

26.06 The Jews Defend Themselves (Esther 9:1–32; 10:1–3)

✓ “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.

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.

- *to defend oneself*: to fight back to protect oneself
- *spoil/plunder/booty*: the property of a defeated enemy; e.g., his clothes, animals, house, money, etc., that a victor takes for himself
- *to cast lots*: to put things, like slips of paper, in a container and then draw them out in order to determine a course of action. For example, in our class we “cast” our names (our lots) into a jar to determine who will choose a song to sing. Haman had cast lots in order to determine the day and month in which the Jews would be destroyed.
- *groggers*: noise-makers

Scripture: (ESV)

Esther 9:1 Now in the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king’s command and edict were about to be carried out, on the very day when the enemies of the Jews hoped to gain the mastery over them, the reverse occurred: the Jews gained mastery over those who hated them. 2 The Jews gathered in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to lay hands on those who sought their harm. And no one could stand against them, for the fear of them had fallen on all peoples. 3 All the officials of the provinces and the satraps and the governors and the royal agents also helped the Jews, for the fear of Mordecai had fallen on them. 4 For Mordecai was great in the king’s house, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces, for the man Mordecai grew more and more powerful. 5 The Jews struck all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying them, and did as they pleased to those who hated them. 6 In Susa the citadel itself the Jews killed and destroyed 500 men, 7 and also killed Parshandatha and Dalphon and Aspatha 8 and Poratha and Adalia and Aridatha 9 and Parmashta and Arisai and Aridai and Vaizatha, 10 the ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews, but they laid no hand on the plunder.

11 That very day the number of those killed in Susa the citadel was reported to the king. 12 And the king said to Queen Esther, “In Susa the citadel the Jews have killed and destroyed 500 men and also the ten sons of Haman. What then have they done in the rest of the king’s provinces! Now what is your wish? It shall be granted you. And what further is your request? It shall be fulfilled.” 13 And Esther said, “If it please the king, let the Jews who are in Susa be allowed tomorrow also to do according to this day’s edict. And let the ten sons of Haman be hanged on the gallows.” 14 So the king commanded this to be done. A decree was issued in Susa, and the ten sons of Haman were hanged. 15 The Jews who were in Susa gathered also on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and they killed 300 men in Susa, but they laid no hands on the plunder.

16 Now the rest of the Jews who were in the king’s provinces also gathered to defend their lives, and got relief from their enemies and killed 75,000 of those who hated them, but they laid no hands on the plunder. 17 This was on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar, and on the fourteenth day they rested and made that a day of feasting and gladness. 18 But the Jews who were in Susa gathered on the thirteenth day and on the fourteenth, and rested on the fifteenth day, making that a day of feasting and gladness. 19 Therefore the Jews of the villages, who live in the rural towns, hold the fourteenth day of the month of Adar as a day for gladness and feasting, as a holiday, and as a day on which they send gifts of food to one another.

20 And Mordecai recorded these things and sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King

Ahasuerus, both near and far, 21 obliging them to keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar and also the fifteenth day of the same, year by year, 22 as the days on which the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month that had been turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, days for sending gifts of food to one another and gifts to the poor.

23 So the Jews accepted what they had started to do, and what Mordecai had written to them. 24 For Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur (that is, cast lots), to crush and to destroy them. 25 But when it came before the king, he gave orders in writing that his evil plan that he had devised against the Jews should return on his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. 26 Therefore they called these days Purim, after the term Pur. Therefore, because of all that was written in this letter, and of what they had faced in this matter, and of what had happened to them, 27 the Jews firmly obligated themselves and their offspring and all who joined them, that without fail they would keep these two days according to what was written and at the time appointed every year, 28 that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, in every clan, province, and city, and that these days of Purim should never fall into disuse among the Jews, nor should the commemoration of these days cease among their descendants.

29 Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew gave full written authority, confirming this second letter about Purim. 30 Letters were sent to all the Jews, to the 127 provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, in words of peace and truth, 31 that these days of Purim should be observed at their appointed seasons, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther obligated them, and as they had obligated themselves and their offspring, with regard to their fasts and their lamenting. 32 The command of Esther confirmed these practices of Purim, and it was recorded in writing.

10:1 King Ahasuerus imposed tax on the land and on the coastlands of the sea. 2 And all the acts of his power and might, and the full account of the high honor of Mordecai, to which the king advanced him, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia? 3 For Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Ahasuerus, and he was great among the Jews and popular with the multitude of his brothers, for he sought the welfare of his people and spoke peace to all his people.

Introduction/Review:

Haman, the wicked prince who wanted to exterminate the Jews, was hung to death on his own gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Esther received all his property. Mordecai took Haman's place and had great authority over the one hundred twenty-seven provinces of King Xerxes/Ahashureus. Since Haman's law to exterminate the Jews could not be revoked or reversed, Mordecai wrote another law in the name of the king. According to this law, on the day appointed to destroy the Jews, the Jews were allowed to defend themselves, strike down their enemies, and even take the spoil of their enemies. Scribes wrote copies of the new law, and messengers spread the word throughout the kingdom.

Story:

Nine months passed, and the fateful day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, came. Enemies of the Jews rose up against the Jews. They hoped to have power over the Jews, but the Jews defended themselves so successfully that, in the end, the Jews had power over their enemies. This is how it happened:

The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces so that they could fight against those who hated them. But people everywhere feared the Jews. Even the rulers of the provinces helped the Jews because they were fearful of Mordecai, who had great power over them all and kept getting greater and greater and more and more famous.

In Shushan, where Xerxes, Esther, and Mordecai lived, five hundred enemies were struck down. In addition, Haman's ten sons were put to death.

Even though the new law stated they could take the spoil, none of the Jews touched the spoil for

themselves—not in Shushan nor in the rest of the provinces.

By that evening of the fateful day, the king learned that five hundred men had died in just the city of Shushan/Susa. As Esther came before him and touched his scepter, Xerxes said, “In Susa the capital the Jews have slain five hundred men and also the ten sons of Haman. What then have they done in the rest of the king’s provinces?! Now what more do you want? I will give it to you. Whatever it is that you request further shall be fulfilled.”

Well, Esther did have a further request. This is what she asked: “If it please the king, let the Jews in Shushan do tomorrow as they did today. Let them fight and slay and defend themselves. Also, I request that the dead bodies of Haman’s ten sons be hanged on gallows.”

“It shall be done as you request, Esther,” answered the king.

So on the fourteenth day of the twelfth month, the Jews in Shushan again gathered themselves together and slew another three hundred men in that city. Of course, this command couldn’t be spread throughout the one hundred twenty-seven provinces but only in the city of Shushan. Three hundred more men were struck down, and the bodies of Haman’s ten sons were hanged on gallows.

The day following the day of victory became a day of celebration. Oh, the Jews were happy! They feasted! They rejoiced! They gave gifts to one another! They gave gifts to the poor! This was a day of rest from their enemies, a time that was turned from sorrow into joy for them, from crying into a good day.

In fact, the Jews were so delighted to have this victory over their enemies that they decided to celebrate the victory every year. Mordecai and Esther wrote letters again and sent them throughout the kingdom to “save the date.” The new decree stated that every year all the Jews would celebrate the holiday called Purim in remembrance of the defeat of the Jews’ enemies. They celebrate Purim even to this day.

Why is it called Purim? Because the word *pur* means “the lot” as in casting lots. Who had cast lots? [Haman had cast lots.] Why had he cast lots? [To decide the day and the month on which the Jews would be destroyed.] Who was in charge of the lots when they were cast? [God.] God gave plenty of time for the turn of events that got rid of Haman and allowed the Jews to defend themselves. God was good. God is good.

The information to follow does not come from the Bible. Rather, it is a summary of the traditions of Purim. It is a happy celebration in February or March and lasts about three days.

On the first day, called “Esther’s Day,” the people fast from three hours before daybreak until after forty minutes after nightfall. That’s no breakfast, lunch, or supper until after the sun goes down. They are very precise about the time the fast begins and ends; for example, 6:22 a.m. and 5:23 p.m. Why do you think they fast? It is because Esther and the Jews fasted before she went before the king.

After the fast, for two days the Jews go to the synagogue for merrymaking. There they read the book (“scroll”) of Esther. This reading is called the Megillah. Whenever children hear the name of Haman, they hiss, shout, stamp their feet, and shake their groggers in order to drown out his evil name.

The next day they read the book of Esther again. Again, children make noise at the mention of Haman’s name. Showing friendship, people have their children take gifts of two different foods to others. More than usual, they give money gifts to the poor. That afternoon before nightfall (they must at least begin before nightfall) they eat a festive meal. Children and adults dress in costumes. Singing songs, telling jokes, and eating hamantaschen are a regular part of the festivities.

This great celebration honors God’s deliverance of the Jews from their enemies as recorded in the book of Esther. Even though God’s name is never mentioned in the book, anyone can see the hand of God in His protection of the Jews.

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:

One day, when Jesus returns again, all sin and wickedness will be done away. Believers will rejoice with exceeding great joy as we spend eternity with Jesus.

- God can turn our sorrow into joy using fantastic means to do it.
- It's a good thing to remember and celebrate with joy those events in which we can see that God has given us victory. We celebrate birthdays. How about celebrating "new birth" days? I know a man who celebrated the anniversary of his new birth by visiting the man who led him to the Lord.

Activities:

- Play dough: Hamantaschen
- Snack: Hamantaschen: a three-cornered filled cookie said to look like Haman's supposed hat. A recipe is found at [Easy Hamantaschen Recipe \(allrecipes.com\)](http://www.allrecipes.com).
- Sing the Purim songs found in the previous lessons.
- Review questions: (Game: A person who answers a question correctly may shake his or her grogger.)
 1. In what month was vengeance and destruction to take place? [Jewish calendar's February or March.]
 2. What man had become more and more powerful as the months had passed? [Mordecai.]
 3. Instead of just waiting to be destroyed by Haman's plan, what could the Jews do? [Defend themselves, even to the point of destroying the destroyers.]
 4. How many had died in Susa/Shusan? [Five hundred plus Haman's ten sons.]
 5. What is the name of the feast, celebrated even in our day, to remember the victory of the Jews over their enemies in Esther's time? [Purim.]
 6. Why is it called *Purim*, from the word *pur*? [*Pur* means casting lots. Haman had cast lots to determine the day of destruction.]
 7. Tell one thing that the people do during Purim. [Fast; read the book of Esther; shake their groggers when hearing the name of Haman; give gifts of food and money; have a festive meal; dress in costumes; sing; tell jokes; eat hammentaschen.]

Memory Verse[s]: Begin memorizing Psalm 1:1. Define *blessed* the condition of joy that is free from evil. The three words—*wicked*, *sinner*s, and *scoffers*—all describe someone in rebellion against God and His ways. Note the three verbs: *walks*, *stands*, *sits*. One who ends up sitting with scoffers (totally agreeing with them) first became friends with a wicked person and then stood around discussing evil. A person is joyful who avoids walking, standing, and then sitting with those who rebel against God.

- **1** Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
2 but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.
3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.
4 The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
6 for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Handwork:

- Color the picture at the end of this lesson or one at <http://www.torah tots.com/holidays/purim/purcolr.htm>.

to defend oneself

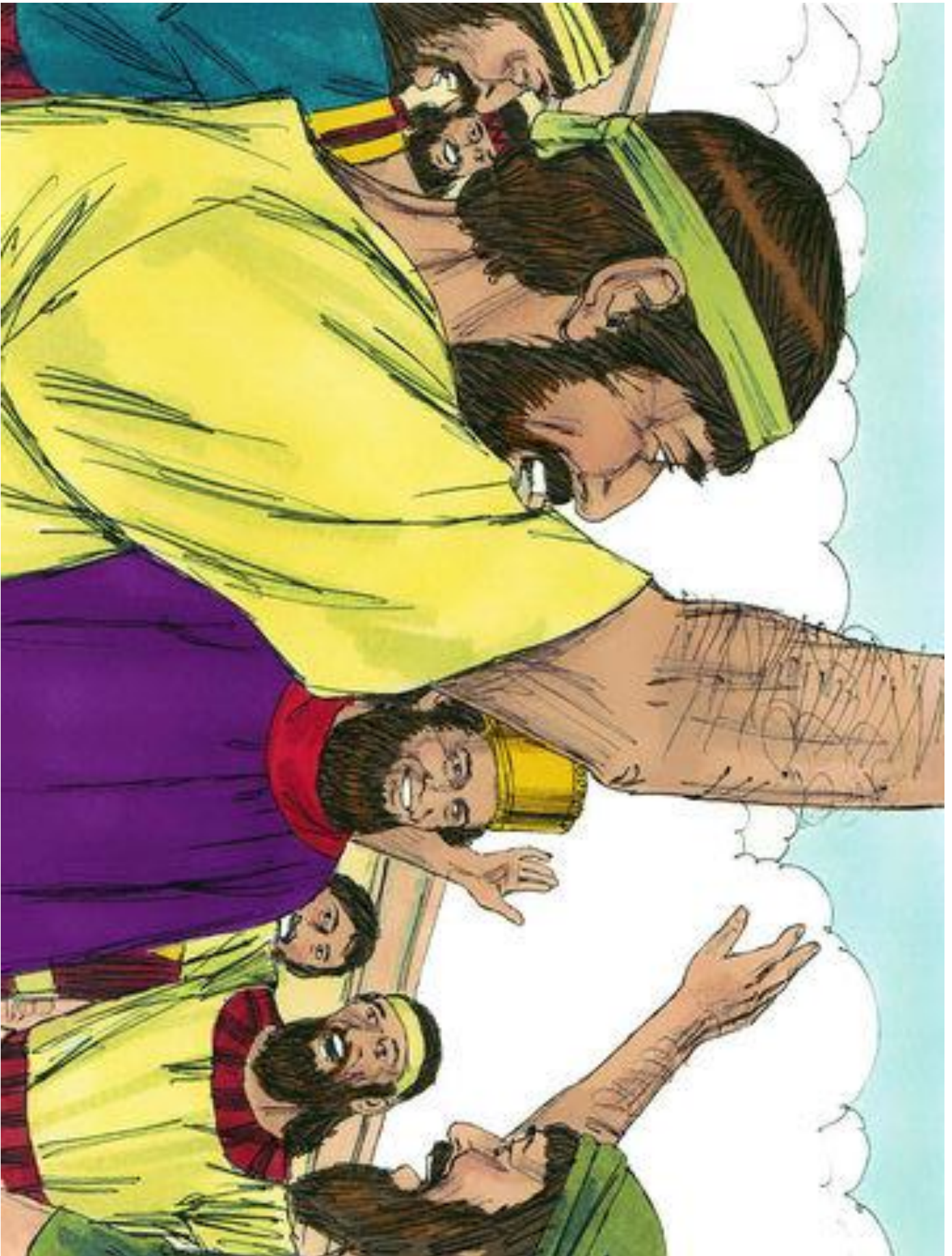
spoil/plunder/booty

to cast lots

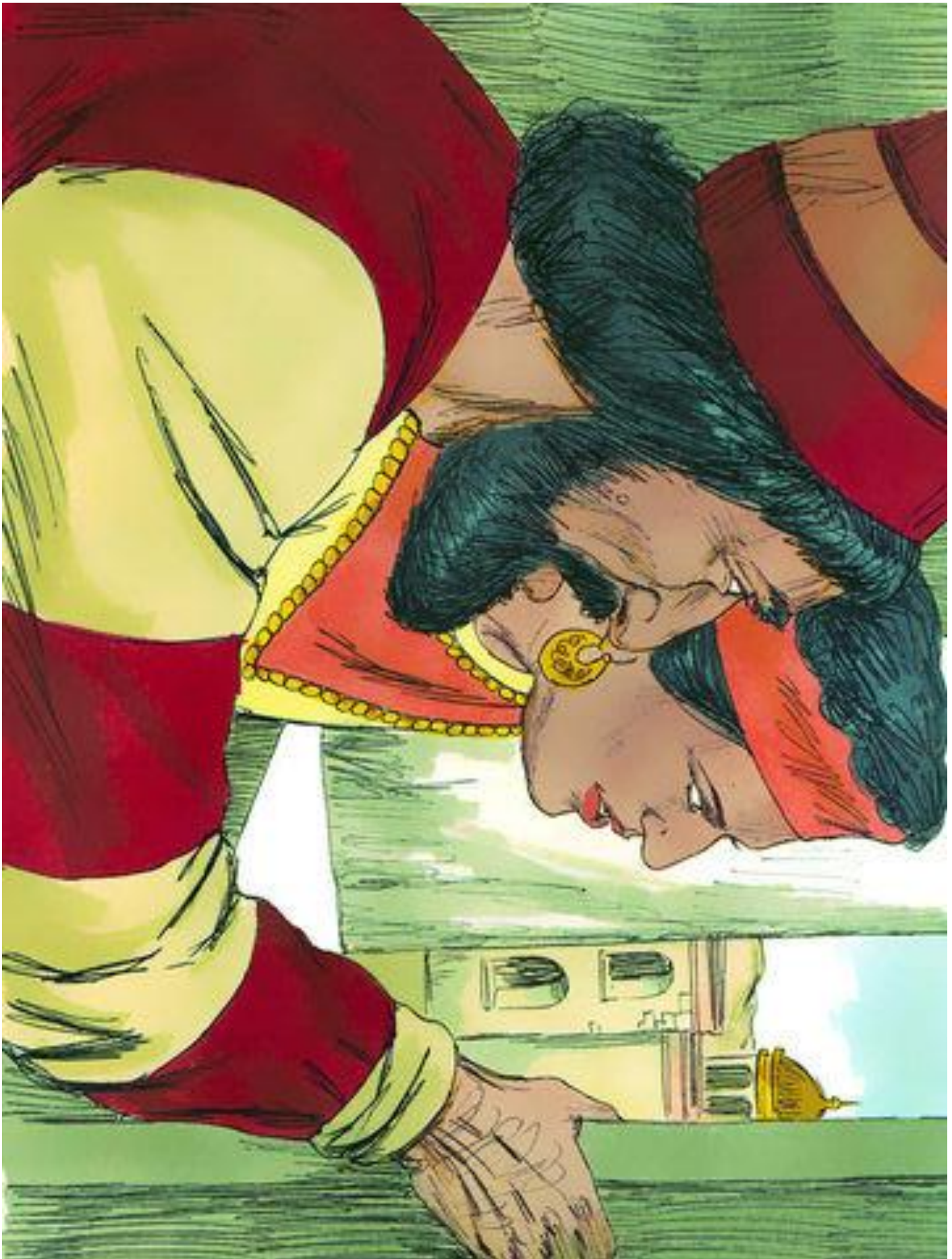
groggers



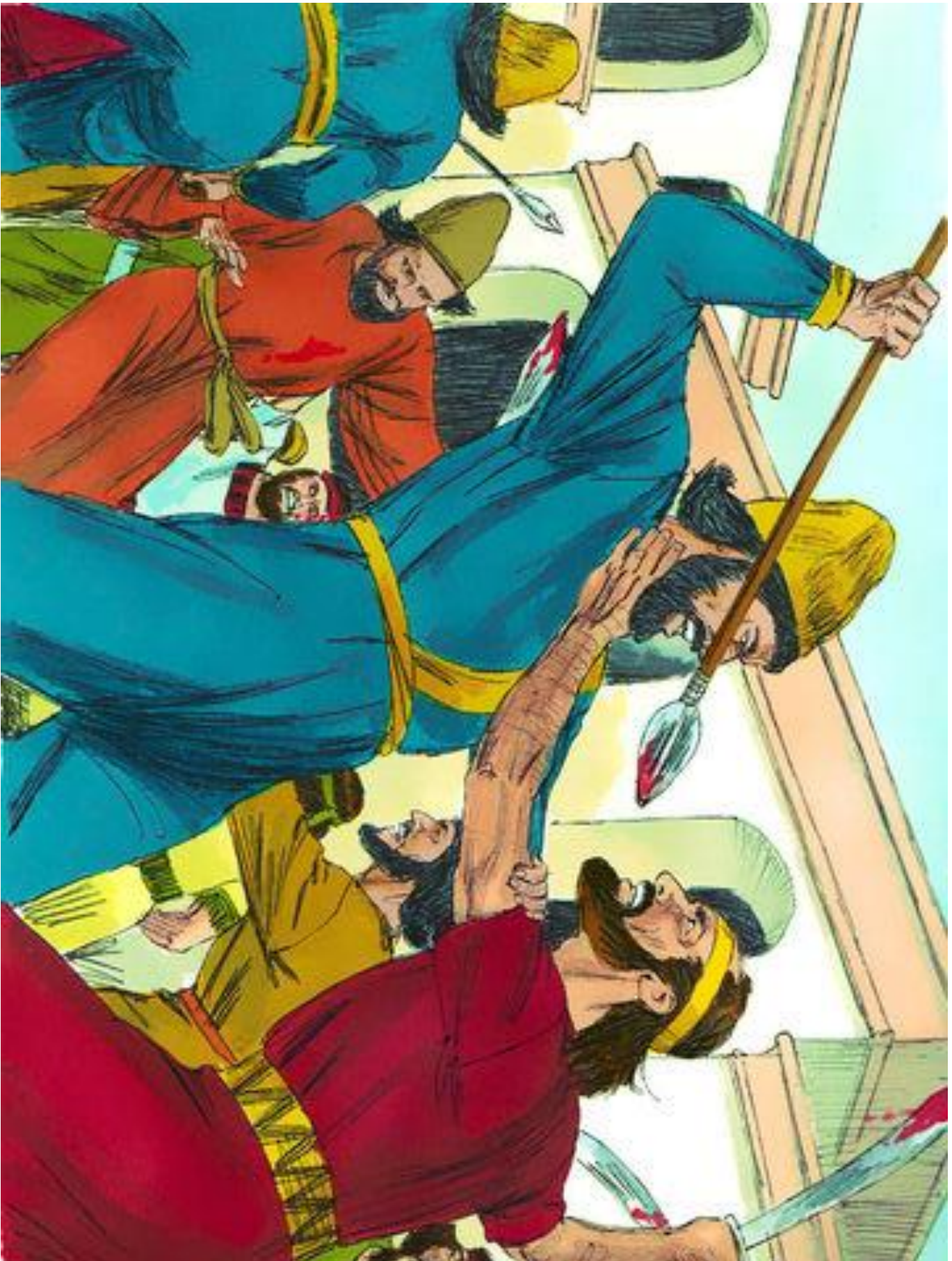
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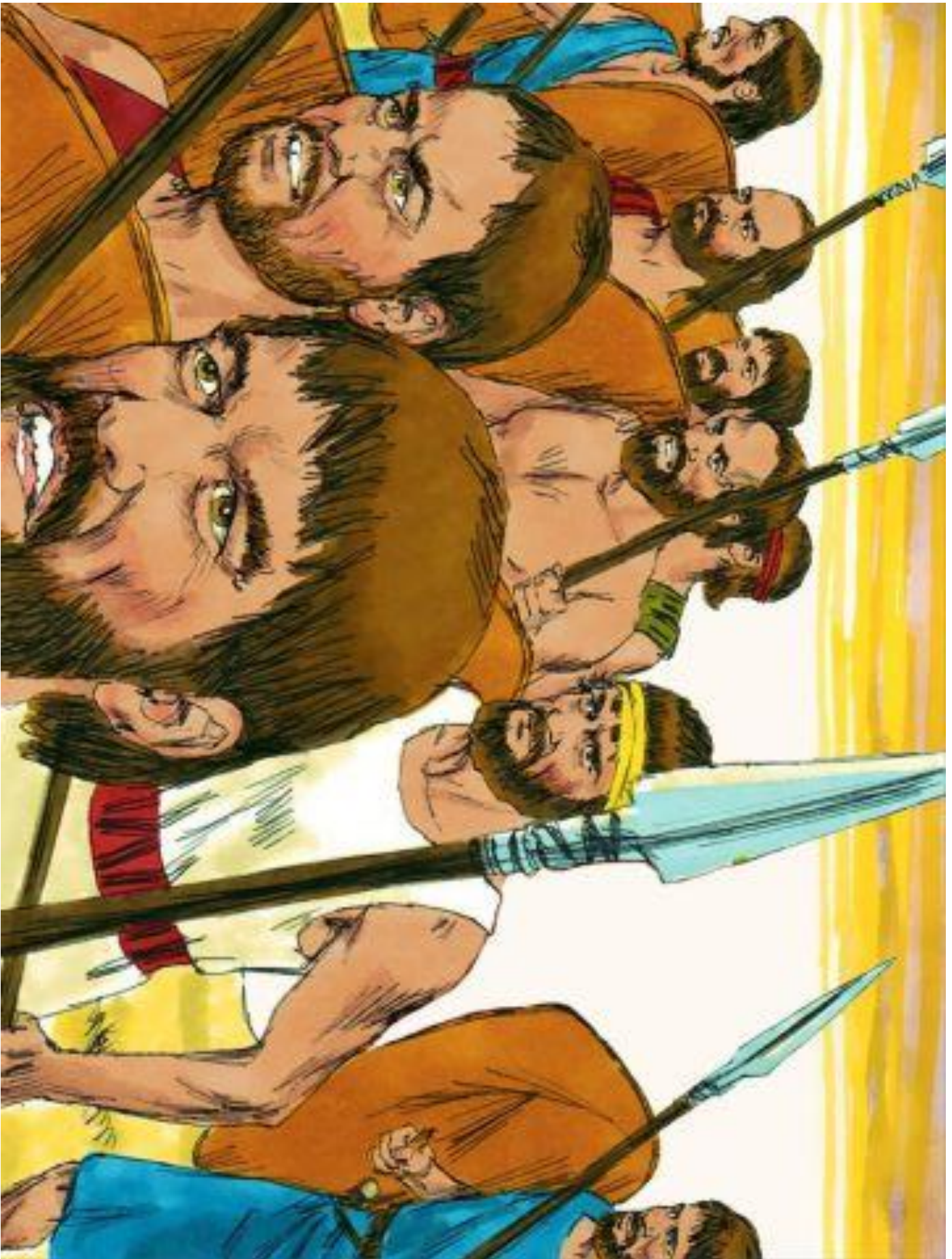
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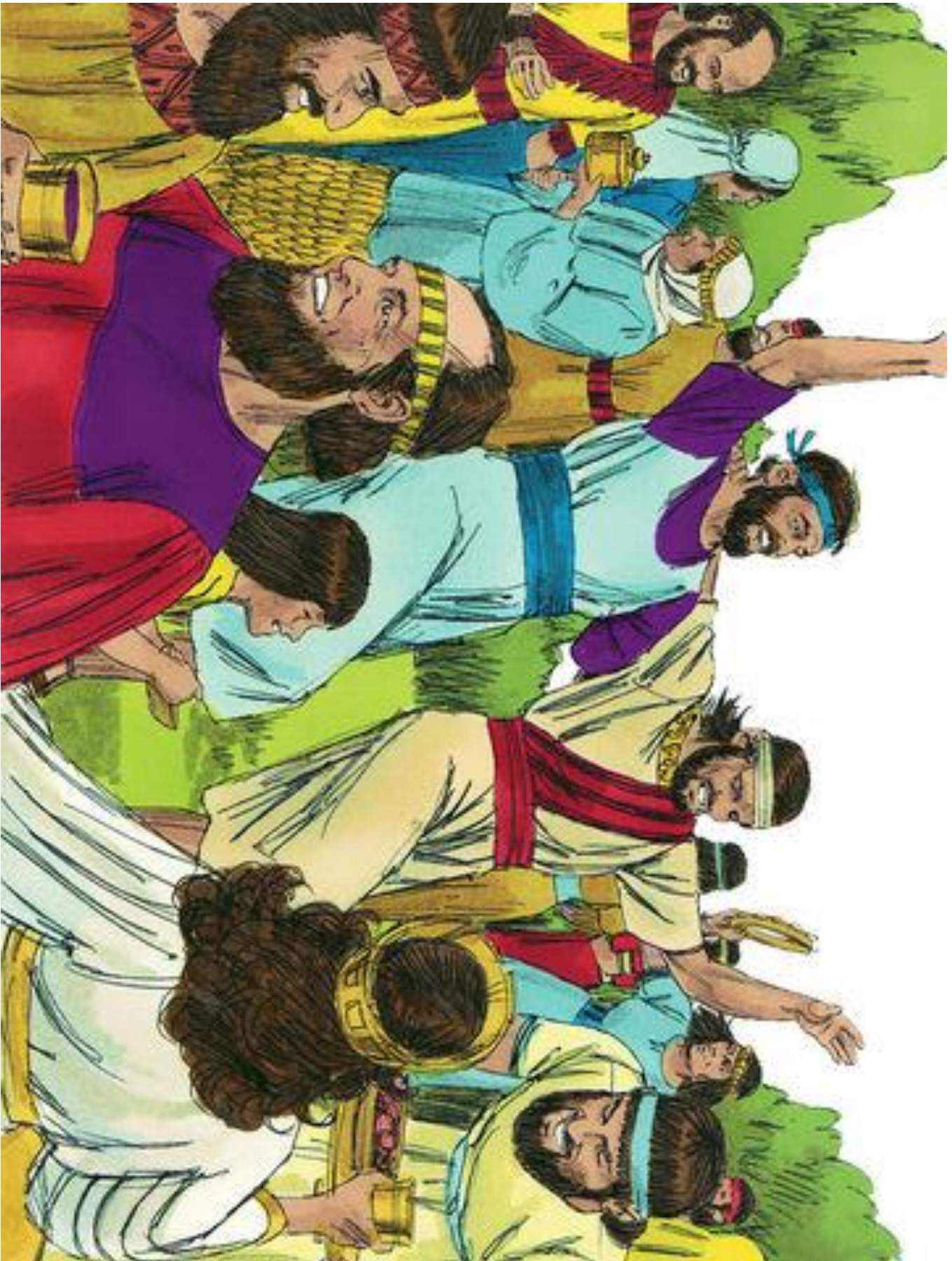
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A tomb in Iran believed to be the place where Mordecai and Esther are buried.