

## 26.01 Esther Becomes Queen (Esther 1:1–22; 2:1–20)

✓ “Check” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows.

[. . .] Brackets indicate a remark to the teacher that will not be read aloud; they also show answers to questions.

### Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Lotions

**Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach:** Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print on colorful cardstock and cut apart.

- *women in Persia:* In Persian culture women were not to be seen, even with their husbands, in public.
- *purification:* cleaning up and preparing the body to smell and look good
- *provinces:* portions of a kingdom, like states, governed by rulers appointed by the king
- *virgins:* women who have never been married and are morally clean
- *Jew/Jewess:* an Israelite from Judah or Jerusalem. We now call all people of Israel *Jews*.

### Scripture: (ESV)

Esther 1:1 Now in the days of Ahasuerus, the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia over 127 provinces, 2 in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne in Susa, the citadel, 3 in the third year of his reign he gave a feast for all his officials and servants. The army of Persia and Media and the nobles and governors of the provinces were before him 4 while he showed the riches of his royal glory and the splendor and pomp of his greatness for many days, 180 days. 5 And when these days were completed, the king gave for all the people present in Susa the citadel, both great and small, a feast lasting for seven days in the court of the garden of the king’s palace. 6 There were white cotton curtains and violet hangings fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rods and marble pillars, and also couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl, and precious stones. 7 Drinks were served in golden vessels, vessels of different kinds, and the royal wine was lavished according to the bounty of the king. 8 And drinking was according to this edict: “There is no compulsion.” For the king had given orders to all the staff of his palace to do as each man desired. 9 Queen Vashti also gave a feast for the women in the palace that belonged to King Ahasuerus.

10 On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha and Abagtha, Zethar and Carkas, the seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus, 11 to bring Queen Vashti before the king with her royal crown, in order to show the peoples and the princes her beauty, for she was lovely to look at. 12 But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king’s command delivered by the eunuchs. At this the king became enraged, and his anger burned within him.

13 Then the king said to the wise men who knew the times (for this was the king’s procedure toward all who were versed in law and judgment, 14 the men next to him being Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, who saw the king’s face, and sat first in the kingdom): 15 “According to the law, what is to be done to Queen Vashti, because she has not performed the command of King Ahasuerus delivered by the eunuchs?” 16 Then Memucan said in the presence of the king and the officials, “Not only against the king has Queen Vashti done wrong, but also against all the officials and all the peoples who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. 17 For the queen’s behavior will be made known to all women, causing them to look at their husbands with contempt, since they will say, ‘King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, and she did not come.’ 18 This very day the noble women of Persia and Media who have heard of the queen’s behavior will say the same to all the king’s officials, and there will be contempt and wrath in plenty. 19 If it please the king, let a royal order go out from him, and let it

be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes so that it may not be repealed, that Vashti is never again to come before King Ahasuerus. And let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she. 20 So when the decree made by the king is proclaimed throughout all his kingdom, for it is vast, all women will give honor to their husbands, high and low alike.” 21 This advice pleased the king and the princes, and the king did as Memucan proposed. 22 He sent letters to all the royal provinces, to every province in its own script and to every people in its own language, that every man be master in his own household and speak according to the language of his people.

2:1 After these things, when the anger of King Ahasuerus had abated, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her. 2 Then the king’s young men who attended him said, “Let beautiful young virgins be sought out for the king. 3 And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom to gather all the beautiful young virgins to the harem in Susa the citadel, under custody of Hegai, the king’s eunuch, who is in charge of the women. Let their cosmetics be given them. 4 And let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti.” This pleased the king, and he did so.

5 Now there was a Jew in Susa the citadel whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, son of Shimei, son of Kish, a Benjaminite, 6 who had been carried away from Jerusalem among the captives carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away. 7 He was bringing up Hadassah, that is Esther, the daughter of his uncle, for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman had a beautiful figure and was lovely to look at, and when her father and her mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter. 8 So when the king’s order and his edict were proclaimed, and when many young women were gathered in Susa the citadel in custody of Hegai, Esther also was taken into the king’s palace and put in custody of Hegai, who had charge of the women. 9 And the young woman pleased him and won his favor. And he quickly provided her with her cosmetics and her portion of food, and with seven chosen young women from the king’s palace, and advanced her and her young women to the best place in the harem. 10 Esther had not made known her people or kindred, for Mordecai had commanded her not to make it known. 11 And every day Mordecai walked in front of the court of the harem to learn how Esther was and what was happening to her.

12 Now when the turn came for each young woman to go in to King Ahasuerus, after being twelve months under the regulations for the women, since this was the regular period of their beautifying, six months with oil of myrrh and six months with spices and ointments for women— 13 when the young woman went in to the king in this way, she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the harem to the king’s palace. 14 In the evening she would go in, and in the morning she would return to the second harem in custody of Shaashgaz, the king’s eunuch, who was in charge of the concubines. She would not go in to the king again, unless the king delighted in her and she was summoned by name.

15 When the turn came for Esther the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his own daughter, to go in to the king, she asked for nothing except what Hegai the king’s eunuch, who had charge of the women, advised. Now Esther was winning favor in the eyes of all who saw her. 16 And when Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, in the tenth month, which is the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign, 17 the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she won grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. 18 Then the king gave a great feast for all his officials and servants; it was Esther’s feast. He also granted a remission of taxes to the provinces and gave gifts with royal generosity.

19 Now when the virgins were gathered together the second time, Mordecai was sitting at the king’s gate. 20 Esther had not made known her kindred or her people, as Mordecai had commanded her, for Esther obeyed Mordecai just as when she was brought up by him.

### **Introduction/Review:**

Shortly after Nebuchadnezzar had first come against Jerusalem and had taken Daniel to Babylon,<sup>1</sup> Daniel had interpreted a dream for Nebuchadnezzar. In this dream was a large image with a head of gold, a chest and arms of silver, the belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of both iron and clay. Each of these metals represented conquering kingdoms. What king and kingdom was represented in the head of gold?

[Nebuchadnezzar/Babylon; locate.] What king and kingdom defeated Babylon? [Cyrus/Medes and Persians; locate.] We are already drawing close to the end of this second kingdom in our Bible stories. The third was now gaining power and would one day defeat the Persians. That kingdom would be Greece [locate].

### **Story:**

The once-great city of Babylon deteriorated as time passed after Cyrus conquered it. The Persian kings chose to rule from another city. At the time Ahasuerus [pronounced ah HAZ eur us]<sup>2</sup> became king, the capital city had moved to Shushan, also called Susa [locate].

Although the Bible names the king in today's story *Ahasuerus*, I'm going to call him *Xerxes* [pronounced XZERK seez] simply because ✓it's another name for the same man but it is easier to say.

### ***Xerxes' Feasts***

Xerxes expanded the kingdom even farther than Cyrus had done. He ruled from India to Ethiopia [locate]. Instead of the former 120 provinces, he now had 127 provinces. Each of these provinces had a prince to rule over it. Oh, he had a rich and glorious kingdom, and ✓he didn't mind letting people know about it. In fact, he had a very long feast to show his princes the glories of the kingdom and "the honor of his excellent majesty." I've never heard of a feast that lasted six months! Have you? Whether some of the princes came for a shorter time and went home before others came, we don't know. We do know, however, that the feast lasted 180 days—half a year.

When this feast was over, Xerxes immediately hosted another feast, this time for a mere seven days. This feast was for all the important and not-so-important people who served in the palace. ✓Perhaps Xerxes wanted to thank everyone for all their service during those previous six months of feasting. The Bible doesn't say. Xerxes hosted all the men in the court of the garden of the palace. The queen, Vashti, entertained the women inside the king's royal house.

Oh, I can tell you this was a magnificent celebration! Fabric of white, green, and blue hung from marble pillars, fastened with cords of purple linen to silver rings. The chairs (actually couches, for the Persians reclined at mealtime) were gold and silver and were placed on marble floors of red, blue, white, and black. Gold cups of various designs held all the wine anyone wanted to drink.

By the seventh day Xerxes had drunk enough liquor to be quite blissful. Showing off all his splendor, he thought, "Ah! My wife, Vashti, is so beautiful. All these men ought to see how very lovely she is. You seven servants, go tell Vashti to put on her royal crown and come here so that I may show her off to everyone."

### ***Vashti's Refusal***

The trusted servants went to Vashti with the king's demand, but surprisingly, Vashti answered, "I will not go." She refused the king!

"What!?" shouted Xerxes when he heard the news. "She refuses to come? Ooooh! I am sooo angry! What shall I do!? You seven wise princes, tell me what we should do to Queen Vashti according to law because she did not perform the command of the king!"

One of the wise princes stood and said, "Queen Vashti has not only wronged the king but also all the princes and all the people who are in all the provinces of King Xerxes, for the queen's behavior will become known to all women. They will despise their husbands when they hear the report that King Xerxes commanded Queen Vashti to come before him, but she refused to come. There will be excessive contempt and wrath."

The wise prince had a solution to this serious problem: "If it pleases the king, let a royal decree go out from him, and let it be recorded in the unchangeable laws of the Persians and the Medes that Vashti shall no longer come before King Xerxes. Let the king find another queen who is better than she. When the king's decree is proclaimed throughout all his empire, all wives will honor their husbands."

So, students, what was the solution to the problem of the wives' possibly becoming rebellious after hearing

about Vashti's refusal to appear before the king? [To let Vashti no more come to the king at all. To find a replacement for Queen Vashti.]

The other wise men agreed with this plan. ✓“Good idea,” said one. “Wish I had thought of that,” mused another. “I concur,” a third said.

After this agreement the king sent letters into all the provinces telling the people that men (not women) should rule their homes.

✓History tells us that Xerxes went off to war against Greece around this time, but when he returned, he thought about Vashti and what she had done. ✓Maybe he missed his queen. So a servant suggested this plan: “Let men in all your provinces look for beautiful virgins and bring them to the palace, into the house of the women. Keep them a year, purifying them, and then you, O King, may choose a queen to replace Vashti.”

“I like that idea,” said Xerxes.

### ***Esther's Chance***

Now, one of the king's helpers in the palace was a Jew from Jerusalem named Mordecai [pronounced “MOR duh KAY” or “MOR duh KI”]. He had a young cousin named Esther. Since Esther's father and mother had died and Mordecai was older than Esther, he took her into his home, and she became like a daughter to him. Esther was very beautiful.

Can you predict what will happen? Yes, she was selected to go into the house of the women in order to be considered as queen. Hegai, the man in charge of all these women, liked Esther ✓from the start. He was especially kind to her, giving her oils, soaps, and lotions for purification. Hegai even gave Esther seven maids to help her and then placed them in the best part of the house.

Mordecai, wanting to know how it was going with Esther, walked every day in the court of the house of the women. Being a Jew and not a Mede or Persian, he had been careful to warn Esther, “Don't tell anyone you are a Jewess.” Esther obeyed Mordecai as she would a father.

✓One day Hegai told Esther, “You have been in the house of the women almost a year now. Soon you will go before the king to see if he likes you. Now, what would you like in order to impress the king—✓a fine robe, a particular perfume or oil, makeup for your face. What would you like?”

“Nothing,” answered Esther. ✓“I am perfectly content with all that you supply.”

“Very well,” answered Hegai.

Everyone, who looked at Esther thought she was a beauty and ✓so nice! They liked her very much. But would the king like her, or would he like one of the other young virgins?

When the day came for Esther to appear before the king, Xerxes did love Esther more than all the other virgins. Xerxes placed the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. Then, showing his great favor for her, he made another great feast—Esther's feast. He gave gifts to lots of people and told the provinces they didn't need to pay taxes for a while.

Esther, the Jewess, was queen, but, in honor to the command of Mordecai, Esther told no one she was a Jewess.

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<sup>1</sup>114 years before today's story (first deportation to Babylon, 597 B.C., minus 483 B.C., the date of this story, equals 114).

<sup>2</sup>There are many pronunciations of this name; this is the one chosen by this teacher.

### **Lessons from this lesson:**

- We see Jesus:

The Persian kingdom had become “over-grown” and “in time would sink with its own weight. . . . Christ’s kingdom is, or shall be, far larger than this, when the kingdoms of the world shall all become his; and it shall be everlasting.” Even though it will be huge, it will never be “over-grown, for it will be ruled by a perfect Ruler, Jesus Christ ([Esther 1 Commentary - Matthew Henry Commentary on the Whole Bible \(Complete\) \(biblestudytools.com\)](#)).

- Men, according to other Bible passages, are to be the head of the home. However, the Bible does not condone mistreatment of a wife, divorce, or more than one wife while another wife is living.
- Help those who need help. Mordecai took care of Esther when her parents died.
- Obey those who are over you, even if they are not your parents, as Esther obeyed Mordecai.

### Activities:

- Play dough: crown
- Snack: For a healthy snack, make cucumber and tomato crowns. See photo and instructions at [Easy Cucumber and Tomato Crowns Recipe - Eats Amazing](#). Or, using your favorite sugar cookie recipe, bake cut-out sugar cookie crowns or round, three-dimensional ones. See a photo of how the latter is done at [snacks that look like crowns - Search Images \(bing.com\)](#).
- Watch the beginning (only the first 2.55 minutes) of a video, “Esther, Queen for a Reason,” found at [Bible Stories for the Young : Stories \(biblestoriesonline.com\)](#). Click “Stories,” and scroll more than halfway down the page.
- Do a readers’ theater using students who can read. This skit is found at [Scene 1](#), and the skits to go with today’s story are Scenes 1 and 2. (More scenes from this skit can be performed in coming lessons.)
- Review questions: (Game: Make a crown from gold paper or card stock using the pattern found below. A student who answers a question correctly may wear the crown until the next student answers correctly.)
  1. How long did Xerxes’ long magnificent feast last? [180 days; six months; the second one, 7 days.]
  2. What was the name of Xerxes’ queen who refused to show off her beauty? [Vashti.]
  3. Who was Esther’s cousin who had taken care of her? [Mordecai.]
  4. How long did the virgins have to wait before meeting the king? [About one year.]
  5. How did Esther end up being queen? [She was chosen by the king above all the other virgins.]

### Memory Verse[s]:

- Psalm 75:6, 7: “For promotion comes neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he puts down one, and sets up another.”

### Handwork:

- Make crowns printed on card stock (see pattern below). Decorate with “jewels,” glitter, and/or sequins.
- Or print masks on card stock of Xerxes and Esther (found below). Decorate the crowns on the masks. (Keep these masks in the classroom to use for other Esther stories.)

*women in Persia*

*purification*

*provinces*

*virgins*

*Jew/ Jewess*



# Nebuchadnezzar's Dream (Daniel 2)



Head of Gold

ASSYRIO-BABYLONISH MONARCHY  
THE LION

(Nebuchadnezzar - Belchassar)

671 - 538 B.C.

Breast and Arms of Silver

MEDO - PERSIAN EMPIRE  
THE BEAR

(Cyrus and Darius)

538 - 331 B.C.

Belly and Thighs of Brass

GRECO - MACEDONIAN KINGDOM  
THE LEOPARD

(Alexander the Great)

331 - 160 B.C.

Legs of Iron

THE GREAT ROMAN EMPIRE  
THE DRAGON

(under the Caesars)

160 B.C. - 395 A.D.

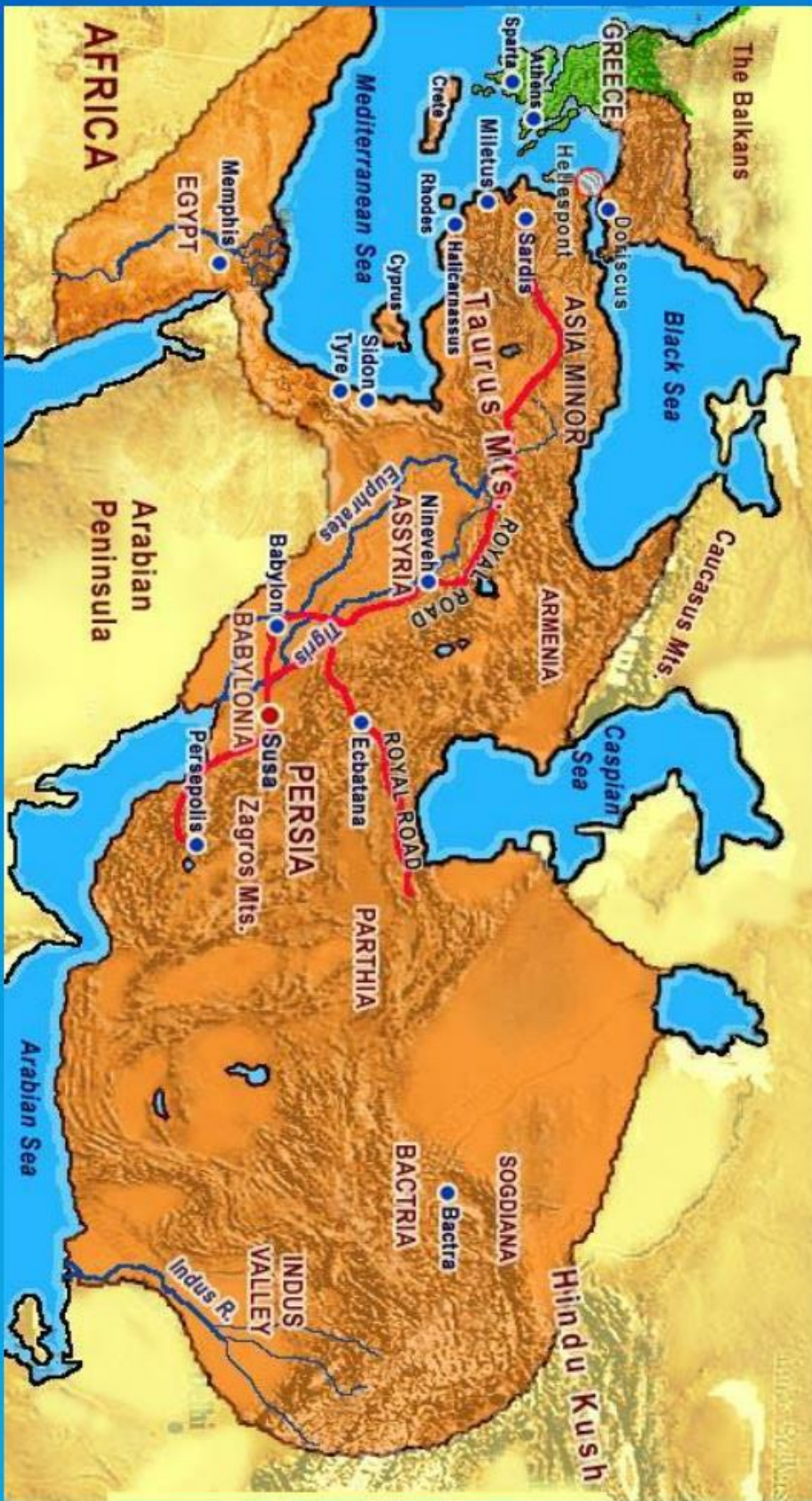
Feet and Toes - Part Iron and Part Clay

KINGDOMS OF THE (10) TOES

1. Italy	496	6. Portugal	1138
2. France	752	7. Prussia	1139
3. England	803	8. Austria	1159
4. Belgium	806	9. Spain	1179
5. Holland	922	10. Greece	1829

496 - 1829 A.D.

# Map of the Persian Empire





# Marble



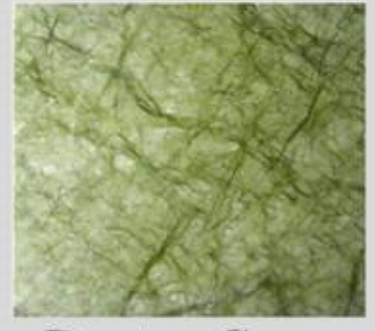
Venattno



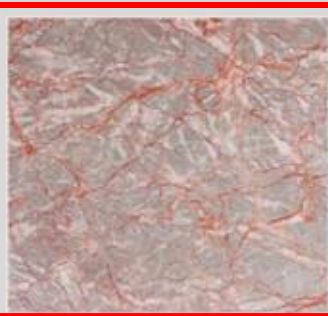
Rose White



Momentum Grey



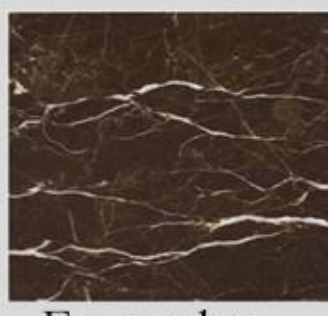
Danton Green



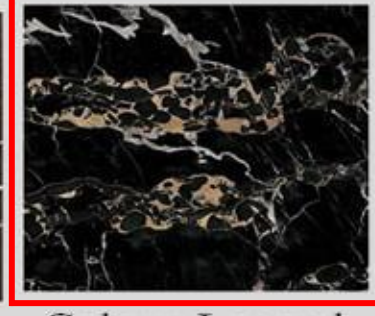
Agat Red



Beige



Emprador



Galaxy Legend



Imperiale Golden



Atlantic Blue



Rosa Valencia



Sahara Amethyst

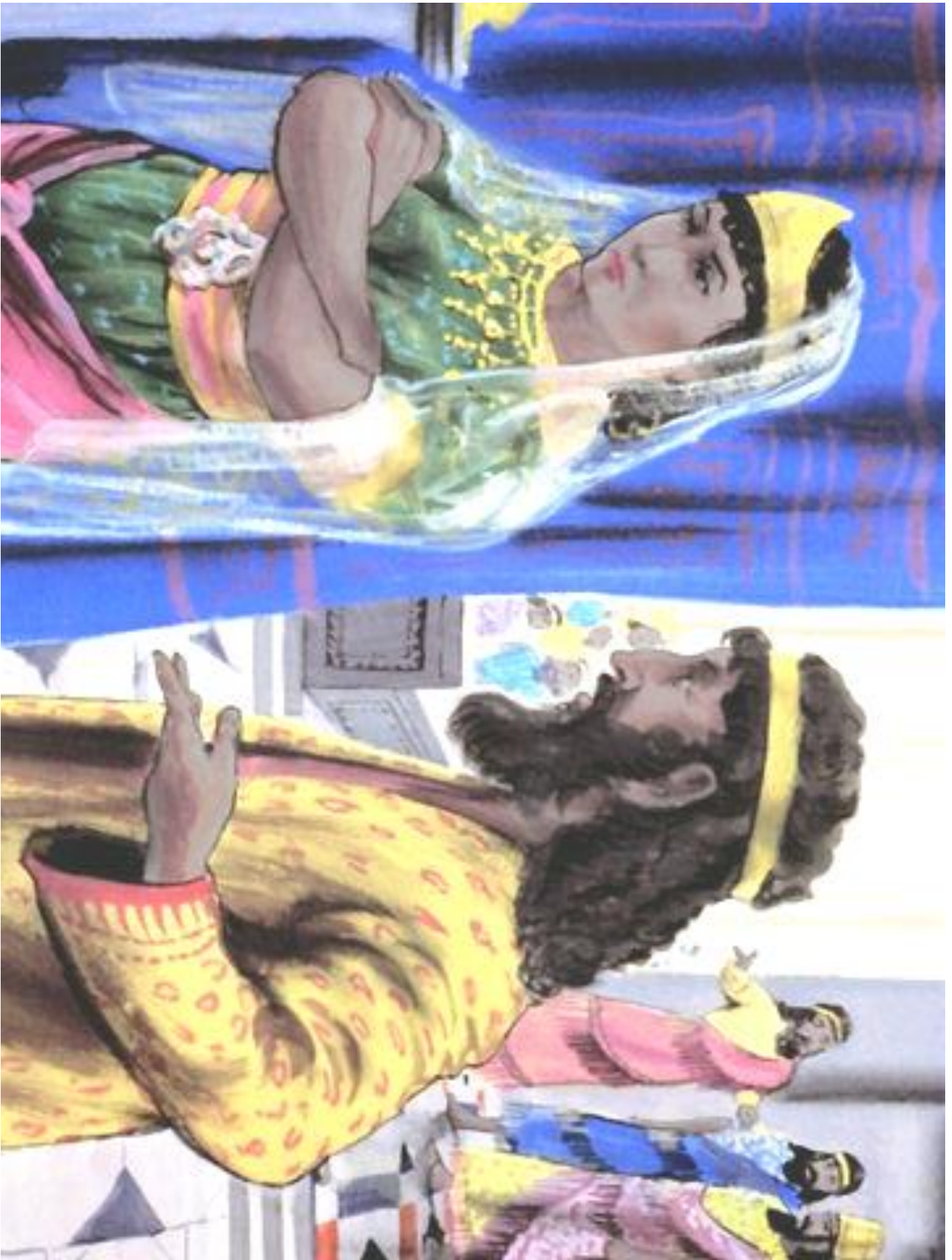


[FreeBibleimages :: Queen Esther prays for help :: Queen Esther asks God to save her people from Haman \(Esther\)](#)





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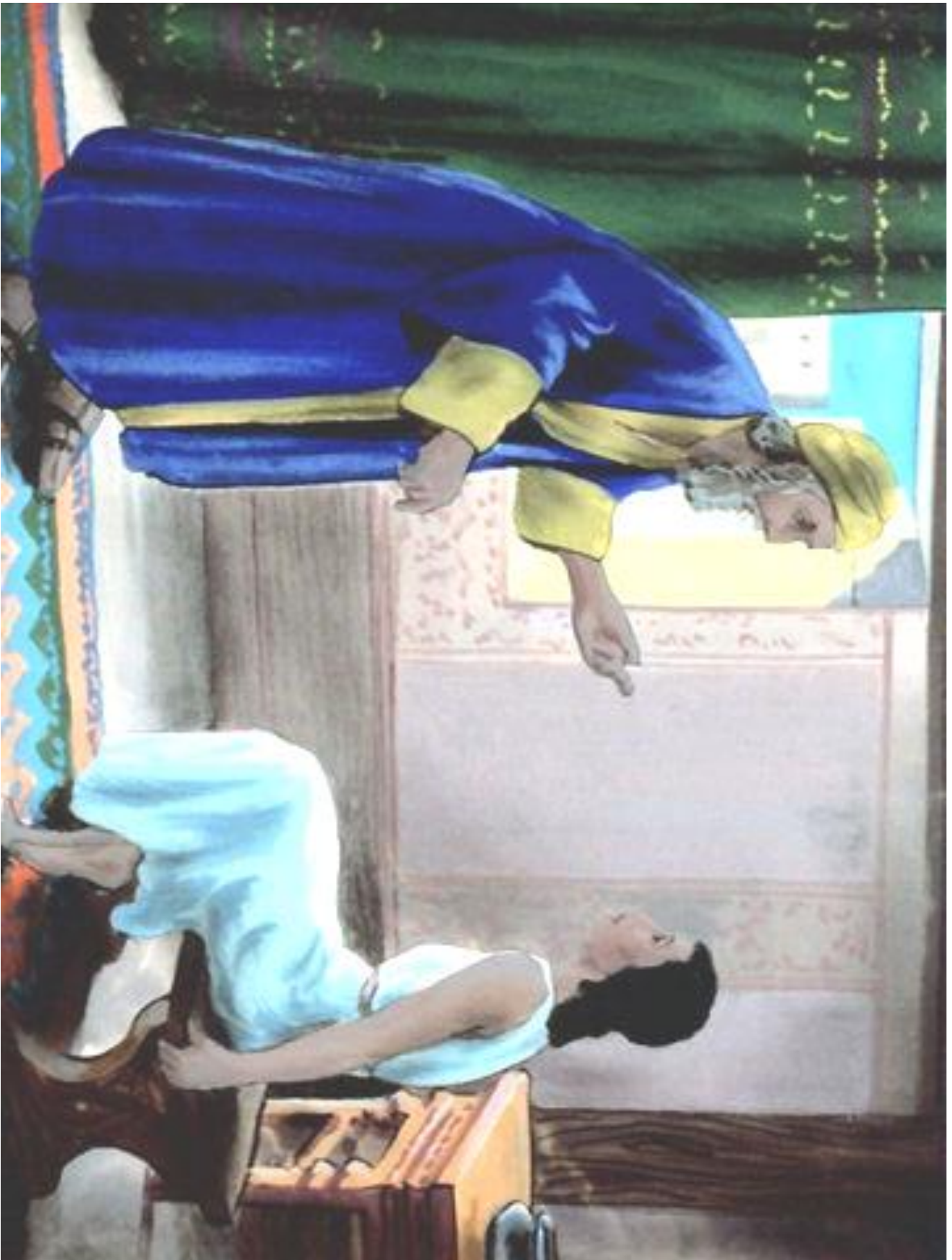


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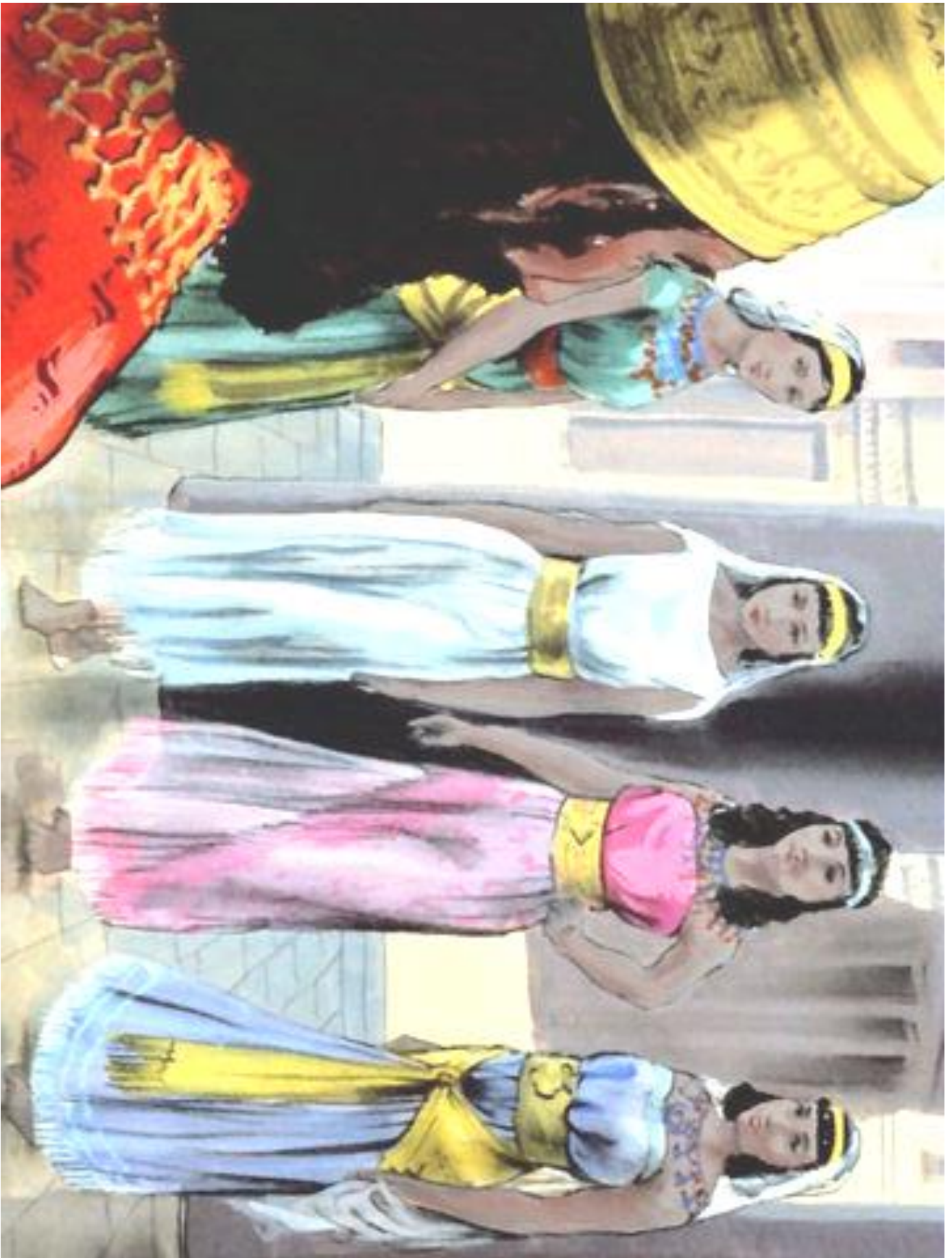


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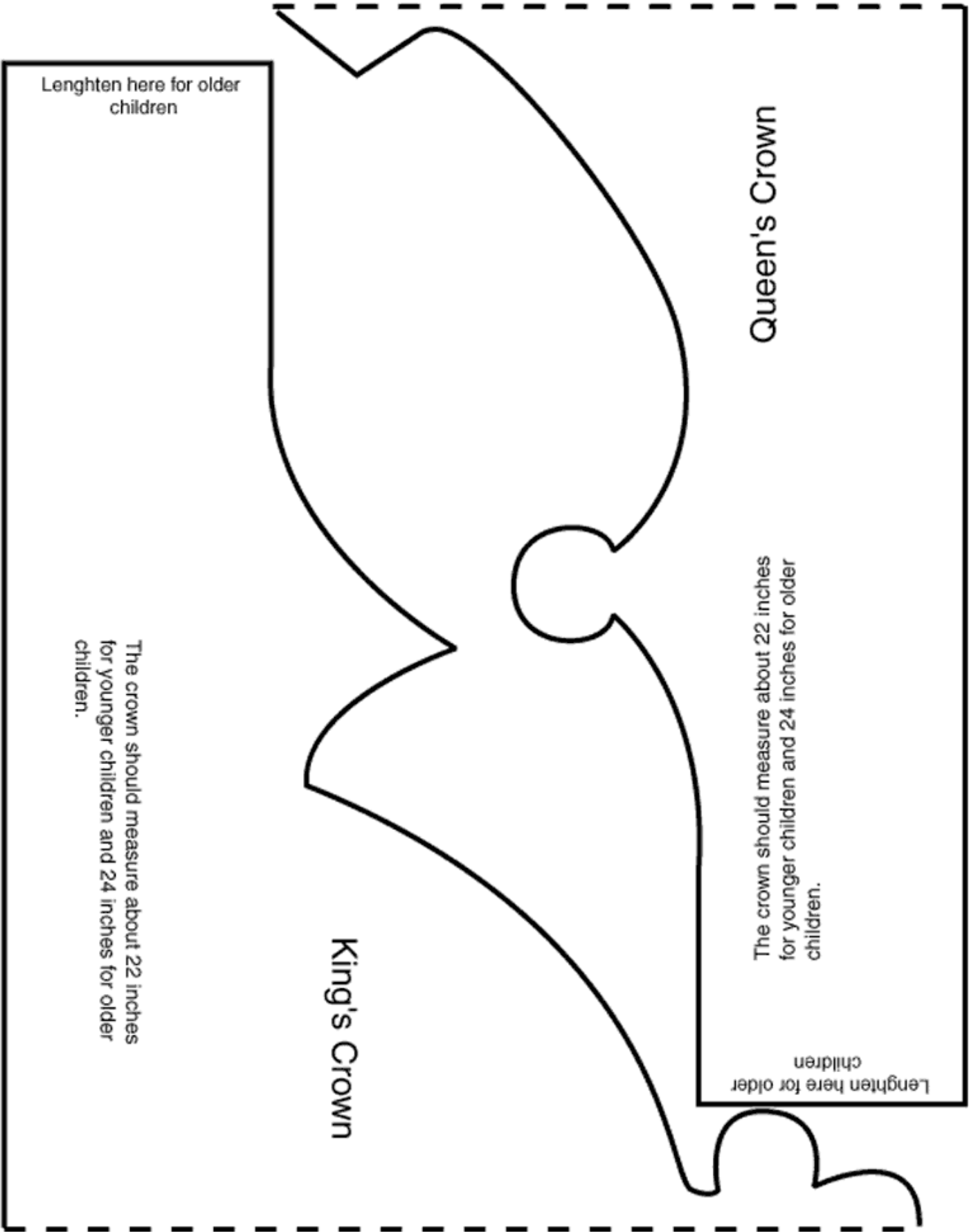


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Lenghten here for older children

The crown should measure about 22 inches for younger children and 24 inches for older children.

King's Crown

Queen's Crown

The crown should measure about 22 inches for younger children and 24 inches for older children.

Lenghten here for older children

