

- Recap of last week: The wall is being rebuilt because the people have a mind to work. At first the enemies of Jerusalem, then they see the wall is getting build so they plan to attack preemptively but Nehemiah thwarts their efforts by creating elaborate plans for the people to guard their efforts. (Nehemiah 4) Nehemiah gets the people to stop enslaving their own people and explains that he and his own people were never corrupt in their ruling. (Nehemiah 5) Four times the enemies of Israel try to lure Nehemiah out but he says he is involved in a great work and cannot come down. Then the enemies of Israel try sending a letter voicing their fears and even hire someone internally to try to lure him into hiding. Nothing works, and the wall is finally finished and the enemies of Israel are scared. (Nehemiah 6) There is a very detailed census of the Israelites people again, and Nehemiah gets Ezra to read the law to the people and confirm the history of the Israelite people. (Nehemiah 7-9)
- A King named Ahasuerus was reigning over a lot of territory from India to Persia, he liked to throw big parties that lasted a long time (think days). His wife Vashti was even throwing parties for the women. (Esther 1:1-9)
- On the seventh day when the King is drunk, he orders his wife Vashti come before him so that he can show off how beautiful she is. The implication that he wants her to dance naked or do some sort of striptease act is clear from the Hebrew. (Esther 1:10-11)
- She refuses to even come. The men at the party say she is setting a bad example for women in the kingdom so he should fire her as Queen and send a proclamation that men should rule in their household. (Esther 1:12-22)
- The King then goes on the hunt for a new Queen. He commands all the young women be brought to him. There is a Jewish man serving him named Mordecai whose grandfather had been brought up into captivity during the time of Jeconiah (remember the Babylonians had changed his name of Jehoachin) during the days in which Nebuchadnezzar was King. (Esther 2:1-6)
- Mordecai has taken his niece Esther in as his daughter since her parents died while she was young. Mordecai “enters Esther in this competition” but he instructs her not to tell anyone she is Jewish. He checks on her daily, but she is doing great in her competition, and even attracts the attention of the King. (Esther 2:1-15)
- Esther is made Queen. (Esther 2:16-20)
- Mordecai stops two men by two persons named Bigthana (which means “threshold of the door” in Hebrew) and Teresh in the King’s Palace who were planning to assassinate him. Those two men are put to death (Esther 2:21-23)

- A man named Haman finds favor with Ahasuerus and is promoted a very high position. People are supposed to bow to him but Mordecai refuses. When he explains why, Haman convinces Ahasuerus to put out a proclamation that the Jews are to be destroyed. (Esther 3)
- Wherever the Jews are when they hear the news, they fast, weep and wail. Many of them wear ashes and sackcloth - a sign of great mourning. Mordecai does this and is wearing sackcloth at the palace gate. Esther asks her servant to figure out what's going on so he does. Esther first tells the man to get some better clothes but he refuses them. (Esther 4:1-4)
- Esther and Mordecai exchange communications through a messenger named Hatach. Mordecai tell her about the specific decree against him, and asks if she can intervene with the King for him. Esther assures him that the King has a rule about people coming close to him (in the Inner Court) – that they are to be put to death unless he pardons them and that even she hasn't been invited to see the King in a month. Mordecai explains that she should not think she will escape this same calamity either and that she may be put there exactly for that purpose (“for such a time as this.”) Esther then tells Mordecai to assemble all the Jews and fast and she will too and then she will go to the King and if she dies she dies. (Esther 4:5-17)
- Esther goes into the inner Court of the King and instead of enforcing death the King pardons her and offers her anything up to half the Kingdom. Esther says she wants the King and Haman to come to a banquet she has prepared for him. They do and the King again says he will give her anything up to half the Kingdom. She says she just wants them to come to another banquet she will prepare for them the next day and she will tell him then what she wants. (Esther 5:1-8)
- Haman goes away happy but on the route home he again passes Mordecai and again (of course) Mordecai does not bow to him and that irritates him again. He goes home and tells his wife and friends about the banquets and tells them about his day. They tell him to build large gallows (50 cubits high) to use to hang Mordecai the next day and to ask the King for that (Esther 5:9-14)
- That night the king could not sleep so he had people reading history to him. He heard about how Mordecai had in fact saved the King from a coup attempt. The King asked how Mordecai had been rewarded and they tell him the he hadn't. Meanwhile Haman is in the outer court anyway so he is brought to the inner court and King Ahasuerus tells him he needs to reward a man who pleased the King. Haman is happy when he thinks he is talking about him, then the King explains he is talking about Mordecai. Haman is at home complaining to his wife and friends about all this when someone comes to tell him it's time to go the banquet. (Esther 6)
- It always pays to study scripture. That is the way to get smarter and to increase our faith. (Romans 10:17, Hebrews 4:12, II Timothy 3:16-17).
- At the banquet, the King reiterates his promise to give Esther up to half the kingdom. She says that all she wants is to save her Jewish people (first time we read of her disclosing the fact that

she was Jewish) and the perpetrator Haman punished. Haman, in trying to get away, apparently trips and falls on the bed where Esther is reclining. The King thinks Haman is trying to rape the Queen and gets even madder. Then he has Haman hung on the gallows he built for Mordecai.

(Esther 7)

- Mordecai is made to rule over all that Haman had. Esther gets the King to officially reverse the proclamation effecting the Jews, in fact favoring them. Many in the Kingdom convert to Judaism consequently. (Esther 8)
- The Jews put their enemies to death, and there were a lot of people (several hundred) who had been planning violence against the Jews. The sons of Haman are hanged as well, and these days become known as the purification. This was the start of the feast of Purim which they still celebrate to this day. (Esther 9)
- The story of Mordecai and King Ahasuerus is so famous that it is also recorded by the Medes and Persians. (Esther 10)

#### Questions:

1. What is the name of the King of Persia during Book of Esther?
2. What is the name of his Queen?
3. What did the King and Queen like to do?
4. What did the King ask the Queen to do?
5. What was the Queen's reaction when the King asked her to do this?
6. What is the King's reaction to the Queen's refusal?
7. Who was Mordecai and how did his family become enslaved in Babylon?
8. What was Mordecai's relationship to Esther?
9. What position does Esther eventually ascend to?
10. What are the name of two men who plan a coup and who stops it?
11. Who is Haman? Why does he want the Jews destroyed?
12. What three things do the Jews do when they hear they are facing destruction?
13. What do ashes and sackcloth represent?
14. What does Mordecai do when Esther tries to get him some clothes?
15. What exchange do Mordecai and Esther have through the messenger Hatach?
16. Why is it brave for Esther to approach the Inner Court of the King?
17. What does the King do when he sees Esther?
18. What does Esther ask for?

19. What happens to Haman on the way home from the first banquet?
20. What does Haman have built?
21. Why does Ahasuerus discover that Mordecai saved him at one point?
22. Who does Ahasuerus tell to reward Mordecai?
23. What happens to Haman at the second banquet?
24. What happens to proclamation against the Jews? What was the effect?
25. What do the Jews do to ensure their enemies can't threaten them anymore? What feast still celebrates this occasion?
26. What other nations chronicle the story of Mordecai and Ahasuerus?