



## Celebrating Esther

### Topic

Exploring Queen Esther's Character Traits and Actions

### Grade Level(s)

3<sup>rd</sup> and up

### Goals for the Lesson/Activity

Students will:

- Develop a deeper understanding of what it took for Esther to summon the courage to take action, and then examine their own values
- Create either a joyful bracelet to wear, or a colorful flag to wave, during the *Megillah*-reading, based on learning about a new tradition honoring Esther's role in the Purim story
- Choose one of Esther's traits that is the most meaningful to them and apply it to their own experience

### Materials needed

- Copies of *Esther's Great Dilemma* (download), one per student

<b>For Bracelets:</b>	<b>For Flags:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stretch Magic Elastic 1.5 mm diameter (15" of elastic per bracelet)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Long straws (use sturdy straws instead of sticks as flag handles to prevent any unintended accidents)</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 6-10 craft bells per bracelet</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 8.5" x 11" pieces of cardstock or felt, cut into large triangles</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 9 mm plastic beads (pony beads)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Glue or glue gun</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Masking tape</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hole punch</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Alphabet Beads</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Markers</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ribbons</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Glitter, stickers, sequins, bells, ribbons, pipe cleaners, etc.</li></ul>

### Background for Teachers

In the last several years many communities have chosen to elevate the attention given to Queen Esther's role in the Purim narrative by ringing bells (or waving flags) whenever her name is read from the *Megillah*.

It is unclear where this tradition originated, though some trace the first creation and use of flags to Ma'yan: The Jewish Women's Project of the JCC Manhattan. The idea behind this new ritual is that both Haman and Mordechai are highlighted during the *Megillah* reading – one through the use of clanging *graggers* and the other through verses which



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the entire congregation recites aloud. Neither of the strong female characters, Esther or Vashti, are given similar attention during the *Megillah* reading. By using flags and bells at the mentions of the names of these characters, participants can recognize the actions of these women without drowning out the words of text.

### Description of Activities

There are three parts to this lesson: 1) reviewing the Purim story, 2) examining the choices Esther faced and applying lessons learned to the students' own actions, and, 3) creating a personalized bracelet or flag to use at the *Megillah* reading.

- 1) To review the Purim story, choose an age-appropriate Purim book from your library and share it with your students. Kids are never too old to be read to!
- 2) Following the story, distribute the *Esther's Great Dilemma* sheet. Ask students to fill out the sheet individually. When everyone is finished, bring the group together and ask for volunteers to share their stories or the one word that describes their strength of character. Now, using that ONE Word, create a flag or bracelet highlighting the word to use during the *Megillah* reading.
- 3) To make a bracelet:
  - Open the bag of alphabet beads and have students find the letters that make up their chosen descriptor.
  - Place a small piece of masking tape around one end of the elastic thread (so the beads will not fall off).
  - Thread decorative beads and letter beads onto the elastic. If students are able, let them also intersperse some of the bells with the beads. Bead the string until it measures between 6"-7.5" (average bracelet size for a student). Tie a triple double knot. Clip edges. If time permits, tie extra ribbons trimmed with bells onto the bracelets.

To make decorative flags:

- Distribute the triangular pieces of cardstock or felt.
- Using markers, glitter, stickers, sequins, bells, ribbons, pipe cleaners, etc. decorate the flag. Make sure to highlight the word they selected.
- Wrap pipe cleaners around the straw. In addition to adding color and sparkle, the pipe cleaners strengthen the straw.
- Using a glue gun, attach the flag to the straw.
- Punch holes around the flag. Tie bells onto the ends of ribbons and then tie the ribbons to the flag.