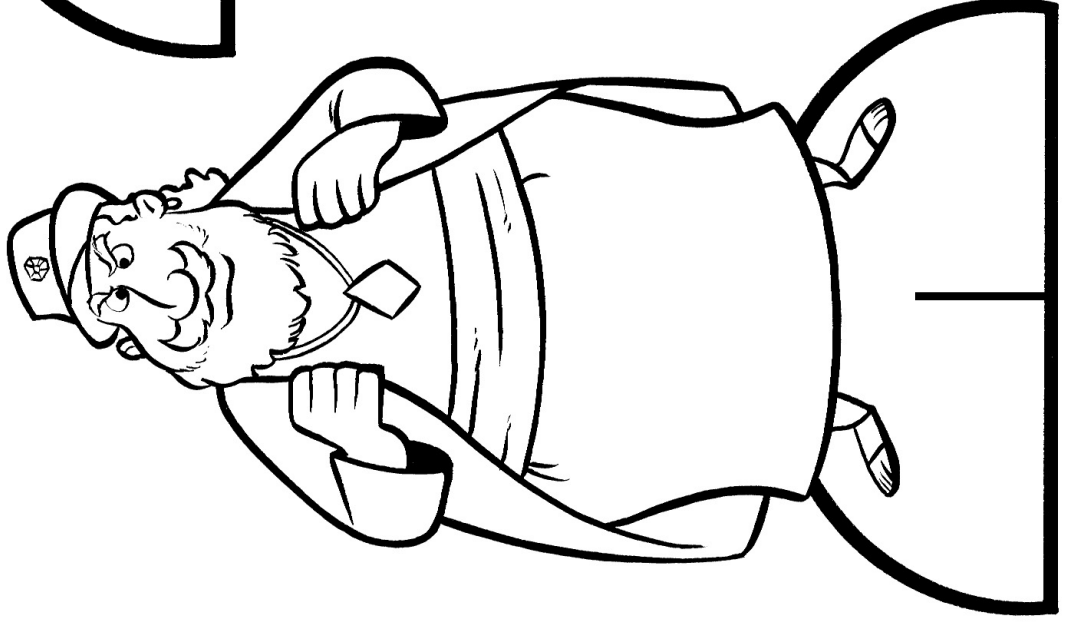
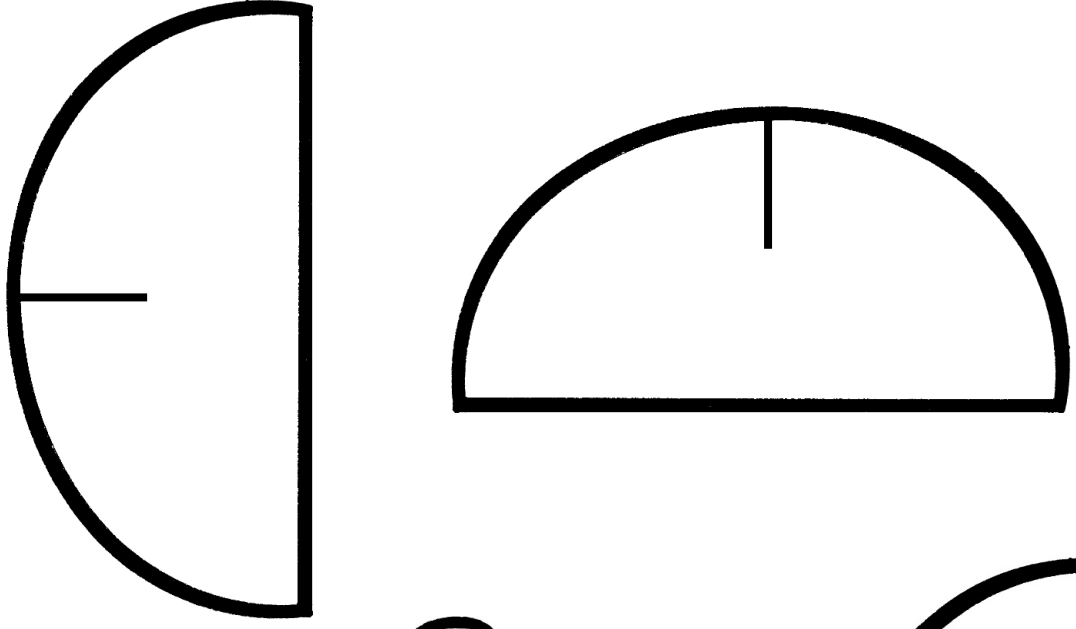
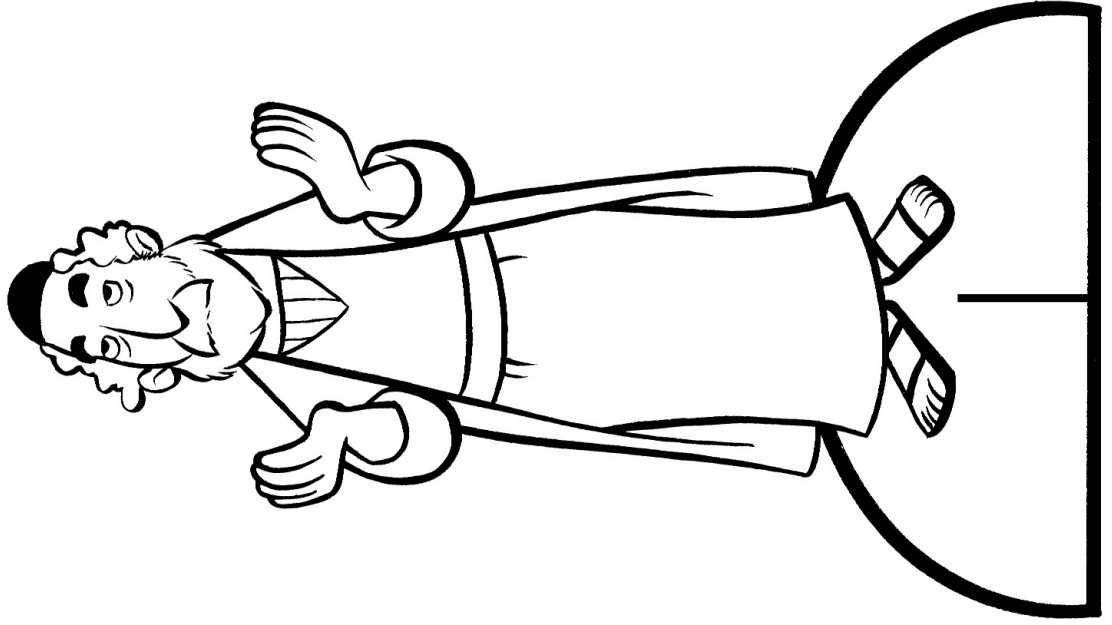
Haman plotted to kill the Jews, but God protected them and gave them an opportunity to defend themselves and kill their enemies.

God caused the king not to sleep, so he read about Mordecai's service and honored him in front of Haman.

Paper Doll Figures

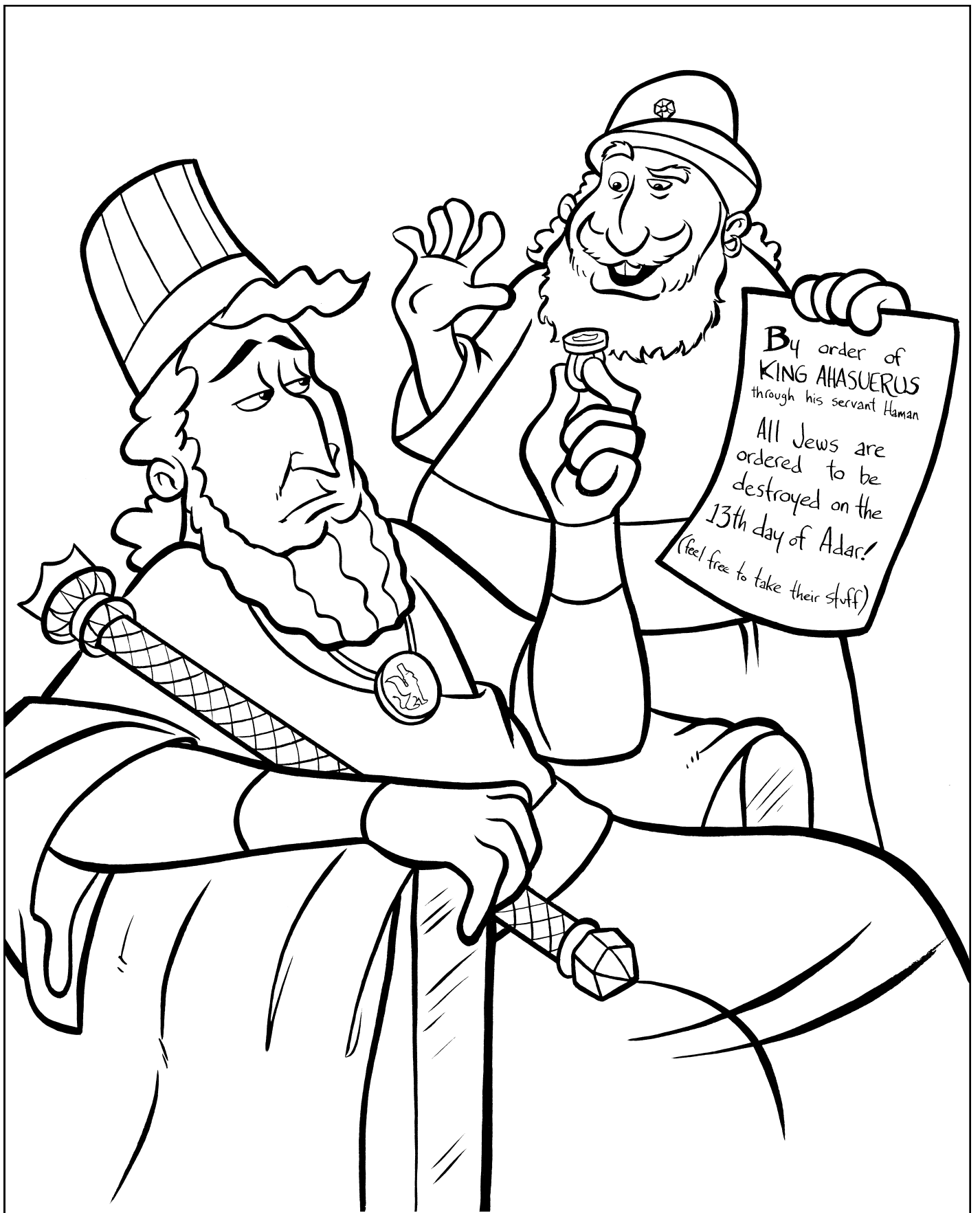


Paper Doll Figures





“The king loved Esther more than all the other women,...so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti” (Esther 2:17).



Haman conspired to kill the Jews by urging King Ahasuerus to write a decree stating that all Jews should be destroyed (Esther 3:8–11).

