

# The Structure of Esther

## ונהפוך הוא The Tables Were Turned



Design: Shlomitstudio 0543-171714

J. Grossman and Y. Reiss, Megillat Esther with Illustrative Charts and Graphs, (Hebrew), 2002

## Lesson Plan: Plot Twists in the Story of Esther

**Target Audience:** Middle/High School Students

**Duration:** 40 – 60 minutes

**Goal:** To familiarize students with the story of Megillat Esther and the concept of reversal of fortunes (“ונהפוך הוא”) as a Purim theme

### INTRODUCTION:

בּוֹרַךְ הוּא וְיִחְפְּרֵהוּ יִפֹּל בְּשַׁחַת יַפְעָלוֹ: (תהילים ז:ט"ז)

*“His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own skull.”* (Tehilim 7:16)

Toward the conclusion of Megillat Esther, there is a description of the reversal that takes place in the narrative: "...On this day the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, but now the tables were turned, and it was the Jews who overpowered their enemies" (9:1).

The turning of the tables is also expressed in the reverse parallel literary structure of the entire narrative as shown in the Structure of Esther diagram.

- The first half of the story (1-7) describes Haman's rise to power, which leads to the king's agreement to do his bidding and threatens the Jewish people with annihilation. This part of the narrative ends with the proposal to hang Mordechai, put forth by Haman's advisors.
- In a symmetrical contrast, the second half of the story (9-15) describes Esther and Mordechai's rise to power, Haman is hung on the very tree he had prepared for Mordechai, and his edicts are abolished. The second part of the narrative also begins with words of advice by Haman's advisors.

### MATERIALS:

- Copies of the Structure of Esther chart (page 1)
- Megillah Texts (optional)
- “Plot Twist” worksheets (page 4)
- Paper slips for Exit Tickets

### LESSON PLAN

#### 1. Opening (5 minutes)

- Hook: "Have you ever watched a movie where the 'bad guy' plans something evil, but it backfires on them?"
- Brief examples from popular movies/shows students might know (eg. Cruella, Home Alone, Barbie)
- Connect to today's lesson about Esther and the Purim theme of reversal of fortunes (“ונהפוך הוא”)

## 2. Story Presentation (10 minutes)

Review the story of Megillat Esther, using the “Structure of Esther” chart on page 1.

Key points:

1. Haman's plan to hurt Mordechai and the Jewish people
2. Esther's bravery in approaching King Achashverosh
3. The plot twist: Haman falls into his own trap!

Question to discuss: What was the turning point in the story?

## 3. "Plot Twist" Activity (15-20 minutes)

Working in small groups, students will fill in the attached worksheet that describes the “plot twists” in the Megillah.

Points to ponder:

- Things that Haman planned vs. what happened
- Where Mordechai started vs. where he ended up
- What was decreed for the Jewish people vs. what happened
- Who Esther was at the beginning of the story vs. where she ended up

Modifications:

- **For support:** Provide students with a partially filled in worksheet so that they can identify **either** the “before” **or** the “after” part of each plot twist.
- **For enrichment (additional 10-15 minutes):** Ask students to support each entry in the chart with a verse from Megillat Esther.
- **Optional activity:** Each group will design a [meme](#) that depicts one of the "plot twists"

## 4. Class Discussion (5 minutes)

- What do students think about how the story turned around?
- Refer to the Structure of Esther chart. Which “plot twist” seems to be the most significant? Why?
- Have they ever seen something unfair turn out right in the end?
- What can we learn from this story for our own lives?

## 5. Wrap-up (5 minutes)

- How do we celebrate the idea of reversal of fortunes (“וּנְהִיפֹךְ הוּא”) on Purim?
- “Exit ticket”: What is your favorite “plot twist” from the Megillah? Why?

## “Plot Twists” Worksheet

Fill in the chart below with examples of "plot twists" that happened in Megillat Esther.

For example:

- Things that Haman planned vs. what happened
- Where Mordechai started vs. where he ended up
- What was decreed for the Jewish people vs. what happened
- Who Esther was at the beginning of the story vs. where she ended up

What was meant to happen...	What actually happened...
<i>Example: Bigtan and Teresh plotted to kill the King.</i>	<i>Bigtan and Teresh were put to death.</i>

