

# Bible Challenge 2018

## Week 17: April 22-28

### Outline

Esther 1: Introduction and Queen Vashti's Fall  
Esther 2: From Hadassah to Queen Esther  
Esther 3: Introducing Wicked Haman  
Esther 4-7: Esther's Defeat of Haman  
Esther 8-9: Securing the Place of the Jews & Purim  
Esther 10: Honoring Mordecai

Oftentimes people get worked up about the book of Esther as it never explicitly uses God's name. "How could it be in the Bible," people sometimes say. The bottom line is that while God's name is not explicitly, but you can clearly see his hand at work in the labors of Esther and Mordecai.

Historically, this book takes place around the time of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, so it is after the people who were in exile in Babylon have begun to reestablish Jerusalem. King Ahasuerus, also known as King Artaxerxes, was a Persian king, and probably was most famous for his campaign against Athens and fighting against the 300 Spartans who held the Pass of Thermopylae, one of the more famous battles of ancient military history.

Theologically, Esther provides the foundation for the Jewish festival of "Purim," named for the Persian word, "pur" which means "to cast lots." Interestingly, "Purim" in Hebrew, refers to the rending of one's garments when one laments, something very alien to the celebration of Purim — a festive time where people dress up as figures from the account — or simply in silly, colorful costumes.

### Introduction and Queen Vashti's Fall

The book opens up with a party that King Ahasuerus is hosting for his friends and those officials that serve him. The plot thickens when he desires to show off his trophy wife, Vashti and she decides that she is unwilling to have the world gawk at her. The king did not want to be embarrassed before his guests, and his advisors did not want their wives behaving like Vashti (the danger of "Women's Lib!"), so the king divorced her and exiled Vashti from the kingdom.

### From Hadassah to Queen Esther

The story then introduces us to Hadassah, who is being raised by her cousin, Mordecai. Ahasuerus signs an edict to begin looking for a new wife in the place of Vashti and Hadassah is chosen to be part of the harem. To conceal her Jewish identity, Mordecai tells her to take the name, "Esther." In God's providence, Esther is taken to and chosen by the king to be his next wife, and so our story unfolds. To remain close to Esther, Mordecai begins spending time in the gate of the palace, where he would hear of a plot to murder the king and, like any other good citizen, he reports those who were conspiring (a reminder of our civic duty even to wicked rulers).

### Introducing Wicked Haman

We are now introduced to the man whose name shall not be remembered through the ages — or, that when it is remembered, it will only be remembered with scorn. He is a

proud man and was only interested in his reputation. Further, he and Mordecai hit it off poorly as Mordecai refused to bow in submission before him. So, to punish Mordecai, Haman decides he is going to attack all of the Jewish people. We may think that this is a bit extreme (and it is), but if we are honest, genocide has been attempted more than a few times in world history.

### Esther's Defeat of Haman

Esther agrees to create a plot to undermine Haman's plan and to defeat this enemy of her people and it seems that the wisdom of her cousin, Mordecai, who told her to change her name, has borne fruit. Haman does not know what is coming. In a few short dinner parties, Esther gets Haman to lower his guard and trap is set, baited, and sprung. And, indeed, it would be on the gallows that Haman had prepared for Mordecai that he himself would be hung. It is a fitting punishment.

### Securing the Place of the Jews & Purim

Though Haman has been put to death, his compatriots all around the empire are ready to do harm to the Jewish people. One of the great advances of this day, though, is that the kings of Persia had a tremendous infrastructure of roads built to facilitate movement. In addition, they had a royal system of communication, structured much like the later Pony Express in America, where riders would ride and hand off a message from one stopping point to another.

And so, riders are dispatched with the instructions, but the king in those days wasn't able to simply rescind the orders. The first orders were to kill and plunder the Jews. This second command gave the Jews permission not only to defend themselves, but to take vengeance on the families of those who attack them. A stalemate was essentially established and only a limited number of uprisings would take place, with the Jewish people putting to death those who conspired against them.

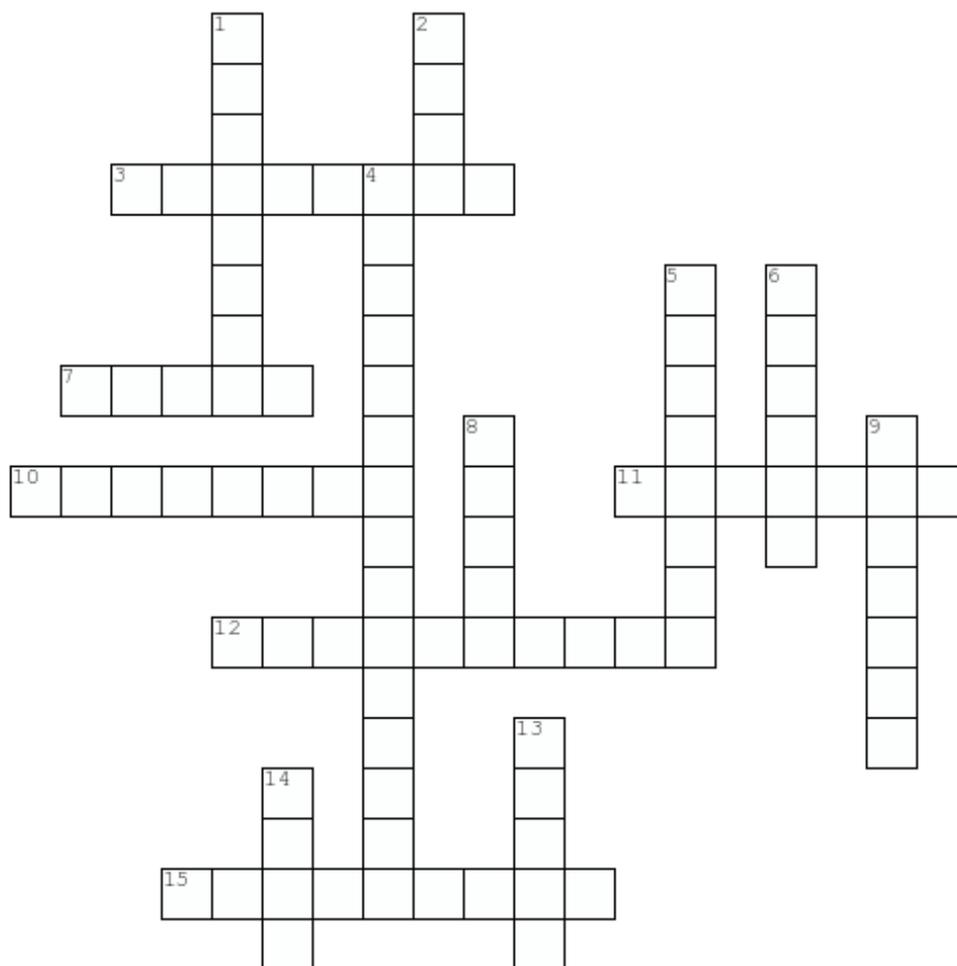
When safety was secured, the feast of Purim was inaugurated to remember God's protection through Esther. How often, indeed, God places people in positions of authority to protect his own.

### Honoring Mordecai

Chapter 10 of Esther is one of the shortest chapters of the Bible, though it is not the shortest (that belongs to Psalm 117). It sets apart Mordecai and honors his labors as well as his continued role in the kingdom of Ahasuerus. Mordecai now stands amongst a long line of godly people that God raised up to lead under the reign of a wicked king. His role is a reminder to us today that Christians must never abandon roles in government. Mordecai, Esther, Daniel, Nehemiah, Joseph, Moses, and others all have found a place serving faithfully even within wicked administrations.

# WEEK 17: ESTHER

Complete the crossword below



Created with [TheTeachersCorner.net](http://TheTeachersCorner.net) [Crossword Puzzle Generator](#)

## Across

3. Esther's birth name.
7. This Jewish Holiday is established in Esther's honor.
10. The name of Esther's cousin who cared for her.
11. One of the eunuch's who plotted to kill Ahasuerus.
12. Another name for Ahasuerus.
15. The King's Eunuch, in charge of the harem.

## Down

1. Haman must give a parade in whose honor?
2. The royal city where Ahasuerus lived.
4. Mordecai tells Esther that God has raised her up: '\_\_\_\_\_' (5 words)
5. The order allowing the Jews to protect themselves went out by mounted \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The wife that Ahasuerus exiles.
8. Prior to going into the king, Esther fasted and prayed for \_\_\_\_ days along with the Jews.
9. Haman builds this to kill Mordecai.
13. His name shall be forgotten by the peoples of Israel.
14. It was in this month that the Jews avenged themselves on their enemies.