

ANUED

Lesson Plan: Stepping into Leadership The Story of Queen Esther ANU – Museum of the Jewish People For Students in Years 8-12

Lesson Overview

This lesson focuses on the theme of stepping into leadership through the lens of the Jewish Purim story, where Queen Esther rises to the challenge to save her people. The main point is centered around the verse in the Megillah, The Book of Esther Chapter 4 verse 14:

- כִּי אִם־הִחַרְשׁ תִּחַרְיִשׁי בְּעַת הַזֹּאת רִיחַ וְהִצָּלָה יַעֲמֹד לַיהוּדִים 14
מִמָּקוֹם אֲחֵר וְאֶת וּבֵית־אָבִיו תֹּאבְדוּ וּמִי יוֹדֵעַ אִם־לֵעַת כָּזֹאת הִגַּעְתָּ
לְמַלְכוּת:

On the contrary, if you keep silent in this crisis, relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another quarter, while you and your father's house will perish. And who knows, perhaps you have attained to royal position for just such a crisis.”

Source: Sefaria

Mordechai, her uncle, is pleading for her to speak to her husband, King Achashverorsh, to cancel Haman's evil decree to destroy all the Jewish People.

Lesson Objectives

- Analyze the role of leadership and the qualities that make a good leader.
- Review who else in Jewish History has stepped up as an unlikely leader at a specific time when they were needed to.
- Reflect on personal leadership potential and moments of stepping up in their own lives.
- Partake in a discussion about people that you know either privately or in the public sphere that have assumed leadership roles in the Jewish World.

Materials Needed

- Whiteboard and markers
- Paper and pens for students
- Printed copies of the verse and its context (appendix 1)
- Printed copies of Queen Esther's depiction in Dura Europas and the Megillat/Scroll of Esther in ANU Museum of the Jewish People (appendix 2)

Lesson Structure

Introduction (10 minutes)

- Begin with a brief overview of the Jewish holiday of Purim and the story of Queen Esther.
- Review the printed copy of the description of artefacts that represent Queen Esther in ANU – Museum of the Jewish People. (Appendix 2)
- Introduce the verse from the Book of Esther. (Appendix 1)

Reading and Discussion (20 minutes)

- Read the verse from the Book of Esther, focusing on the key moment when Esther steps into her role as a leader.
- Discuss the following questions with the students:
 - What qualities did Esther show that made her a good leader?
 - What challenges did she face and how did she overcome them?
 - How does the verse from the Megillah apply to Esther's situation?
 - What other leaders in Jewish History have had a similar story or challenge like Esther had?

Group Activity (20 minutes)

- Divide the class into small groups and give each group a scenario where they have to step into a leadership role. Write these on the whiteboard. Examples could include:
 - Leading a project at school
 - Organizing a community event
 - Helping a friend in need
- Each group should discuss their scenario and come up with a plan of action, identifying the qualities and steps needed to lead effectively.
- Have each group present their scenario and plan to the class.

Reflection (10 minutes)

- Ask students to individually reflect on a moment in their lives when they had to step up and lead. Provide paper and pens for them to write about this experience.
- Encourage a few volunteers to share their reflections with the class.

Conclusion (10 minutes)

- Recap the main points of the lesson: the story of Queen Esther, qualities of a good leader, and personal reflections on leadership.

Appendix 1

Mordechai, Esther's uncle, is pleading for her to speak to her husband, King Achashverosh, to cancel Haman's evil decree to destroy all the Jewish People.

Towards the end of the fourth chapter, we find Esther telling her Uncle Mordechai about all the problems there might be in interceding with King Achashverosh regarding the fate of the Jewish people. Mordechai listens and then responds to her with the famous words, *Im haharash tachrishi, ba'et hazot revach v'hatzlah ya'amod layehudim mimakom acher*, "If you are silent and you do nothing at this time somebody else will save the Jewish people." *U'mi yodeia im l'et kazot, higa'at lamalchut?* "But who knows, was it not for just this moment that you became a Queen, with access to King Achashverosh in the royal palace?"

"Was it not for this very challenge that you are here in this place at this time?" Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks <https://rabbisacks.org/archive/gods-hidden-call/>

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Appendix 2



Megillah or Scroll of Esther from the community of Sephardi Jews (Spanish Jews) that were expelled from Spain in 1492.

This original scroll is from the community of Sephardic Jews from Spain who settled in Western Europe in the early 16th century. Written by a sopher (scribe) with ink on parchment/animal skin. This ancient scroll attests to the experiences of the Sephardic Jews who were expelled from Spain during the inquisition. The style of writing and the style of processing the parchment correspond to the Sephardic tradition and indicate the origin of the writer of the scroll, while the Ashkenazi influences on the writing indicate that it was written after the exiles settled in an Ashkenazi community in Western Europe. The scroll arrived with its owners in Fez in Morocco, where a community of Sephardic exiles lived, and came into the possession of the Monsonego family, whose sons were important rabbis. This scroll was read on the holiday of Purim in the Ibn Danan synagogue. The scroll is a Gift of the Mimran family from Yavneh in Israel.

Every Purim, Jews from all over the world read the Megillah or Scroll of Esther. We are commanded to listen to it twice and pay attention to every word.



The story of Purim is painted here. Queen Esther is seated next to the King

The Discovery of Dura Europos

Like a Near Eastern sleeping beauty, the city of Dura Europos had been lying undisturbed, covered by a layered blanket of sand, for 1700 years.

The site, which can be found in modern day Syria on its border with Iraq, was discovered by sheer accident in 1920.

This reconstruction of one of the walls appears on the wall of the Hallelujah gallery at the ANU Museum of the Jewish People.

It is believed to be one of the oldest synagogues in the world. It is also one of the most fascinating. It's remarkable wall paintings depict biblical scenes from the Bible/Tanach and other stories from the midrashim.