



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.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to

- Tell how Esther became Ahasuerus's queen.
- Explain how Mordecai and the Jews escaped Haman's plot.
- List events that led to God's protection of the Jews.
- Remember what was celebrated at the Feast of Purim.

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



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Activity



Q & A



Work Sheet



2 Grade Level

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 the Israelites to teach them the Law?

God gave them scribes such as Ezra to teach and interpret the Law.

Who helped Ezra to arrive in Jerusalem safely?

King Artaxerxes helped Ezra by granting his requests because the hand of the Lord was on him.

Why did the Lord bless what Ezra was doing?

Because God can do anything He wishes, He has the power to direct every man’s steps. Ezra was committed to understanding, and teaching God’s commands to Israel. He was faithful not only to study God’s Word, but also to obey and to teach it. God blessed Ezra for his searching and obeying the Word.

What did the king give to Ezra?

The king gave permission to any Jew who wanted to return to Jerusalem. He also gave silver and gold as an offering to God, money for offerings, and articles for temple service.

Why did the king give all these things to Israel?

The king gave gold and silver to Israel because God had put it into his heart to do so.

What did the people do after Ezra read to them and taught them the Law?

The people realized their sin, confessed it, and repented of it.

How did God respond to the people's sin?

God was merciful to the people despite their sin. God even blessed them by sending a second wave of exiles and gold and silver for the temple. He also 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.



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.



Out of Control

Help the students to think through situations that are beyond their control. For example:

- Getting sick or injured
- Having a teacher or parent ask them to do something they don't understand or don't want to do
- Being treated unfairly
- Winning or losing a competition
- Finding a treasure
- Having plans ruined because of bad weather

These types of situations are beyond our control, but nothing is beyond God's control. He knows all things and controls all things. He is involved in the affairs of the world, from entire nations to individuals (Isa. 40:17, 23). He created and controls the seasons (Gen. 1:14; Lev. 26:4). All authorities, along with their rules and decisions, are decisively instituted by Him (Rom. 13:1). And all good things are gifts from Him (James 1:17). If further explanation is needed, have the students talk about the validity of terms of speech we use. Once we understand what Scripture says about God's sovereign and detailed control, we realize that terms such as *luck*, *fortunate*, *victim*, *helpless*, *narrow escape*, and *accident* are misleading. We are blessed, cared for, protected, part of a good and perfect plan, and watched over by God.



Risky Business

To help the students understand the vulnerability and helplessness that Esther and the Jews must have felt at being out of control of their circumstances, have them play a game. Choose a "king" (preferably a teacher or assistant), and tell him to be as fickle and indiscriminate as he would like. Have some students stand before him and, one at a time, try to please him in some way—by being friendly, funny, desperately sad, etc. If the king chooses to be pleased, he extends his scepter and "spares" the student. Explain that in today's lesson, the students will learn about someone who had to trust God to the point of risking her life. A good outcome was not guaranteed, but she had to choose to do the right thing and trust in the goodness and promises of God.



Our Plans versus His Plans

Divide the class into two teams, and have them compete in some simple games. The games should be obviously unfair; "fix" each one so that a particular team will win. Examples: Have the teams compete to build the highest tower, but give more blocks to one team. Have them play tug-of-war, but adjust the rope or relative strength of one team. Tell them to have a bouncing contest, but give one team better balls. These games likely will frustrate the students as they realize that there is nothing they can do to alter the outcome. Explain to the class that Mordecai, Esther, and the Jews faced a similar difficulty. But God, who is perfectly good and loving, sovereignly determines the outcome of every situation. Haman thought he could manipulate events for his own wicked purposes, but God was in control, protecting His people.

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

Reading of Text

Read portions of Esther.

Introduction

Do you enjoy stories of kings and queens, secret plots, and banquets? In today’s lesson we will see how God used a young woman named Esther and her cousin Mordecai to protect the nation of Israel from the evil Haman. The story is filled with God’s grace as He worked through men and women to accomplish His will. Let’s see what happens in today’s story.



Leadoff Questions (LOQs)

LOQ: What happens at the feast that begins the book of Esther?

Answer: The feast was seven days long and it ended a 180-day display of the king’s riches and splendor. At this feast there was a fight between King Ahasuerus and his queen, Vashti. When Ahasuerus required that the queen come “to show her beauty to the people and the officials,” the queen refused to come (1:10–12). This angered the king, and Queen Vashti was deposed.

LOQ: How did the king find a new queen?

Answer: The king had beautiful young girls from around his empire brought to him. The girl who pleased him the most would be queen instead of Vashti.

LOQ: Who was one of the women chosen?

Answer: One of the women selected was a beautiful Jew named Esther (2:7). After her parents died, Esther had been taken care of by her cousin Mordecai.

LOQ: Did the king choose Esther?

Answer: King Ahasuerus “loved Esther more than all the other women” (2:17). He had finally found a new queen. The Lord had placed a Jewish girl on the throne beside the most powerful man in the world.

LOQ: What did Mordecai overhear while sitting at the king’s gate?

Answer: He overheard two palace guards planning to assassinate King Ahasuerus (2:21). Mordecai told Esther, who 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).

LOQ: Who became the most powerful person in Persia under the king?

Answer: The king promoted a man named Haman to the most powerful position in Persia. The king commanded that all the people bow before Haman, but Mordecai refused to bow down.

LOQ: What did Haman do when he discovered that Mordecai refused to bow down?

Answer: When Haman discovered Mordecai's refusal to pay homage, he became very angry and wanted to destroy all the Jews throughout the whole kingdom.

LOQ: What was Haman's plan for killing the Jews?

Answer: Haman then went to the king and accused the Jews of disobeying the king's laws. He asked permission to put them all to death. Haman promised to give the king in return 375 tons of silver. The king granted Haman's request and sent a letter throughout the empire, saying that all the Jews both young and old, little children, and women were to be killed.

LOQ: What did Mordecai ask Esther to do?

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

LOQ: Why didn't Esther want to ask the king?

Answer: Anyone who entered the king's presence without being asked would be put to death unless the king held out the golden scepter toward that person.

LOQ: Did Esther talk to the king?

Answer: 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. Esther wisely planned for the king and Haman to come to a banquet. At the banquet, Esther requested that the king and Haman come to another banquet the next day, when the king would find out the queen's request.

LOQ: What event did God cause to happen to the king so that Mordecai would be saved from hanging?

Answer: The king had a restless night's sleep and asked 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, the king asked what had been done to honor Mordecai. Haman came in to ask the king for Mordecai's life, but instead the king asked Haman what to do for someone the king wanted to honor. Haman thought that he would be the recipient of the honor, but it was Mordecai instead.

LOQ: What did Esther say when the king asked what she requested?

Answer: When the king asked Esther to present her request, she humbly asked for her life and the life of her people. The king was shocked to discover the plot and wanted to know who had instigated it. Esther revealed that it was Haman who was the enemy of the Jews.

LOQ: What happened to Haman because of his plot?

Answer: After hearing the news, the king rushed off in anger while Haman

pleaded for his life. The king had Haman hanged on the same gallows he had prepared for Mordecai.

LOQ: What would happen to the Jews because of the king's decree?

Answer: The king could not revoke the decree he had made. But he wrote a new decree, which would counteract the first. The new decree gave the Jews 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 day that the Jews were to be attacked, they were safe because they were able to defend themselves.

LOQ: What did the Jews do after their victory over their enemies?

Answer: The Jews celebrated with a day of feasting. The Feast of Purim became a memorial of how the Jews were delivered from their enemies.

LOQ: How did God reward Mordecai for faithfully seeking the welfare of the Jews?

Answer: Mordecai was rewarded by God with a position of power as second in command.

LOQ: How did God use Mordecai and Esther?

Answer: 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, God was continually working to rescue His people. Even when His name is invisible, God's power, plan, and protection are clear.

Summary

The story of Esther begins during a huge feast that was in celebration of the king. At the feast, the king called for his wife, Queen Vashti, to come out and show her beauty to the people and the officials who were present. She refused to come out, and this angered the king greatly. The king's advisors suggested that the king find a new queen. The king decreed that a search be made for a new wife. Women were gathered from throughout the land. Of all the women found, the king loved Esther the most. The king chose Esther to be his new queen. The king also appointed an evil man named Haman to lead in his kingdom. Haman disliked Esther's cousin, Mordecai, because he would not bow down to him. So he created a plot to kill not only Mordecai but all the Jews of the land. Esther found out Haman's plot but was afraid to go before the king. When she did, the king gladly welcomed her, and she invited him to a banquet. On the night of the banquet she invited him to a second banquet. The second night Haman and Mordecai were also at the banquet. That night Esther told the king of Haman's plot. This angered the king, and he had Haman hanged on his own gallows. He wrote a decree that allowed the Jews to protect themselves, and they were safe. God used Mordecai and his cousin Esther to save the Jewish people from destruction and fulfill His promise to Abraham. God promised 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 in the book of Esther, He was continually working to rescue His people. Even when His name is invisible, God's power, plan, and protection can be seen.

Application

Although God is not mentioned in the book of Esther, His hand on Esther, Mordecai, and the Jews is clear. The God who protected the Jews is the same God who reigns today. Believers can see God's work in the lives of His people. This should be a cause for praising God, who controls every event. God has the power to accomplish His will, and that should give believers courage to do the right thing.

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.

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

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus

Trust and Obey

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, glue, crayons, sequins, yarn, foil, cotton balls or fabric squares

Directions: Give each student a copy of the craft pages, and have him cut the shield along the solid lines and then fold along the dotted lines to create flaps. The students can color and decorate the four pictures and then glue the back of the first page to the front of the second page, being careful to avoid gluing the flaps closed. Inside each flap is an explanation of how God used various story elements to protect Israel. The students can decorate the pictures with sequins (for the crown), yarn (for the hangman's noose), foil (for the sword), and cotton balls or fabric squares (for the pillow).



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.



"God Protects the Jews"

Use this work sheet to reinforce the key truths of today's lesson. The work sheet is located at the back of the lesson.



2
3

Journal Page: "God Is in Control"

Give each student a copy of the journal page at the back of this lesson. The students can complete the page individually, in small groups, or at home.

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.

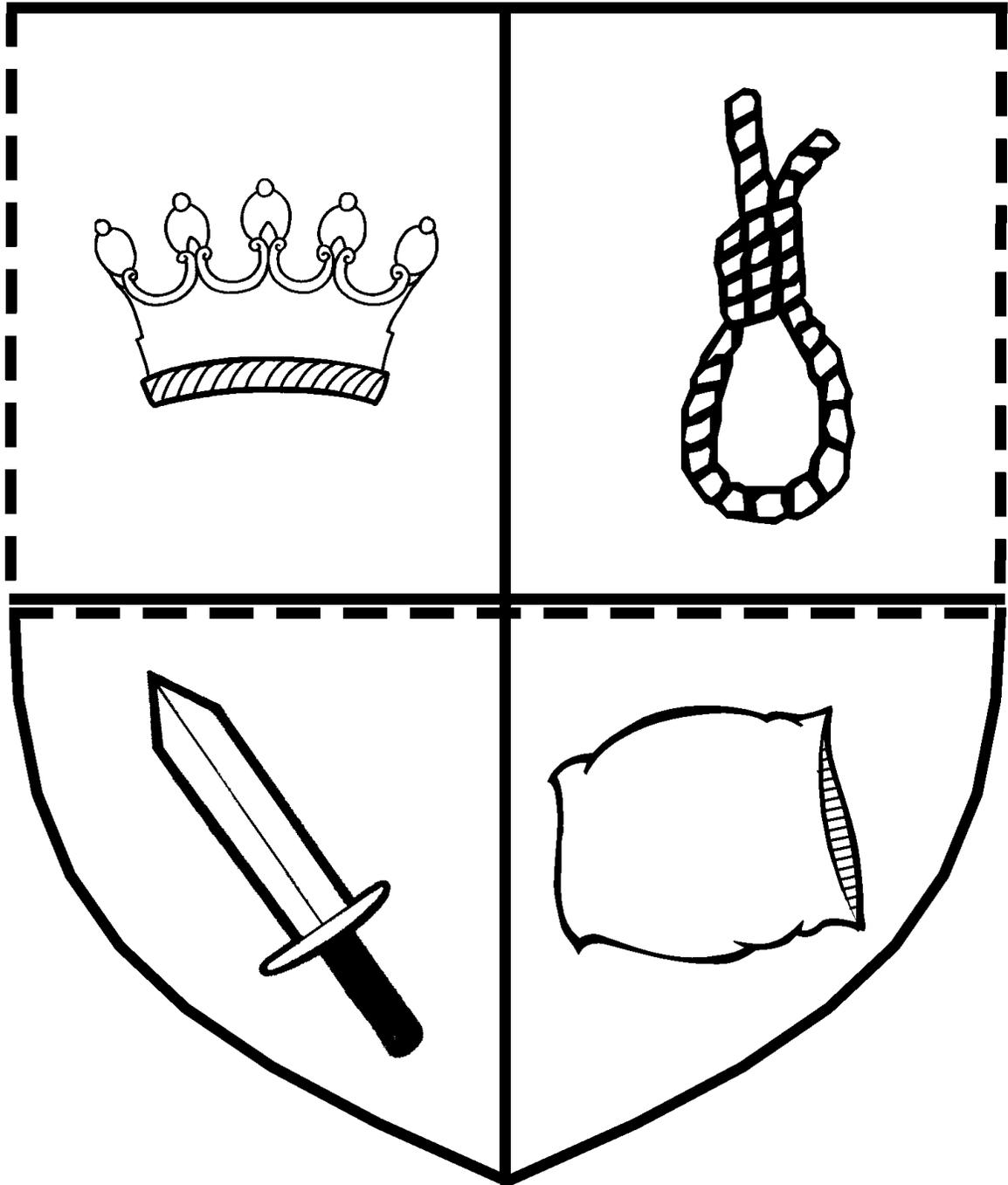


MEMORY VERSE

"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

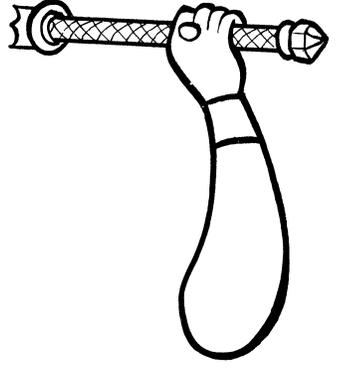
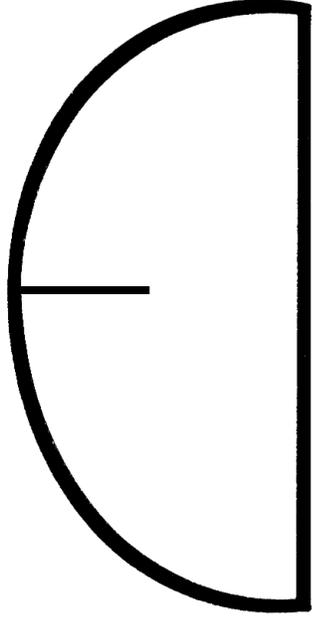
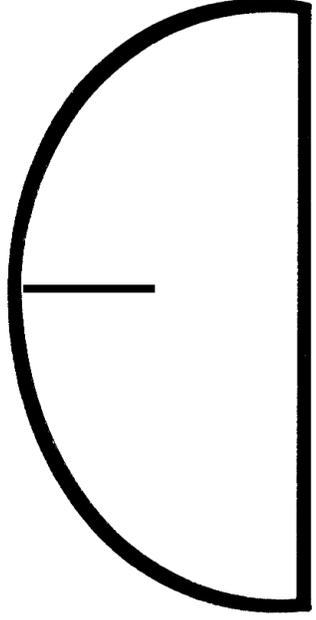
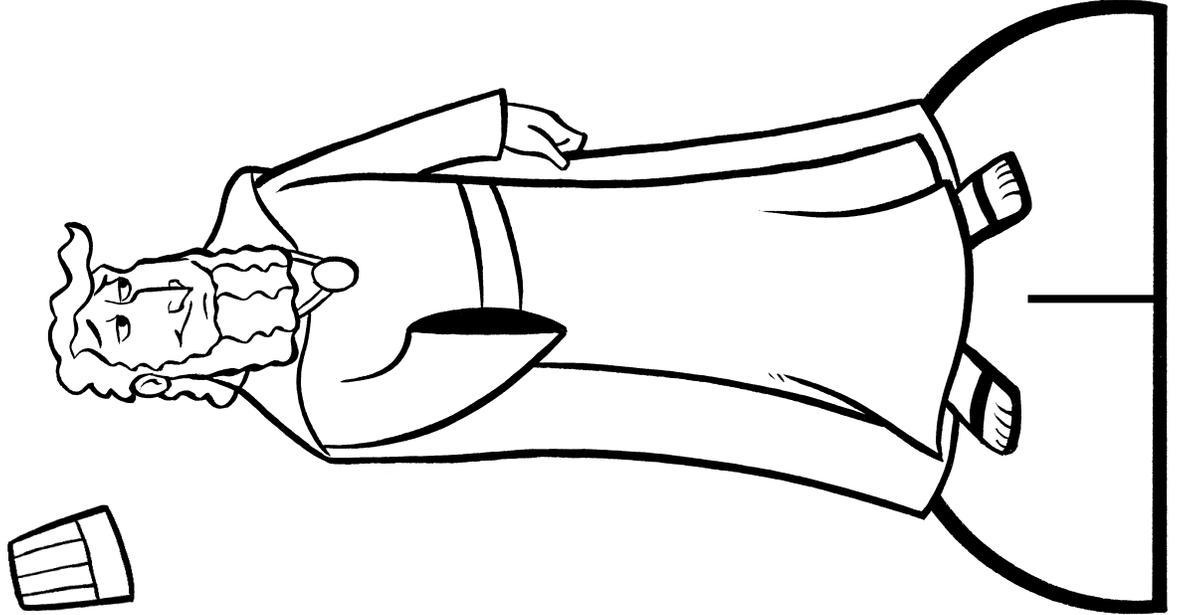
God caused the crown to be taken from Vashti and given to Esther, a Jew, who would one day help the Israelites.

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.

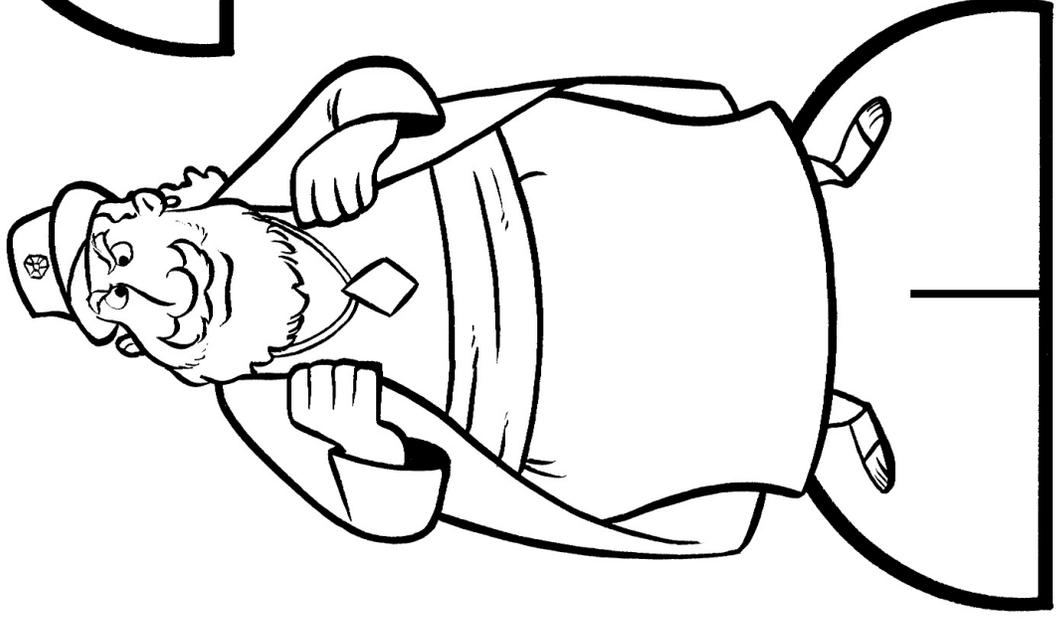
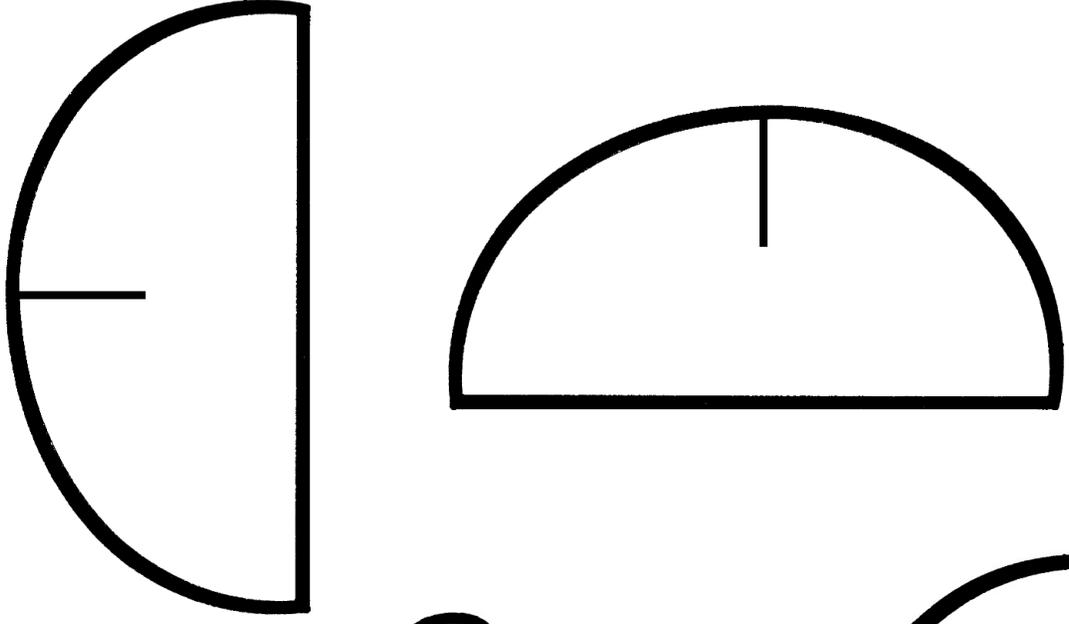
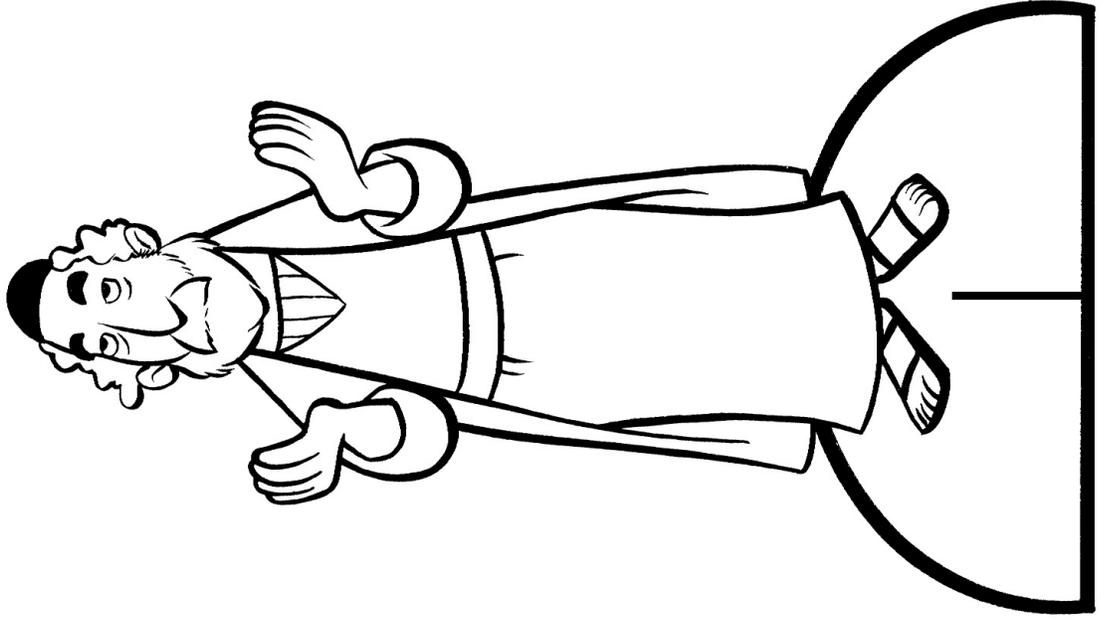
Haman plotted to kill the Jews, but God protected them and gave them an opportunity to defend themselves and kill their enemies.

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



God Protects the Jews



Esther

Name _____

1. Vashti was removed from being queen because she refused to
bow down to the king. bear a child.
appear before the king. do the king's laundry.
2. Whom did King Ahasuerus select as the new queen? _____
3. True or False: Mordecai spoiled a plot to kill the queen. _____
4. Haman's plan was to kill all the _____.
5. Who was hung in the gallows?
Haman Esther
Mordecai King Ahasuerus
6. Was Haman's plan to kill the Jews successful? _____
7. The feast of Purim was to remember how God _____ the Jews.

God Is in Control

“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).

Can you remember a time when your problems seemed overwhelming? Maybe you were disappointed because you were not invited to a birthday party, or maybe you were troubled because your mother was sick. We do not always understand why problems happen, but we can be assured that God is in control, working His perfect will. This was the case in Esther’s situation.

Look up the following verses and write how God was working in each circumstance.

CIRCUMSTANCES

Esther is taken from her cousin to the king’s palace.

The decree for the Jews’ death is issued.

Esther 8:11

Haman builds gallows to hang Esther’s cousin, Mordecai.

Esther 7:9

God Is in Control

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God used Esther and her circumstances to save the Jewish people from destruction and fulfill His promise to Abraham that the Jews would be as numerous as the stars. Isn't this amazing?

God can use your circumstances, too. In Philippians 2:13, Paul tells Christians that God is working in them to do His good pleasure.

Do you have a difficult circumstance? What is it?

In what way might God be working in your circumstance?

What would God have you do in your circumstance?

Sometimes God's purposes in our circumstances are not clear, yet we can still trust Him. Even when we do not see Him working, we can still trust Him and be assured that He is doing His good pleasure.

PRAYER

Praise God for controlling every event in your life. If there is something you do not understand, tell Him about it, and ask Him to help you fulfill His good pleasure.

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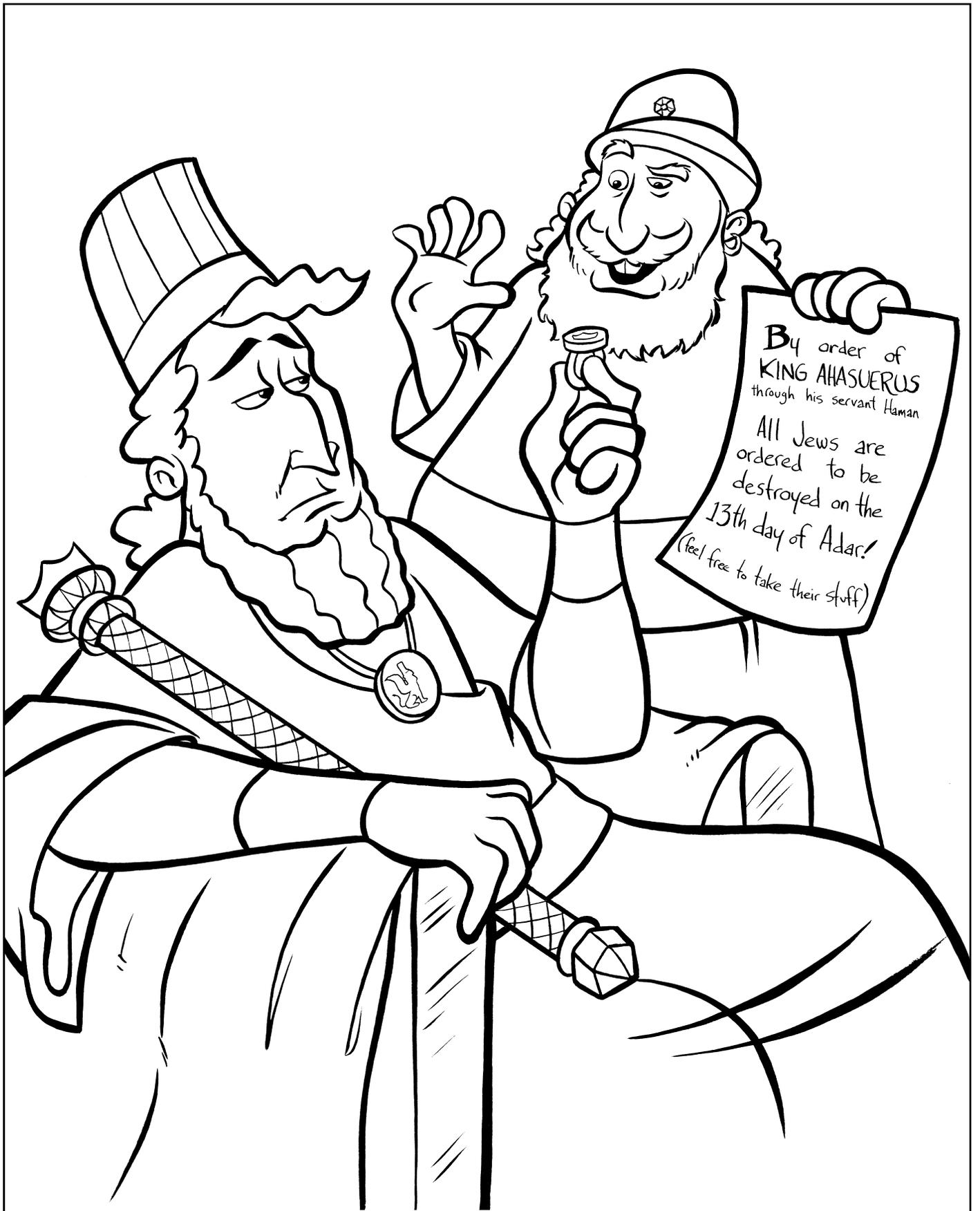
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“The king loved Esther more than all the other women,...so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti” (Esther 2:17).



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).

