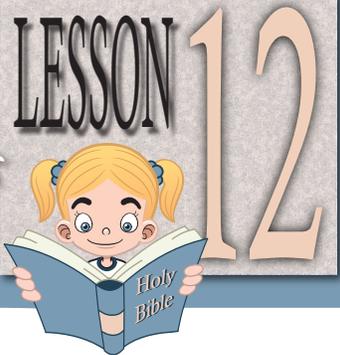


Esther Saves Her People



Book of Esther



Old Testament 8
Part 2: Exile and Post-Exile

SUNDAY MORNING

Old Testament 8 [Class Attendance Sheet](#) provided in activity sheets (NOTE: The document is interactive, allowing the teacher to type in the Class, Teacher, and the children's names.)

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:

Book of Esther

MEMORY WORK:

YOUNGER CHILDREN: "Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go" (Genesis 28:15a).

OLDER CHILDREN: "Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9b).

SONGS AND FINGERPLAYS (SEE END OF LESSON FOR WORDS):

A [song book](#) and [audio recordings](#) of many of the curriculum songs are available on the curriculum Web site.

- ["Esther"](#)
- ["Queen Esther"](#)

LESSON VISUALS AND TEACHING AIDS (NOTE ANY DISCLAIMERS):

- See [AP's Pinterest page](#) for ideas on bulletin boards, visuals, crafts, etc. [DISCLAIMER: Pins may sometimes need to be adjusted to be Scriptural.]
- [The Divided Kingdom 2 Bible fact cards](#) (provided under "O.T. 8 Bible Facts")
- "Summary of the Bible" from ["Kids Prep"](#) CD by Jeff Miller
- Pictures/drawings from any books listed under 3rd-4th Grader Pre-Class Activities/ Learning Centers
- Betty Lukens' felt pieces
- ["Maps of Babylonian and Persian Empires in Daniel's Time"](#) (provided in map section of curriculum Web site)
- Esther A Beka Flash-A-Card Series (DISCLAIMER: use the cards, not the lesson book)



PERSONAL APPLICATION:

When I am afraid or sad, I can be sure that God is always with me, so I can choose to be brave.

LESSON STARTS HERE

INTRODUCTION: (YOUNGER CHILDREN)

Review last week's lesson. Daniel and his friends had to be brave, even when it was very hard. Today we're going to learn about someone else who had to trust God and do something that was very brave.

INTRODUCTION: (OLDER CHILDREN)

Review last several week's lessons, focusing on how Daniel and his friends had to be brave. In our lesson today, we will learn how a brave young woman became a queen and was asked to trust in God and be brave!

HISTORICAL NOTE: The book of Esther took place during the years 483-473 B.C. (The events described took place between chapters 6 and 7 of the book of Ezra.) Ahasuerus [(Hebrew name) or Xerxes (Greek name)] ruled from 485-465 B.C. Esther became queen in 479 B.C. Ahasuerus was the son of Darius I and the grandson of Cyrus the Great.

According to ancient historical records, the first banquet mentioned in the book of Esther was held to impress all the nobles and officials of the kingdom so that they would back the king's planned invasion of Greece. Ahasuerus' father, Darius I, had been defeated by the Greeks in 490 and had planned to return for revenge; before he could return, he died. Ahasuerus had also suffered two other embarrassing defeats at the hands of the Greeks. He planned to finish what his father started, hoping to appeal to the "national pride" of those whose support he needed for a successful invasion. During the time of the search for a new queen, Ahasuerus was attempting another invasion of Greece—but again, was defeated.

The Bible doesn't tell us what happened to Vashti. Many historians think that Vashti was also called Amestris, and was the mother of Artaxerxes, king of the Persian Empire from 463-425 B.C. Artaxerxes was born in 483, the year of the first banquet mentioned in chapter one. It is possible that Vashti was pregnant at that time and therefore unwilling to put herself on public display before the crowd of drunken men (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, On-line, "Xerxes I"; *Barnes' Notes*, Esther 1:1-9; *BibleArchaeology.org*, "Thermopylae and the Book of Esther").

Historians believe that Vashti was a very powerful influence on her son during his reign. This likely indicates that Esther was either dead or had fallen "out of favor" after Ahasuerus died.

The names of both Mordecai and Esther are closely related to names of idols of Babylon (Marduk and Ishtar, respectively). The Jews had become so assimilated into the Babylonian, and then the Medo-Persian, cultures that it was not difficult for them to hide their religious identity if they wanted to. [continued]





HISTORICAL NOTE [cont.]: Xerxes was also the famous king whose enormous army attacked a small group of Greeks in the battle of Thermopylae. The movies “300” and “The 300 Spartans” portray the battle.

POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

1. The people of the Southern Kingdom of Judah (the Jews/Hebrews/Israelites) had lived in a land far from their homeland for about 70 years, under foreign kings. Their homeland had been devastated, and Jerusalem and the Temple had been destroyed. They were ruled by a Persian king named Ahasuerus (or Xerxes) for part of this time. Kings of ancient nations were known to have extravagant banquets, and Ahasuerus was no exception, holding a great banquet for 180 days! [This is the first of eight banquets described in the book of Esther.]
2. When this banquet was over, Ahasuerus decided to have another one that lasted seven days. At the same time, Queen Vashti was having a banquet for the women in her palace. The king decided to entertain his guests by showing off his beautiful wife. He and his guests had a great deal of wine to drink and were no doubt very rowdy. As one of the most powerful kings in the world, he thought he could do anything he wanted and make anyone obey him. But Vashti refused to come to the banquet and parade herself before a crowd of drunken men. Ahasuerus was very angry; the queen refusing to obey him made him look foolish. He decided that Vashti would no longer be queen and ordered his servants to begin a search for a new queen to replace her. The king sent orders throughout his huge kingdom that the most beautiful young women were to come to his palace. [It probably took three or four years for the king’s orders to be carried, i.e., there are three or four years between chapters 1 and 2.]
3. A Jew named Mordecai, a gatekeeper at the city gates, heard about the king’s desire for a new queen. His uncle and aunt had died years before, and Mordecai had taken their young daughter Esther to raise as his own daughter. [Esther is the Persian word meaning “star;” her Hebrew name, Hadassah, means “myrtle.”] He took Esther (his cousin) to the palace to see if she could become the new queen. He warned her not to tell anyone that she was a Jew.
4. Esther (and the other girls) was prepared for 12 months, with oils and perfumes, to be brought before the king. When Esther was taken, Mordecai saw very little of her. But he walked in front of the building where the women were kept every day and waited for word on how she was doing. When Ahasuerus looked at the young women who were brought to the palace, he chose Esther to be his new queen.
5. In the capital city of Susa (or Shushan), there was a government official named Haman. He was a very wealthy man, and he was in charge of a lot of the king’s business. The king ordered that people bow down to Haman wherever he went. But Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman, and this made Haman very angry! When he found out that Mordecai was a Jew, Haman decided to try to get rid, not only of Mordecai, but also all of the Jews in the entire kingdom!
6. Haman went to the king and told him that a certain group of people, the Jews, were willfully disobeying the laws of the kingdom and should be punished. He asked the king to sign a letter to be sent throughout the kingdom that on a certain day twelve months later, all the Jews would be killed. The king agreed and sent messengers throughout the kingdom to deliver these special orders. The entire capital city was in an uproar because so many Jews lived there. Many Jews had been born and raised in Susa and didn’t know anything about Palestine (Canaan) where the Jews had come from.

7. When Mordecai heard about the king's order and the planned massacre of his people, he became very sad and upset. He tore his clothes as people did back then when they were extremely distressed and sad; he wept and wailed throughout the city and sat in sackcloth and ashes—another thing people did when they were that upset. Esther did not know why Mordecai was acting this way and sent servants to find out what was wrong with him. He sent a message back to the queen telling her what would happen to her people—and to her. He urged Esther to plead with the king to change the law.
8. Esther responded to Mordecai, reminding him that if anyone who had not been called by the king tried to go before him, he would be killed if the king did not choose to hold out his golden scepter to him to allow him to come to him. Esther told him that the king had not called for her in a month.
9. Mordecai sent word back to Esther warning her that all of the Jews, including her, would be killed if she did not go to the king. Mordecai knew that the Jews would be saved one way or the other, but he also believed in God's providence. He told her, "[W]ho knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (3:14). [With the older children, read together Esther 4:13-14 and Esther's reply in verse 16.]



RECOMMENDED READING FOR TEACHERS: See the article "[God's Providence and the Problem of Evil](#)" by Kyle Butt on the Apologetics Press Web site for a study of biblical providence.

10. Esther spent three days fasting, and asked Mordecai to encourage the rest of the Jews in Shushan to do the same. They were, no doubt, praying to God as well.
11. Esther went to the king and waited outside the throne room. The king **did** hold out his scepter to Esther, and he offered to give her anything she wanted, up to half of his kingdom. She explained that she would like to invite Haman and him to a banquet she'd prepared that very day. This, no doubt, made Haman feel very important and more prideful.
12. At the banquet the king asked Esther what troubled her and again offered to give her anything that she wanted up to half of the kingdom. She asked only for Haman and him to come to another banquet the next day. This made Haman feel even more proud, that he would be invited, not just to one private banquet with the king and queen, but **two!** [Remind older children about the pride of Belshazzar and what happened to him!]
13. As Haman walked by the king's gate again, Mordecai still didn't "stand or tremble" before Haman. So Haman's anger continued to grow against Mordecai and, with the advice of his family, he built a gallows to be used specifically to kill Mordecai. He would suggest to the king the next day that Mordecai be killed on it.
14. That very night, the king could not sleep and asked for some old records to be read to him. Providentially, of all the nights he couldn't sleep, and of all the records that could have been brought to the king, the king read the record that told of how Mordecai had uncovered a plot to kill him and found that nothing had been done to honor Mordecai.
15. The next day, Haman came to suggest to the king to kill Mordecai, but instead, the king asked Haman what he thought should be done for someone who the king wanted to honor. Haman, full of pride, assumed the king was talking about himself. Instead, the king wanted Haman to bestow the same honors that he had suggested on Mordecai. The king ordered Haman to lead Mordecai through the streets on the king's horse, wearing royal robes and a crown. Haman's plan had backfired, and now he was terribly angry and embarrassed!

16. At the second banquet, the king again asked Esther what she wished from him. This time she asked the king to save her life and the lives of her people, thus telling him for the first time that she was a Jew. The king was so very angry that someone would plan to harm his beautiful queen. When she told him Haman was the evil man who wanted to have the Jews destroyed, the king ordered that Haman be killed on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai.
17. Because the first order (to kill the Jews) was sealed with the king's signet ring and therefore could not be "undone," the king gave permission to Esther and Mordecai to write another order to be sent throughout the kingdom, signed by the king. [The second order was sent about two months after the first.] The new order gave the Jews the right to defend themselves if anyone attacked them. The Jews had a great celebration that became known as the Feast of Purim. Mordecai told the Jews to give gifts to the poor as part of their celebration. The Jews today still celebrate this feast for two days (in February or March) each year, at which time the book of Esther is read, special food is eaten, and gifts are exchanged.
18. Sometimes going to the doctor, staying with a new babysitter, spending the night at a camp or a friend's house for the first time, or starting a new school year, etc., can frighten us. Whenever we need to be brave, we can remember brave Queen Esther. She listened to the advice of Mordecai. She knew that he would not ask her to do something she could not do. And remember that Esther prayed for three days before going to the king. Even a queen knew that she could depend on God to help her to be brave.



RECOMMENDED READING FOR TEACHERS: See the article "[Questions and Answers: Why is the Book of Esther in the Bible?](#)" by Kyle Butt on the Apologetics Press Web site for a response to the argument that Esther does not belong in the Bible since it does not even mention God.

PRE-CLASS ACTIVITIES/LEARNING CENTERS (TO BE USED AS CHILDREN ARE ARRIVING—BEFORE CLASS, AND UP TO THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES OF CLASS; OR AS HOMEWORK):

- Click here for complete [Activity Book](#).

Ages 2-5:

- "[Esther Saves Her People Coloring Sheet](#)" (provided in activity sheets)
- Jewelry: Help the children make necklaces with cereal or macaroni that has been spray-painted gold and strung on yarn. Give each child a paper crown which they can decorate with stickers. Help them make scepters of paper towel rolls painted gold. ("[Crown Cutouts](#)" provided in activity sheets)
- Placemats: On 9x12 sheets of construction paper write "I can be brave like Queen Esther." Make crown stamps out of sponges or potatoes, and let the children decorate their placemats with these stamps. If possible, laminate the placemats.
- Banquet: Bring fruits, cheese, bread, etc. to class. Jews today share triangle-shaped cookies called Hamantaschen Cookies (recipe below). They are three-cornered because the Jews have a tradition that Haman wore a three-cornered hat. Make and bring the cookies to class, and let the children add icing and sprinkles to their cookies.
- Ask a young woman from your congregation to dress up as Esther and tell the story in her own words.

1st–2nd Graders:

- Banquet: Bring fruits, cheese, bread, etc. to class. Jews today share triangle-shaped cookies called Hamantaschen Cookies (recipe below). They are three-cornered because the Jews have a tradition that Haman wore a three-cornered hat. Make and bring the cookies to class, and let the children add icing and sprinkles to their cookies.
- Ask a young woman from your congregation to dress up as Esther and tell the story in her own words. **Or** let the children role play the story.
- Write review questions over this lesson on the backs of paper crowns. Tape them onto the floor, and let the kids throw a beanbag onto a crown, then answer the question on the back. The game can be played for individual or team points. (“[Crown Cutouts](#)” and “[O.T. 8 Review Questions](#)” provided in activity sheets)
- Play Bible Bowling: Divide the class into two teams. Use either plastic bowling pins (with a review question taped on the back of each pin) or toilet paper tubes (with review questions inside). Let each child have a turn knocking down a pin or tube (lined up in a straight line) with a soft ball. If he answers correctly the question on/in the pin, his team gets a point. (“[The Book of Esther Clues](#)” provided in activity sheets)

3rd–4th Graders:

- Banquet: Bring fruits, cheese, bread, etc. to class. Jews today share triangle-shaped cookies called Hamantaschen Cookies (recipe below). They are three-cornered because the Jews have a tradition that Haman wore a three-cornered hat. Make and bring the cookies to class, and let the children add icing and sprinkles to their cookies.
- Ask a young woman from your congregation to dress up as Esther and tell the story in her own words. **Or** let the children role play the story.
- Write review questions over this lesson on the backs of paper crowns. Tape them onto the floor, and let the kids throw a beanbag onto a crown, then answer the question on the back. The game can be played for individual or team points. (“[Crown Cutouts](#)” and “[O.T. 8 Review Questions](#)” provided in activity sheets)
- Play Bible Bowling: Divide the class into two teams. Use either plastic bowling pins (with a review question taped on the back of each pin) or toilet paper tubes (with review questions inside). Let each child have a turn knocking down a pin or tube (lined up in a straight line) with a soft ball. If he answers correctly the question on/in the pin, his team gets a point. (“[The Book of Esther Clues](#)” provided in activity sheets)
- Have the children read the following:
 - Esther [This could be assigned Sunday, to be completed by Wednesday.] Print out copies of the Esther quiz from AP’s [Advanced Bible Reader](#) site for the children to take.
 - *Discovery* magazine article: “Esther: Queen of Courage,” [December, 2001](#)
 - *Elijah and the Great Prophets*, by Joy Melissa Jensen, Contemporary Bible Series, Scandinavia Publishing (DISCLAIMERS: p. 20—the text says a “great fish,” not a “whale”; p. 36—skip the phrase “like the one in his dream”; p. 49—skip the last two sentences; p. 61—change the first sentence of the second paragraph to “So a new law was written that protected the Jews.”)
 - *It’s Scary, God!* by Benrei Huang, Standard Publishing
 - *Bible Heroes: Esther*, by Jason Parish, Watertown Press (DISCLAIMER: remove “and praying” on p. 7)
 - *Queen Esther Helps God’s People*, by Kelly Pulley, Zonderkidz I Can Read! Series (DISCLAIMER: skip p. 11)

- *Just in Time Esther*, by Carol Wedeven, Arch books
- *Adventure Bible: Brave Queen Esther*, by David Miles, Zonderkidz I Can Read! Series

Hamantaschen Cookies Recipe

1 cup oil	1 ½ cup sugar
4 eggs	2 tablespoons vanilla
2 tablespoons baking powder	5 ½ cups flour
6 ounces preserves (any flavor)	

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease and lightly flour cookie sheets.

Combine the oil, sugar, eggs, vanilla, and baking powder in a large bowl. Mix well. Add flour a little at a time. Blend well.

Roll out the dough ¼ inch thick on a floured surface. Cut two-inch circles with a cookie cutter or cup. Spoon ½ to 1 teaspoon of preserves in the center of each circle. Bring three edges of each circle to the center to form a triangle. Pinch edges together.

Bake for 25 to 30 minutes or until golden brown. Cool before serving.

SONGS:

“ESTHER”

Author: Jewel Kendrick

(Tune: “I’m a Little Teapot”)

[See *Sing-A-Story* Vol. 1, Old Testament, by Jewel Kendrick]

“QUEEN ESTHER” ([Click to Hear](#))

Author: Unknown*

(Tune: “Good Morning Song”)

(Teacher:) Queen Esther,

(Children:) Queen Esther,

(Teacher:) She heard bad news.

(Children:) Oh, no!

(All:) She talked to the king, and she saved all the Jews!

*Author Unknown: Please contact us through the feedback button for this lesson if you are aware of any copyright information for this song.

*** IF YOU HAVE SUGGESTIONS PERTAINING TO THIS LESSON, PLEASE CLICK THE “SUGGESTION” BUTTON BESIDE THE BUTTON FOR THIS LESSON ON THE CURRICULUM WEB SITE.



Esther Saves Her People

LESSON 12

Book of Esther



Old Testament 8
Part 2: Exile and Post-Exile

WEDNESDAY EVENING

Old Testament 8 [Class Attendance Sheet](#) provided in activity sheets (NOTE: The document is interactive, allowing the teacher to type in the Class, Teacher, and the children's names.)

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:

Book of Esther

MEMORY WORK:

YOUNGER CHILDREN: "Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go" (Genesis 28:15a).

OLDER CHILDREN: "Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9b).

SONGS AND FINGERPLAYS (SEE END OF SUNDAY'S LESSON FOR WORDS):

A [song book](#) and [audio recordings](#) of many of the curriculum songs are available on the curriculum Web site.

- ["Esther"](#)
- ["Queen Esther"](#)

LESSON VISUALS AND TEACHING AIDS (NOTE ANY DISCLAIMERS):

- See [AP's Pinterest page](#) for ideas on bulletin boards, visuals, crafts, etc. [DISCLAIMER: Pins may sometimes need to be adjusted to be Scriptural.]
- [The Divided Kingdom 2 Bible fact cards](#) (provided under "O.T. 8 Bible Facts")
- "Summary of the Bible" from "[Kids Prep](#)" CD by Jeff Miller
- Pictures/drawings from any books listed under 3rd-4th Grader Pre-Class Activities/ Learning Centers
- Betty Lukens' felt pieces
- "[Maps of Babylonian and Persian Empires in Daniel's Time](#)" (provided in map section of curriculum Web site)
- Esther A Beka Flash-A-Card Series (DISCLAIMER: use the cards, not the lesson book)



PERSONAL APPLICATION:

When I am afraid or sad, I can be sure that God is always with me, so I can choose to be brave.

INTRODUCTION:

Review [O.T. 8 Bible Fact Flash Cards](#) (provided under “O.T. 8 Bible Facts” on curriculum Web site)

POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

Review Sunday’s lesson. (See [O.T. 8 Review Questions](#) for example questions.)

Write the names of the main characters of the book of Esther on the board. Write clues about the main characters on index cards (example clues below). Let each child choose a card and put it on the board (with tape or a magnet) under the name of the correct character. (“[The Book of Esther Clues](#)” provided in activity sheets)

PRE-CLASS ACTIVITIES/LEARNING CENTERS (TO BE USED AS CHILDREN ARE ARRIVING—**BEFORE** CLASS, AND UP TO THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES OF CLASS; OR AS HOMEWORK):

- See Sunday morning’s lesson.

*** IF YOU HAVE SUGGESTIONS PERTAINING TO THIS LESSON, PLEASE CLICK THE “SUGGESTION” BUTTON BESIDE THE BUTTON FOR THIS LESSON ON THE CURRICULUM WEB SITE.

