



Traveling Through the Megillah: ***Good times, bad times and the spaces in-between***

Topic

Purim

Grade Level(s)

6th and Up

Goals for the Lesson/Activity

Students will:

- Time travel through *Megillat Esther* (and create a summative timeline in the process)
- Formulate questions about details that are not given in *Megillat Esther*
- Create a Purim spiel based on their interpretation of what was happening in Shushan during the down time in the *Megillat Esther*

Materials needed

- Copies of *Megillat Esther* (enough for each group)
- Blank time travel sheets for each group (download)
- Pencils and paper
- Timeline reference sheet (at the end of this lesson)

Technology needed

- Devices to record audio and video (optional)

Background for Teachers

Time could be seen to play an important role in the narrative of *Megillat Esther*, which takes place over the course of more than 10 years. The *megillah* opens in the third year of King Ahasuerus' reign, ends at the end of the 13th year, and makes multiple references to the passing of time in between. In the meantime, the *megillah* relates many of the highlights that occur during this period of the kingdom of Shushan, but it also leaves out many details.

Description of Activities

1. In groups, students time travel through *Megillat Esther*. Students read through sections of the *megillah* and create timelines based on their findings.
 - a. One possible way to divide the text would be:
 - i. Chapters 1-2 (eight time references)
 - ii. Chapters 3-4 (7 references)
 - iii. Chapters 5-7 (5 references)
 - iv. Chapters 8-10 (10 references)



Traveling Through the Megillah: ***Good times, bad times and the spaces in-between***

2. Based on their timelines, students think about what they know from the text and what they imagine what might have occurred during the “in-between times.” Students should write down related questions. Some possible questions include:
 - a. Chapters 1-2
 - i. What does Esther do during the year that she prepares to meet the king?
 - ii. It takes at least four years for King Ahasuerus to find a new queen after exiling Vashti. How do the people in the kingdom react to there being no queen for so long?
 - b. Chapters 3-4
 - i. Mordechai not bowing down seems to go on for at least a couple of years. How does Haman’s reaction change over that time? How do the courtiers’ reactions change?
 - ii. There is almost a full year between when the decree is written and the actual date of its manifestation. What are the reactions of the people in the various provinces when they hear the decree? How do the non-Jews prepare for the decree? How are their reactions different?
 - iii. Esther is not summoned for 30 days to the king. Why not? How does she spend her days in the meantime?
 - c. Chapters 5-7
 - i. All of this happens about two months after the initial decree, why does everything move so quickly all of a sudden?
 - ii. How are the king and Haman able to squeeze in honoring Mordechai in between Queen Esther’s two feasts?
 - d. Chapters 8-10
 - i. How do preparations change in the provinces with the new decree that Jews can defend themselves?
 - ii. What happens after the fighting?
 - iii. How does day-to-day life change for the Jews after they fend off their attackers and with Mordechai and Esther in power?
3. Students create a Purim spiel based on their questions and interpretations.
 - a. Students create a narrative that begins to answer their questions. Students should choose one specific area of the narrative to focus on. Possible media include:
 - i. Writing in the style of *Megillat Esther*
 - ii. Filming a movie scene
 - iii. Writing a song to a popular tune
4. Students present their narratives to the class.
 - a. Students put their timelines on the board as they go up to present.



Traveling Through the Megillah: *Good times, bad times and the spaces in-between*

Teacher's Time Reference Guide

פרק Chapter	פסוק Verse	זמן Time Reference	מה קרה What Happened
1	3	3 rd year of King Ahasuerus' reign	King Ahasuerus throws a big party for all the officials in his kingdom.
1	4	Party lasts for 180 days	King Ahasuerus displays his riches at the big party.
1	5	End of 180 days 7-day banquet	King Ahasuerus holds a 7-day banquet for all the people of Shushan.
1	10	7 th day of the Shushan banquet	King Ahasuerus calls for Queen Vashti (who refuses to come).
2	1	After an unspecified amount of time	King Ahasuerus thinks of Vashti, what she did, and what he decreed against her.
2	12	12 months	Girls have 12 months to prepare to be presented to King Ahasuerus.
2	12	6 months (x2)	Girls are prepared with oil for 6 months and perfumes and cosmetics for 6 months.
2	16	10 th month of 7 th year of King Ahasuerus' reign	Esther is presented to the king.
3	1	After an unspecified amount of time	Haman rises to power.
3	4	Day after day	Mordechai would not listen to the king's servants about bowing to Haman.
3	7	1 st month, Nisan, of the 12 th year of King Ahasuerus	Haman casts lots to determine the fate of the Jews.
3	12	13 th day of the 1 st month	King decrees the destruction of the Jews.



Traveling Through the Megillah: ***Good times, bad times and the spaces in-between***

3	13	13th day of the 12th month, Adar	The date of the destruction of the Jews
4	11	30 days	Queen Esther has not been summoned by the king for 30 days.
4	16	3 days	Queen Esther tells Mordechai and the rest of the Jews to fast for 3 days.
5	1	3rd day	Queen Esther prepares a feast for the king and Haman.
5	8	Tomorrow	Queen Esther asks the king and Haman to come to another feast tomorrow.
5	9	That day (i.e. the day of the first feast prepared by Queen Esther)	Haman leaves happy but Mordechai does not bow to him.
6	1	6:1 That night (i.e. the night after the first feast prepared by Queen Esther)	The king cannot sleep and orders the Book of Records brought to him.
7	2	2nd day (Find out in 8:9 that it is the 23rd day of the 3rd month)	Esther throws a 2 nd feast for the king and Haman.
8	1	That day (i.e. the day of the second feast prepared by Queen Esther)	The king gives all of Haman's possessions to Queen Esther.
8	9	23rd day of the 3 rd month, Sivan	An edict is written that the Jews can defend themselves when they are attacked in the 12 th month.
8	12	13 th day of the 12 th month, Adar	This is the day that the Jews will be attacked and may defend themselves.
9	1	13 th day of the 12 th month, Adar	The opposite of the original decree happened.
9	15	14 th day of Adar	The Jews of Shushan kill 300 people but do not lay hands on the spoils.
9	17	13 th and 14 th of Adar	The Jews fought back on the 13 th and rested on the 14 th (outside of Shushan).



Traveling Through the Megillah:
Good times, bad times and the spaces in-between

9	18	13 th , 14 th , and 15 th of Adar	The Jews fought back on the 13 th and 14 th and rested on the 15 th (in Shushan).
9	19	14 th of Adar	Jews of unwalled cities celebrate.
9	21	14 th and 15 th of Adar	Jews of walled cities celebrate every year.
9	27	2 days to observe	Purim is established to be celebrated on these two days.