

Esther Saves her People

Storyteller: *Hold Esther and Haman and show them to the children:* You have heard the story about Esther, the refugee girl

Esther had a servant named Hathach, who had been given to her by the king. So she called him in and said, "Find out what's wrong with Mordecai and why he's acting this way."

Hathach went to Mordecai in the city square in front of the palace gate, and Mordecai told him everything that had happened. He also told him how much money Haman had promised to add to the king's treasury, if all the Jews were killed.

Mordecai gave Hathach a copy of the orders for the murder of the Jews and told him that these had been read in Susa. He said, "Show this to Esther and explain what it means. Ask her to go to the king and beg him to have pity on her people, the Jews!"

Hathach went back to Esther and told her what Mordecai had said. She answered, "Tell Mordecai there is a law about going in to see the king, and all his officials and his people know about this law. Anyone who goes in to see the king without being invited by him will be put to death. The only way that anyone can be saved is for the king to hold out the gold scepter to that person. And it's been thirty days since he has asked for me."

When Mordecai was told what Esther had said, he sent back this reply, "Don't think that you will escape being killed with the rest of the Jews, just because you live in the king's palace. If you don't speak up now, we will somehow get help, but you and your family will be killed. It could be that you were made queen for a time like this!"

Esther sent a message to Mordecai, saying, "Bring together all the Jews in Susa and tell them to go without eating for my sake! Don't eat or drink for three days and nights. My servant girls and I will do the same. Then I will go in to see the king, even if it means I must die."

Mordecai did everything Esther told him to do.

Three days later, Esther dressed in her royal robes and went to the inner court of the palace in front of the throne. The king was sitting there, facing the open doorway. He was happy to see Esther, and he held out the gold scepter to her.

When Esther came up and touched the tip of

who became Queen of Persia, and about Haman who wanted to kill all of God's People. *Set up the Persia back-stand still with the Gallows folded back. Place Haman in front of the central "palace" part of the backstand, to the left of the doorway, and pick up Mordecai.*

The Queen's cousin, Mordecai, told Queen Esther about the law Haman had made, that the Jews were to be killed. He asked Esther to go to the king and beg him to have pity on her people, the Jews!"

But Esther told Mordecai, "there is a law, that anyone who goes in to see the king without being invited by him will be killed, unless the king holds out the gold scepter to that person. And the king has not invited me for thirty days."

Mordecai said, "It could be that you were made queen for a time like this!" For three days, Mordecai and Esther and all the Jews prayed and fasted.

Put Mordecai over to the right leaning against the backdrop (the refugee's cottage.) Place Xerxes just inside the main doorway of the Persia backdrop, so the children can see him through the doorway. You can stand him up by leaning him against your legs, or use a bit of blue-tack to stand him up. Move Esther toward the doorway. Then Esther dressed in her royal robes and went to see the king. The king was happy to see Esther, and he held out the gold scepter to her. *Touch Esther with the sceptre, and then put it down next to Xerxes.*

When Esther came up and touched the tip of the scepter, the king said, "Esther, what brings you here? Just ask, and I will give you as much as half of my kingdom." Esther answered, "Your Majesty, please come with Haman to a dinner I will prepare for you later today."

Story Materials

- Dolls:
 - Esther (with crown)
 - Mordecai (with sceptre)
 - Xerxes
 - Haman
 - Persia back-stand

Tray, basket or shallow open box to hold the story

the scepter, the king said, "Esther, what brings you here? Just ask, and I will give you as much as half of my kingdom."

Esther answered, "Your Majesty, please come with Haman to a dinner I will prepare for you later today."

The king said to his servants, "Hurry and get Haman, so we can accept Esther's invitation."

The king and Haman went to Esther's dinner, and while they were drinking wine, the king asked her, "What can I do for you? Just ask, and I will give you as much as half of my kingdom."

Esther replied, "Your Majesty, if you really care for me and are willing to do what I want, please come again tomorrow with Haman to the dinner I will prepare for you. At that time I will answer Your Majesty's question."

Haman was feeling great as he left. But when he saw Mordecai at the palace gate, he noticed that Mordecai did not stand up or show him any respect. This made Haman really angry, but he did not say a thing.

When Haman got home, he called together his friends and his wife Zeresh and started bragging about his great wealth and all his sons. He told them the many ways that the king had honored him and how all the other officials and leaders had to respect him. Haman added, "That's not all! Besides the king himself, I'm the only person Queen Esther invited for dinner. She has also invited the king and me to dinner tomorrow. But none of this makes me happy, as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the palace gate."

Haman's wife and friends said to him, "Have a tower built about seventy-five feet high, and tomorrow morning ask the king to hang Mordecai there. Then later, you can have dinner with the king and enjoy yourself."

This seemed like a good idea to Haman, and he had the tower built.

That night the king could not sleep, and he had a servant read him the records of what had happened since he had been king. 2 When the servant read how Mordecai had kept Bigthana and Teresh from killing the king, the king asked, "What has been done to reward Mordecai for this?"

"Nothing, Your Majesty!" the king's servants replied.

About this time, Haman came in to ask the king to have Mordecai hanged on the tower he had built. The king saw him and asked, "Who is that man waiting in front of the throne room?"

Move Esther over in front of the left palace doorway (the women's quarters.) Put Haman and Xerxes on either side of her. The king and Haman went to Esther's dinner. While they were drinking wine, the king asked her, "What can I do for you? Just ask, and I will give you as much as half of my kingdom." Esther replied, "Your Majesty, please come again tomorrow with Haman to the dinner I will prepare for you.

Move Haman from your left to right in front of the backdrop, passing in front of Mordecai. Haman was feeling great as he left. But when he saw Mordecai who did not bow down to him, Haman became very angry.

Pick up Haman in both hands and hold him out to the children. When Haman got home, he called together his friends and his wife Zeresh and started bragging about how all the other officials and leaders had to respect him. Haman added, "That's not all! Besides the king himself, I'm the only person Queen Esther invited for dinner. She has also invited the king and me to dinner tomorrow. But none of this makes me happy, as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the palace gate."

Haman's wife and friends said to him, "Have a tower built about seventy-five feet high, and ask the king to hang Mordecai there.

This seemed like a good idea to Haman, and he had the tower built. *Fold forward the Gallows section of the backdrop.*

Move Haman back to Esther's side (Xerxes is still there). The king and Haman went to Esther's second dinner, and the king again said, "Esther, what can I do for you? Just ask, and I will give you as much as half of my kingdom!"

Esther answered, "Your Majesty, please save me and my people! A reward has been promised to anyone who kills my people!

"Who would dare to do such a thing?" the king asked.

Esther replied, "That evil Haman!"

The king was very angry. One of the king's servants, said, "Your Majesty, Haman built a tower seventy-five feet high beside his house, so he could hang Mordecai on it. And Mordecai is the very one who spoke up and saved your life."

The king's servants answered, "Your Majesty, it is Haman."

"Have him come in," the king commanded.

When Haman entered the room, the king asked him, "What should I do for a man I want to honor?"

Haman was sure that he was the one the king wanted to honor. 7 So he replied, "Your Majesty, if you wish to honor a man, 8 have someone bring him one of your own robes and one of your own horses with a fancy headdress. Have one of your highest officials place your robe on this man and lead him through the streets on your horse, while someone shouts, 'This is how the king honors a man!'"

The king replied, "Hurry and do just what you have said! Don't forget a thing. Get the robe and the horse for Mordecai the Jew, who is on duty at the palace gate!"

Haman got the king's robe and put it on Mordecai. He led him through the city on the horse and shouted as he went, "This is how the king honors a man!"

Afterwards, Mordecai returned to his duties at the palace gate, and Haman hurried home, hiding his face in shame. Haman told his wife and friends what had happened. Then his wife and his advisors said, "If Mordecai is a Jew, this is just the beginning of your troubles! You will end up a ruined man." They were still talking, when the king's servants came and quickly took Haman to the dinner that Esther had prepared.

The king and Haman were dining with Esther and drinking wine during the second dinner, when the king again said, "Esther, what can I do for you? Just ask, and I will give you as much as half of my kingdom!"

Esther answered, "Your Majesty, if you really care for me and are willing to help, you can save me and my people. That's what I really want, because a reward has been promised to anyone who kills my people. Your Majesty, if we were merely going to be sold as slaves, I would not have bothered you."

"Who would dare to do such a thing?" the king asked.

Esther replied, "That evil Haman is the one out to get us!"

Haman was terrified, as he looked at the king and the queen.

The king was so angry that he got up, left his wine, and went out into the palace garden.

Haman realized that the king had already decided what to do with him, and he stayed

"Hang Haman from his own tower!" the king commanded. *Move Haman up on top of the wall, and then lay him down behind the backdrop.*

Esther begged the king, "Please stop Haman's evil plan to have the Jews killed!" King Xerxes made a law that said: "On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the Jews in every city and province will be allowed to get together and defend themselves."

The enemies of the Jews had hoped to do away with them. But the Jews turned things around. The Jews killed their enemies, but they did not take anything that belonged to the ones they killed. This is why the Jews now celebrate "Purim" on both the fourteenth and the fifteenth of the twelfth month, the days when the Jews defeated their enemies.

and begged Esther to save his life.

Just as the king came back into the room, Haman got down on his knees beside Esther, who was lying on the couch. The king shouted, "Now you're even trying to rape my queen here in my own palace!"

As soon as the king said this, his servants covered Haman's head. Then Harbona, one of the king's personal servants, said, "Your Majesty, Haman built a tower seventy-five feet high beside his house, so he could hang Mordecai on it. And Mordecai is the very one who spoke up and saved your life."

"Hang Haman from his own tower!" the king commanded. Right away, Haman was hanged on the tower he had built to hang Mordecai, and the king calmed down.

Before the end of the day, King Xerxes gave Esther everything that had belonged to Haman, the enemy of the Jews. Esther told the king that Mordecai was her cousin. So the king made Mordecai one of his highest officials and gave him the royal ring that Haman had worn. Then Esther put Mordecai in charge of Haman's property.

Once again Esther went to speak to the king. This time she fell down at his feet, crying and begging, "Please stop Haman's evil plan to have the Jews killed!" King Xerxes held out the golden scepter to Esther, and she got up and said, "Your Majesty, I know that you will do the right thing and that you really love me. Please stop what Haman has planned. He has already sent letters demanding that the Jews in all your provinces be killed, 6 and I can't

bear to see my people and my own relatives destroyed."

King Xerxes then said to Esther and Mordecai, "I have already ordered Haman to be hanged and his house given to Esther, because of his evil plans to kill the Jews. I now give you permission to make a law that will save the lives of your people. You may use my ring to seal the law, so that it can never be changed."

On the twenty-third day of Sivan,[a] the third month, the king's secretaries wrote the law. They obeyed Mordecai and wrote to the Jews, the rulers, the governors, and the officials of all one hundred twenty-seven provinces from India to Ethiopia. The letters were written in every language used in the kingdom, including the Jewish language. They were written in the name of King Xerxes and sealed with his ring. Then they were taken by messengers who rode the king's finest and fastest horses.

In these letters the king said:

On the thirteenth day of Adar, the twelfth month, the Jews in every city and province will be allowed to get together and defend themselves. They may destroy any army that attacks them, and they may kill all of their enemies, including women and children. They may also take everything that belongs to their enemies.

A copy of this law is to be posted in every province and read by everyone.

Then the king ordered his messengers to take their fastest horses and deliver the law as quickly as possible to every province. When Mordecai left, he was wearing clothes fit for a king. He wore blue and white robes, a large gold crown, and a cape made of fine linen

and purple cloth.

After the law was announced in Susa, everyone shouted and cheered, and the Jews were no longer afraid. In fact, they were very happy and felt that they had won a victory.

In every province and city where the law was sent, the Jews had parties and celebrated. Many of the people in the provinces accepted the Jewish religion, because they were now afraid of the Jews.

The first law that the king had made was to be followed on the thirteenth day of Adar, the twelfth month. This was the very day that the enemies of the Jews had hoped to do away with them. But the Jews turned things around, and in the cities of every province they came together to attack their enemies. Everyone was afraid of the Jews, and no one could do anything to oppose them.

The leaders of the provinces, the rulers, the governors, and the court officials were afraid of Mordecai and took sides with the Jews. 4

Everyone in the provinces knew that the king had promoted him and had given him a lot of power.

The Jews took their swords and did away with their enemies, without showing any mercy. They killed five hundred people in Susa, but they did not take anything that belonged to the ones they killed. Haman had been one of the worst enemies of the Jews, and ten of his sons were among those who were killed. Their names were Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vaizatha.

Later that day, someone told the king how many people had been killed in Susa. Then he told Esther, "Five hundred people, including Haman's ten sons, have been killed in Susa alone. If that many were killed here, what must have happened in the provinces? Is there anything else you want done? Just tell me, and it will be done."

Esther answered, "Your Majesty, please let the Jews in Susa fight to defend themselves tomorrow, just as they did today. And order

the bodies of Haman's ten sons to be hanged in public."

King Xerxes did what Esther had requested, and the bodies of Haman's sons were hung in Susa. Then on the fourteenth day of Adar the Jews of the city got together and killed three hundred more people. But they still did not take anything that belonged to their enemies.

On the thirteenth day of Adar, the Jews in the provinces had come together to defend themselves. They killed seventy-five thousand of their enemies, but the Jews did not take anything that belonged to the ones they killed. Then on the fourteenth day of the month the Jews celebrated with a feast.

On the fifteenth day of the month the Jews in Susa held a holiday and celebrated, after killing their enemies on the thirteenth and the fourteenth. This is why the Jews in the villages now celebrate on the fourteenth day of the month. It is a joyful holiday that they celebrate by feasting and sending gifts of food to each other.