



Lesson 159B

Esther Saves the Jews – Part 2

Story Elements

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Setting: circa 474-473, in Susa, Persia• Main Characters: God, Esther, Vashti, Haman, Mordecai, and Ahasuerus• Plot: Esther's courage saves her people from certain destruction.• Key word(s): "for such a ____ as this" (4:14) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Climax: Esther 4:16 <i>Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.</i> |
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Background (1:1-3:6)

1. Chronologically, Esther's story takes place between Ezra 6:22 and 7:1.
 - (a) Ahasuerus divorced his queen, Vashti, after she refused to be subjected to public gawking; Esther was later chosen from amongst the royal harem to be the new queen of Persia.
 - (b) Esther's cousin, Mordecai, was a civil leader who kept his and Esther's Jewish origins a secret. When Mordecai refused to pay homage to Haman, the Agagite, his Jewishness was discovered, and Haman began to plot a way to have all the Jews destroyed in the kingdom.

Casting the Pur

2. (3:7) In order to determine the most opportune time to execute his devious plot, Haman and his cohorts would cast lots (called *Pur*). Lots were like modern ____, and they were often used to make decisions.
 - (a) (3:8-11) When *Pur* gave a favorable indication, Haman approached Ahasuerus regarding a rebellious people group. Haman suggested that this insurrectionist race be destroyed, and their wealth plundered. Ahasuerus agreed and issued the decree.
 - (b) (3:12-15) As the decree was circulated throughout all the provinces, the city of Susa was thrown into confusion – even the non-Jewish residents were shocked at the king's decision. The decree was to be fulfilled on _____, 473 BC.

Counting the Cost

3. (3:1-11) When Mordecai learned of the decree, he wept publicly and rent his clothes. He sent a message to Esther, explaining the dilemma and asking her to appear before the king and plead for the lives of her fellow Jews.
 - (a) Esther was at first hesitant to do so because it was a crime punishable by death to appear before the king without his _____; additionally, the king had not sent for Esther in thirty days, which implied to her the king grew disinterested.
 - (b) (3:12-17) Mordecai reminded Esther that she was not safe behind palace walls. He also encouraged her that the Jews would certainly be preserved but warned that her refusal to help would bring destruction on her family. Esther agreed and requested that Mordecai and the other Jews of Susa ____ for her three days, after which she would risk her life and go to the king.

Constructing the Gallows

4. (5:1-8) Three days later, Esther appeared before the king and found favor in his sight. She invited the king and Haman to a _____.
5. (5:9-14) Haman was giddy with how things were going for him; the only sour note in his life was that Mordecai was still breathing. Haman's wife, Zeresh, suggested he have gallows constructed _____ feet high upon which to hang Mordecai, and then to ask the king for permission to execute him.
6. (6:1-11) That night, the king was restless, and called for the royal records to be read. In so doing, he was reminded of _____ vital role in saving the king from an earlier assassination attempt. The king decided that Mordecai should be rewarded for his service, and when Haman came to the palace, the king asked, "What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour?"
 - (a) Haman assumed the king was referring to him, and so he prescribed the most elaborate public ceremony.
 - (b) (6:12-13) Haman was devastated by the extreme turn of events; even his family and friends interpreted them as an omen of his coming _____.

Cause for Celebration

7. (7:1-10) Haman attended the feast hosted by Esther. It was then that Esther informed the king of Haman's deceptive plot to destroy her and her people. Infuriated, Ahasuerus had Haman hung on the _____ he had constructed for Mordecai.
 - (a) (8:3-8) Esther then pleaded with the king to save her people by issuing a new decree. The king agreed, and Mordecai was given the privilege of writing the edict.
 - (b) (9:20-32) To mark the occasion, Mordecai and Esther issued a proclamation that the Jews should celebrate their deliverance every year on the 14th and 15th days of Adar (_____).

Application

8. The book of Esther is unique in that it teaches us to see how God moves "behind the scenes." What special acts of providence can you find in the story of Esther? _____

Proverbs 16:33 The lot is cast into the lap; But the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.

Notes: _____

Answer Key: Key word(s): "time" • 2. dice; b) March 7 • 3. a) invitation; b) fast • 4. feast • 5. 75 • 6. Mordecai's; b) destruction • 7. gallows; b) March • answers vary

How to use this worksheet for personal Bible study: (1) Read the Bible passage given in the **Story Elements** section. (2) Read through the worksheet and try to fill in the blanks without looking at the **Answer Key**. (3) Check your answers with the key and make the necessary corrections. Keep in mind that some answers are a matter of opinion, and often more than one answer is correct. (4) Write down your own thoughts, applications, and questions for further study in the **Notes** section.