



QUEEN ESTHER SAVES HER PEOPLE

Retold by Rita Golden Gelman

Illustrated by Frane Lessac

In preparation for meeting the king, Esther ignores offers of golden robes and jewels. She chooses a simple white dress and allows her inner beauty to shine through. Esther seems to know instinctively that her true worth is measured by who she is and not what she wears or owns.

COURAGE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Esther gathered her courage to approach her husband, the king, and save her family and the Jewish community. Sometimes, standing up for what we believe is not easy. How can we embody Esther's bravery when we encounter social injustice or see a sibling or friend treated unfairly?

IT'S WHAT'S INSIDE THAT COUNTS

"Do not look at the jug, but rather at what is in it" (Ethics of our Ancestors, 1:6). In preparation for meeting the king, Esther ignores offers of golden robes and jewels. She chooses a simple white dress and allows her inner beauty to shine through. Esther seems to know instinctively that her true worth is measured by who she is and not what she wears or owns.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN READING

- Why do you think Haman hates Mordecai?
- Esther listens to her cousin's advice. Who do you go to for advice? Why?
- Why do you think Esther waits so long before asking her husband, the king, for help?

GIFT BASKETS

Purim is a joyous celebration. A *mitzvah* (commandment) associated with *Purim* is spreading joy and giving gift baskets (*mishloach manot*) to friends and family. Each basket should contain at least two types of food to eat, such as fruit and hamentaschen. It might include a funny poem, drawing, or *Purim* noisemaker. Involve the entire family in finding recipes, buying ingredients, baking, decorating the baskets, and making a list of lucky recipients. Consider delivering a basket to a neighbor whose family lives far away, or to school or office staff you suspect might be overlooked during the festivities.

GIFTS TO THE NEEDY

Another *Purim mitzvah* -- though it's appropriate any time -- is giving to the needy. (*Mattanot la'evyonim*.) Traditionally Jewish people offer charity to those less fortunate. Is there a cause your family is passionate about supporting? If your family is looking for an active way to help, find a local food bank that enlists volunteers in sorting food and packing boxes.