

26.03 Esther's Appeal and Haman's Self-Appraise (Esther 4:1–17; 5:1–14)

✓ “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 needed materials. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- sackcloth and ashes

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. (Most of these terms are reviewed from last week.)

- *sackcloth and ashes*: Wearing sackcloth with ashes showed great sorrow or repentance.
- *king's gate*: the entrance to the king's house or palace. Men who were allowed to be at the king's gate were trusted servants and officials of the king.
- *to fast*: to go without food because of a great sorrow or in order to humble oneself before God
- *scepter*: a rod, usually of gold, held by a king to show his authority [pronounced “SEP ter”]
- *perish*: to die or be destroyed
- *bowing to the king's officials*: To bow respectfully to an official was not against God's law, ✓but in Shushan the king's official was considered to be some sort of a god. Therefore, to bow to such a person who was supposedly a god was to disobey God's law [*John Gill's Expositor on Esther 3:2*].
- *gallows*: a high wooden frame to which is attached a rope for hanging criminals to death [see picture below]

Scripture: (ESV)

Esther 4:1 When Mordecai learned all that had been done, Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and he cried out with a loud and bitter cry. 2 He went up to the entrance of the king's gate, for no one was allowed to enter the king's gate clothed in sackcloth. 3 And in every province, wherever the king's command and his decree reached, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting and weeping and lamenting, and many of them lay in sackcloth and ashes.

4 When Esther's young women and her eunuchs came and told her, the queen was deeply distressed. She sent garments to clothe Mordecai, so that he might take off his sackcloth, but he would not accept them. 5 Then Esther called for Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs, who had been appointed to attend her, and ordered him to go to Mordecai to learn what this was and why it was. 6 Hathach went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king's gate, 7 and Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the exact sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries for the destruction of the Jews. 8 Mordecai also gave him a copy of the written decree issued in Susa for their destruction, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her and command her to go to the king to beg his favor and plead with him on behalf of her people. 9 And Hathach went and told Esther what Mordecai had said. 10 Then Esther spoke to Hathach and commanded him to go to Mordecai and say, 11 “All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law—to be put to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter so that he may live. But as for me, I have not been called to come in to the king these thirty days.”

12 And they told Mordecai what Esther had said. 13 Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, “Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. 14 For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” 15 Then

Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, 16 “Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish.” 17 Mordecai then went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him.

5:1 On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king’s palace, in front of the king’s quarters, while the king was sitting on his royal throne inside the throne room opposite the entrance to the palace. 2 And when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the court, she won favor in his sight, and he held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. Then Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter. 3 And the king said to her, “What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given you, even to the half of my kingdom.” 4 And Esther said, “If it please the king, let the king and Haman come today to a feast that I have prepared for the king.” 5 Then the king said, “Bring Haman quickly, so that we may do as Esther has asked.” So the king and Haman came to the feast that Esther had prepared. 6 And as they were drinking wine after the feast, the king said to Esther, “What is your wish? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled.” 7 Then Esther answered, “My wish and my request is: 8 If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my wish and fulfill my request, let the king and Haman come to the feast that I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has said.”

9 And Haman went out that day joyful and glad of heart. But when Haman saw Mordecai in the king’s gate, that he neither rose nor trembled before him, he was filled with wrath against Mordecai. 10 Nevertheless, Haman restrained himself and went home, and he sent and brought his friends and his wife Zeresh. 11 And Haman recounted to them the splendor of his riches, the number of his sons, all the promotions with which the king had honored him, and how he had advanced him above the officials and the servants of the king. 12 Then Haman said, “Even Queen Esther let no one but me come with the king to the feast she prepared. And tomorrow also I am invited by her together with the king. 13 Yet all this is worth nothing to me, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king’s gate.” 14 Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, “Let a gallows fifty cubits high be made, and in the morning tell the king to have Mordecai hanged upon it. Then go joyfully with the king to the feast.” This idea pleased Haman, and he had the gallows made.

Introduction/Review:

Mordecai had told Esther the queen not to tell anyone she was a Jew. He himself could not bow down to Haman, the king’s highest official, ✓because the king had set Haman up as a sort of god [John Gill]. Jews followed God’s law, which said, “You shall have no other gods before Me . . . You shall not bow down to them” (Exodus 20:3, 5). When Haman saw that Mordecai would not bow down, he was so angry that he cast lots to determine the day and month when *all* Jews—man, woman, child, old, young—would be annihilated in all the kingdom of Xerxes—in the 127 provinces from India to Egypt. That day and month chosen by lots was the twelfth month and the thirteenth day, about eleven months in the future.

Story:

Mordecai's grief

At first, the Jews didn’t quite believe or understand what was going on, but the decree sent out by Haman became quite clear to them: They were to be destroyed! Mordecai, in great grief, tore his clothes, put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the middle of the city, crying with a loud and bitter cry. He came close to the king’s gate but could not enter the king’s gate where he usually worked, for it was against the law to come into the king’s gate wearing sackcloth. Throughout the kingdom many Jews, fearing for their lives, wailed and wept and fasted and wore sackcloth and ashes.

“Esther,” reported the chamberlains and maids, “we saw Mordecai wailing throughout the city. He’s wearing sackcloth and ashes, and he’s crying with a loud and bitter cry.”

✓“He is?” answered Esther. “I wonder why he’s doing that. Here, take some clothes to him.”

But Mordecai refused Esther's clothes. So Esther said to her chamberlain, "Hatach [pronounced "HAY tack"], will you please go and see why Mordecai is acting so strangely?"

"As you wish," answered Hatach.

When Hatach met Mordecai in the street in front of the king's gate and asked him why he was wearing sackcloth and wailing, Mordecai answered, "Haman has sent letters throughout the kingdom saying that all the Jews are to be annihilated ✓ merely because I refused to bow to him. He has even promised to pay 10,000 silver talents to slay all of us. Here, show this copy of Haman's letter to the queen. Tell her from me that she should go in unto the king to ask for the safety of her people."

"Yes, sir, I'll do that," answered Hatach, and he told Esther everything Mordecai had said.

Esther's choice

Fearful, Esther asked Hatach to return a message to Mordecai. "Tell him," she said, "what everyone already knows—that no man or woman may come before the king in his inner court who has not been called there. The person who comes without being called will be killed unless the king holds out his golden scepter. The king has not called me before him for thirty days. ✓ Perhaps he is unhappy with me for some reason. I really fear to go before the king."

When Hatach told Mordecai all of Esther's words, Mordecai had a solemn answer for Esther. "Do not think that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews. For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, ✓ or you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Oh, those were sober words; yet, they were true: Esther, the queen herself, would just as surely as any of the other Jews be slain. She answered, "Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Susa, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!"

✓ I wonder if this answer didn't encourage Mordecai. Maybe he said, "Atta girl, Esther!" The Bible doesn't say what he said, but it tells us he did as Esther requested. He gathered the Jews together to do what? [Fast three days.]

Day one. The Jews, Esther, and her maids fasted. Day two. The Jews, Esther, and her maids fasted. On day three, Esther got dressed in her royal clothing and stood in the inner court of the king's house, where no one should stand without being called by the king. Would he receive her, or was he unhappy with her?

Xerxes accepts Esther

When King Xerxes saw Esther standing in the court, [Teacher, string out these words for the sake of suspense] he looked upon her with . . . favor and held out his golden scepter! Esther came close and touched the end of the scepter.

King Xerxes asked, "What do you want, Queen Esther? What is your request? It shall be given to you, even to the half of my kingdom." (That really was favor, wasn't it?)

"If it please the king," answered Esther, "may the king and Haman come to a banquet that I have prepared for the king today."

"Indeed," answered Xerxes. "Servant, tell Haman to hurry and come to the banquet prepared by Esther for us today."

When the banquet took place, King Xerxes asked again, "What do you wish? I will give you up to half of my kingdom."

Esther still did not state her real request but said, "My petition and request is this: If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, then let the king

and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare for them tomorrow, and tomorrow I will tell the king my real request.”

✓“Very well,” said the king.

Haman plans Mordecai's death

Haman was ecstatic. Not only was he the king’s favorite, ✓but it looked as if he also was the queen’s favorite. Oh, he was a happy man! But as he passed through the king’s gate and saw Mordecai sitting instead of bowing, all his joy fled from him.

Haman went home. He called for a conference with his friends and his wife. When they gathered, he told them of all the glory of his riches, the multitude of his children, and his promotion by the king above all the other princes and servants. He said, “To top it off, Queen Esther asked only the king and me to her banquet today, and tomorrow the king and I are again invited to her banquet. Yet all this does me no good. ✓It’s almost as if I don’t care about all this glory so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king’s gate.”

Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to Haman, “This is what you need to do. Build a gallows fifty cubits (75 feet) high (very high), and in the morning when you see the king, tell him to have Mordecai hanged upon the gallows. Then go merrily with the king to the queen’s banquet.”

Haman was pleased with this terrible suggestion and went ahead and had the gallows made so that he could slay Mordecai by hanging. What an evil, wicked plan! What an evil, wicked man!

What will happen? Will Mordecai die? Will the Jews be annihilated? Next week, we will find out.

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:
“Some think that the three days’ fast was only one whole day and two whole nights . . . and that this is called *three days*, as Christ’s lying in the grave so long is. This exposition is favoured by the consideration that on the third day the queen made her appearance at court” ([Esther 5 Commentary - Matthew Henry Commentary on the Whole Bible \(Complete\) \(biblestudytools.com\)](#)).
- Sometimes, in problems that are very important, we need to fast when we pray. For health reasons, children should not fast, but most adults can fast.
- Providence is God’s doing all His holy will at just the right time. We can trust God even in our darkest hours.
- Apply Esther 4:14—“And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”—to our lives: each of us has a purpose, small or great, in God’s plan.

Activities:

- Play dough: Hamantashen—circles formed into a three-cornered “Haman’s hat”; scepter
- Snack: stick pretzels with grapes or olives attached to one end (a poor semblance of a scepter)
- Fast during snack time, or cut back on the amount of food usually given to the students.
- Pretend to be the Jews, wailing and wearing sackcloth.
- Solve “A Queen’s Crossword” found below. Answers across are 4 fast; 5 ring; 8 scepter; 9 Susa; 14 Haman; 15 kingdom; 16 banquet; 17 Jew; 18 people. Answers down are 1 gallows; 2 Xerxes; 3 signet; 6 Persia; 7 beautiful; 10 adopted; 11 crown; 12 Esther; 13 hanged.
- 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 5 and 6. (More acts to this skit can be performed in coming lessons.)

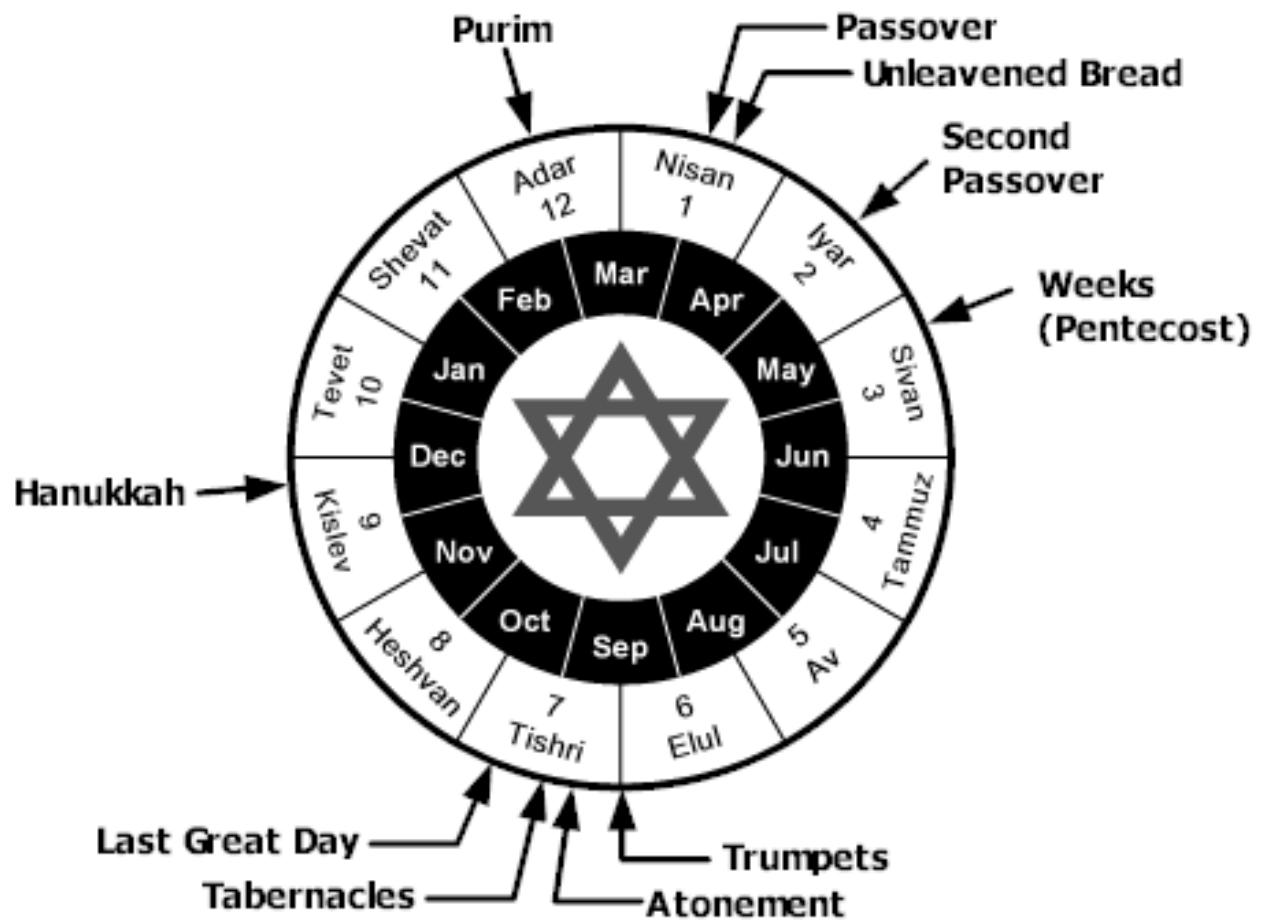
- Watch a 7-plus minutes video, “Esther, Queen for a Reason,” found at [Bible Stories for the Young : Stories \(biblestoriesonline.com\)](http://Bible Stories for the Young : Stories (biblestoriesonline.com)). Click “Stories,” and scroll more than halfway down the page.
- Review questions: (Game: Print the six scepters found below on card stock; cut out squares of scepters. A student who answers a question correctly may place a scepter in a pocket chart.)
 1. Why was Mordecai wearing sackcloth and ashes? [Because of his despair over Haman’s decree that the Jews were to be slain.]
 2. What did Mordecai urge Esther to do? [Go to the king to have the decree changed.]
 3. What law of the king scared Esther? [Anyone who came into the king’s presence without his favor would be slain.]
 4. What did the Jews, Esther, and her maids do before she went before the king? [Fasted; we assume they also prayed.]
 5. How did the king show he favored Esther when she appeared before him? [He held out his scepter.]
 6. What was Haman’s new plan regarding Mordecai? [To hang him on a 50-cubit gallows the next day.]

Memory Verse[s]:

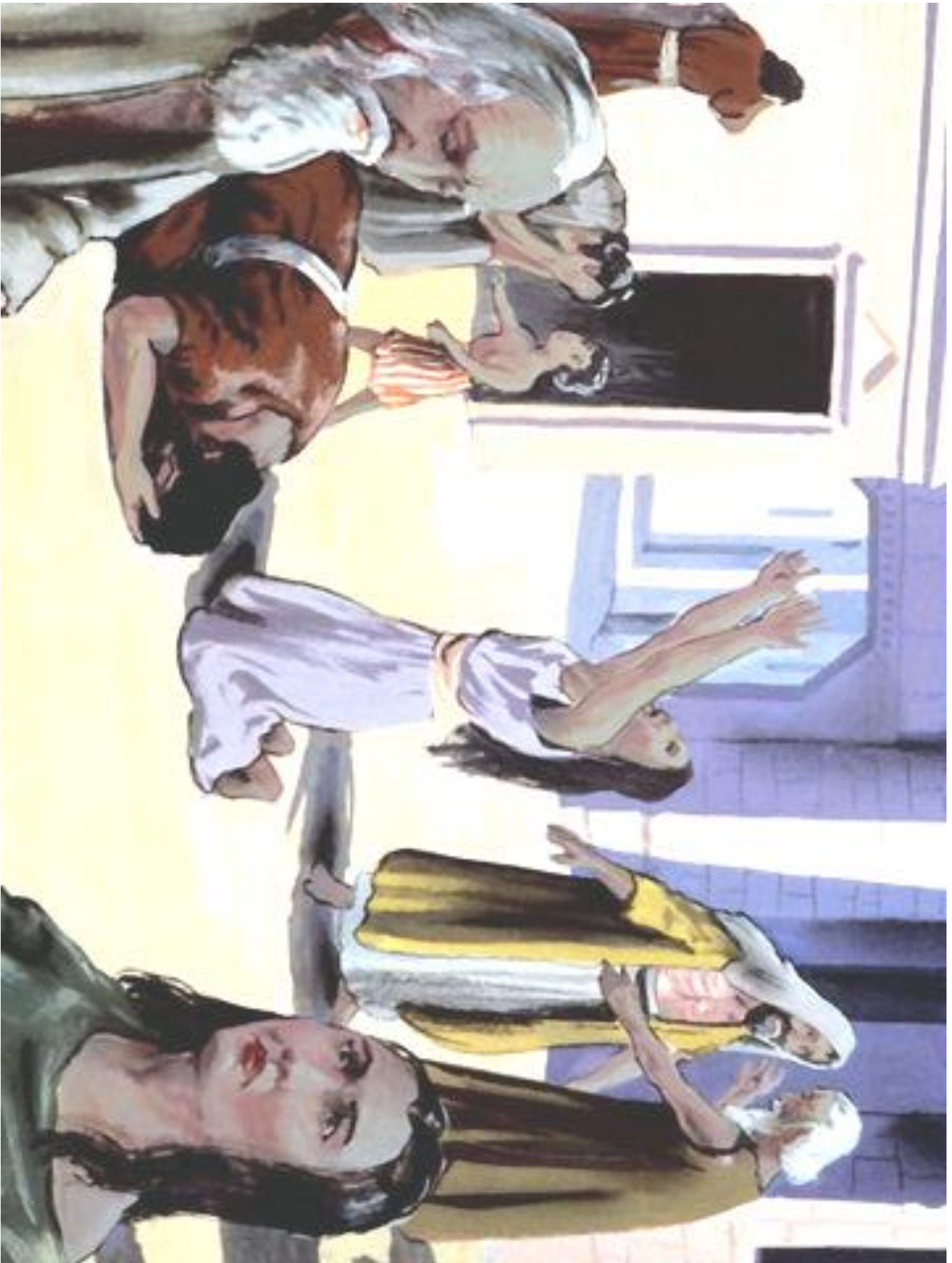
- Esther 4:14: “And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

Handwork:

- Make a scepter. See [Queen Esther Bible Lesson, Crafts, and Activities \(daniellesplace.com\)](http://Queen Esther Bible Lesson, Crafts, and Activities (daniellesplace.com)) for instructions and patterns. (Other Esther crafts are shown at this site.)



Jewish calendar compared to our calendar



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



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

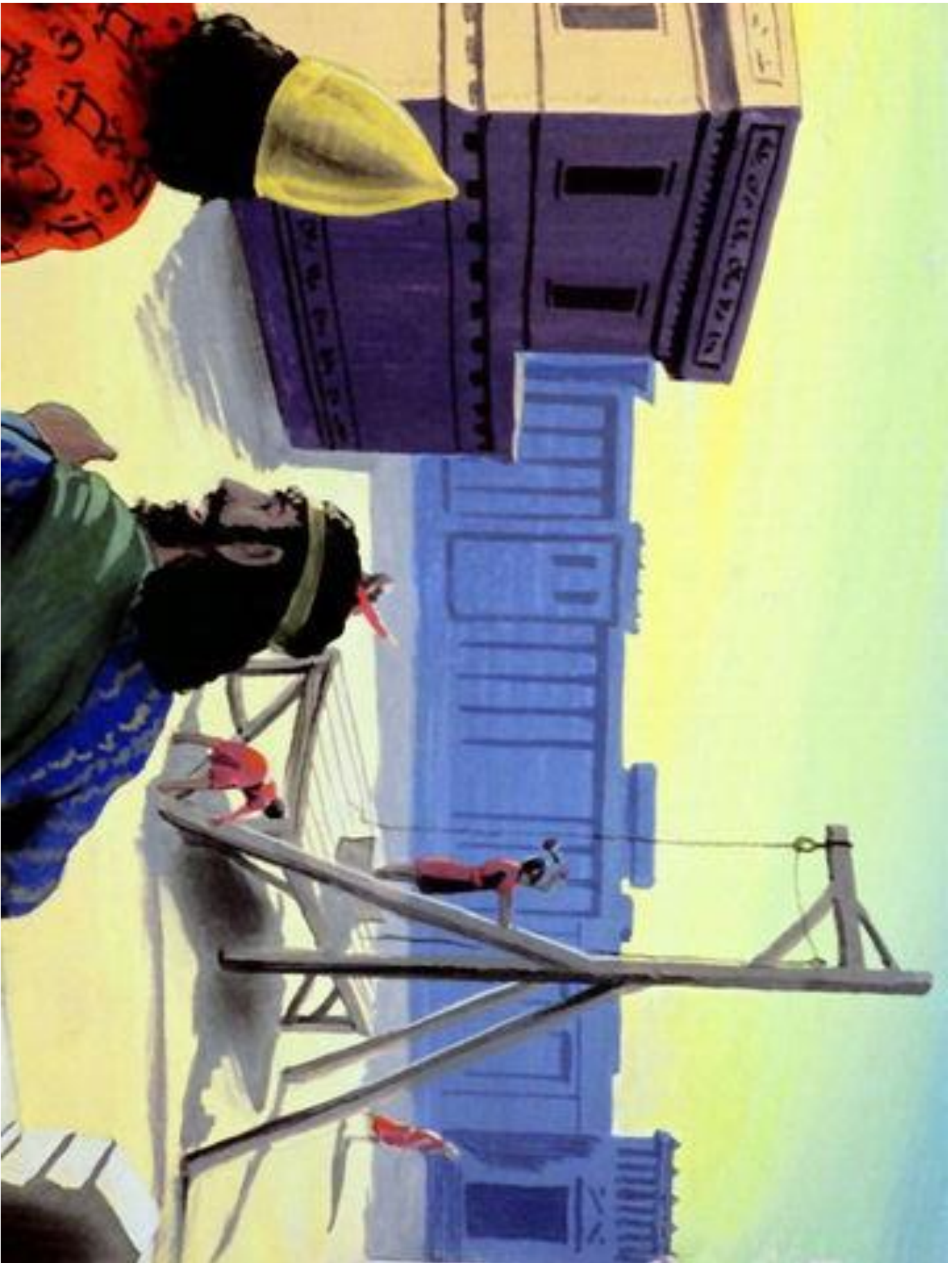


[FreeBibleimages](#) :: [Queen Esther prays for help](#) :: [Queen Esther asks God to save her people from Haman \(Esther\)](#)





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



This gallows is not as tall as Haman's was. ([FreeBibleimages :: Queen Esther prays for help :: Queen Esther asks God to save her people from Haman \(Esther\)](#))



**Haman's
gallows was
50 cubits,
which
equals
75 feet.
That is about
as tall as
2 school buses
stacked
end-to-end.**



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

A Queen's Crossword

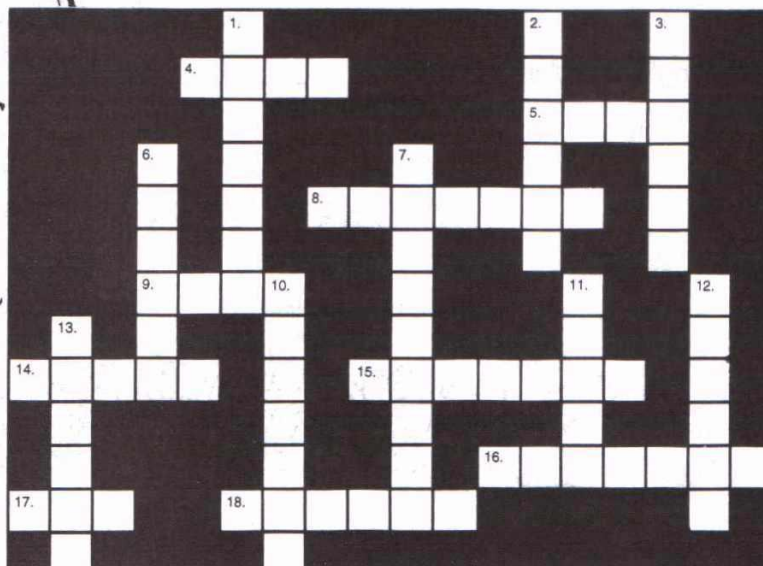
All references can be found in the book of Esther.

ACROSS

4. A time when people do not eat or drink. (4:16)
5. The king gave the enemy of God's people a _____. (3:10)
8. The king held a gold ____ in his hand. (5:2)
9. The name of the city where this story took place. (3:15)
14. _____ planned to kill God's people. (3:6)
15. The king said he would give his new Queen half of his _____. (5:3)
16. The new queen planned a special _____. (5:4)
17. Esther was a _____ from the tribe of Benjamin. (2:5-7)
18. Later, the queen asked the king to "spare my _____." (7:3)

DOWN

1. What happened to 14 Across? He was killed on the _____. (7:10)
2. The name of the king was _____. (2:12)
3. 5 Across was decorated with a special symbol called a _____. (3:10)
6. This story takes place in the country of _____. (1:19)
7. The new queen was the most _____ maiden of all.
10. The new queen was Mordecai's _____ daughter. (2:15)
11. The king put a _____ on the new queen's head. (2:17)
12. The new queen's name was _____. (2:17)
13. What happened to 14 Across? He was _____. (7:10)



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