

MEGILLAH MYSTERY

Piece together the story of Purim and reveal a hidden message



Scribe
(write your name here)



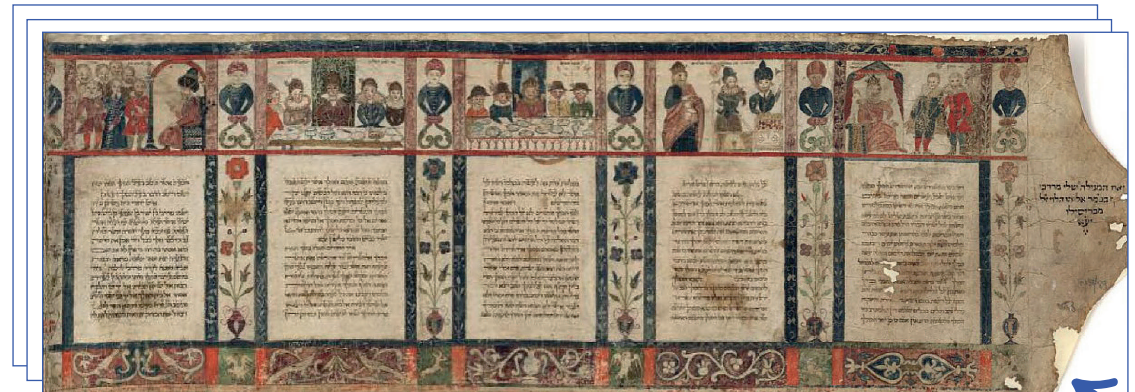
At the heart of Purim is the reading of the megillah – the Book of Esther. The megillah tells the dramatic story of the Jews of Shushan, the capital of Persia, who were saved by the actions of the Jewish Queen Esther. A megillah is written by a scribe on parchment and is often illustrated with traditional decorations and drawings of the events.

The National Library of Israel has a unique collection of megillot. One of the oldest is this illustrated Megillat Esther from Ferrara in Italy, which was made in 1616. It was written and illustrated by Moshe ben Avraham Peshkarol and is over four meters long and 27 centimetres tall.

Want to see the Megillah in full? Scan the code →



Watch the video explaining this megillah's history →



Look closely...

- The megillah is colorfully decorated with blue-green columns dividing it into sections. Between these columns is a vase from which emerges a branch adorned with flowers.
- Each column rests on a rectangular base on which there is an illustration of an animal, bird, or plant.
- At the top of each column there is a figure of a man in full attire.
- Above the sections of text are illustrations of scenes from the megillah.
- The drawings use contemporary Italian designs (such as for clothing and food) not patterns from Persia where the Purim story originally takes place.



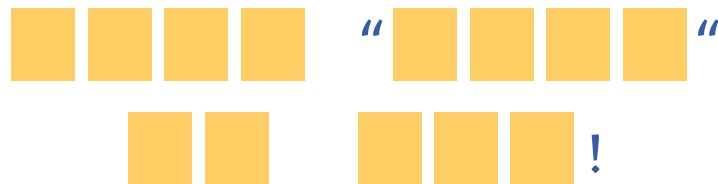
The following four scenes selected from the megillah tell the (short) story of Purim — but some of the words are missing!

- 1 Fill in the missing words under each scene and write them in the crossword puzzle.
Use the word bank if you need extra help.

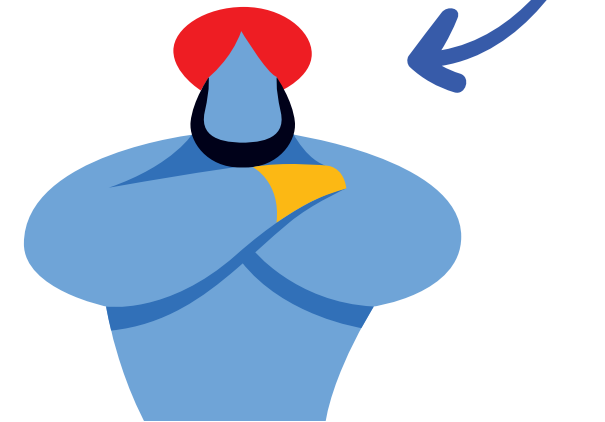
WORD BANK

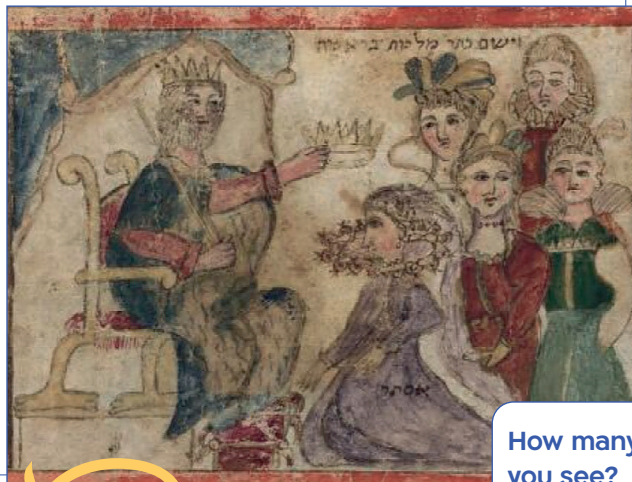
Esther, afraid, Mordechai, written, plot,
Achashverosh, truth, Vashti, horse, far, life

- 2 Gather the shaded words from each puzzle and write them here to unmask a playful Purim pun!



- 3 Remember the man in our Italian megillah who sits at the top of each column? He also appears on our puzzle pages and will help you look deeper into each scene.

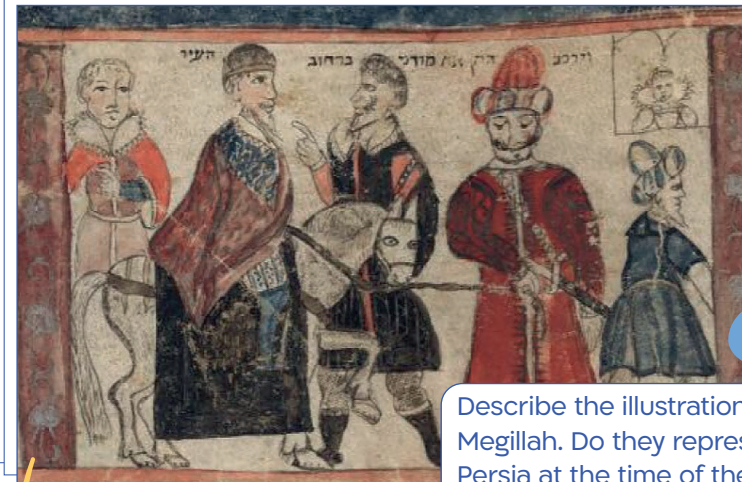




How many crowns do you see?
Who do they belong to?

1. Hadassah, that is _____, was taken to the King's palace.
2. King _____ saw Esther.
3. He chose Esther to be the new Queen, instead of _____.

1.										
2.										
3.										



Describe the illustrations in the Megillah. Do they represent life in Persia at the time of the Purim story or life of a different time and place? Why do you think this?
(Hint: see page 2)

1. Mordechai was rewarded for saving the King's _____.
2. Haman had to dress _____ in royal clothes.
3. Then Haman led Mordechai on a fancy _____ through the city's streets.

1.						
2.						
3.						





Color Me!

You are an art restorer. Bring this scene back to life. How close can you get to the original?



1. At a banquet, Esther told the King about Haman's evil _____ to kill the Jews. She also revealed that she was Jewish.
2. The King was really angry at Haman. Haman became very _____.

1.

--	--	--	--

2.

--	--	--	--	--	--



Many artists have illustrated Megillat Esther. Why do you think so many have chosen to illustrate this specific story?

1. Esther and Mordechai sent letters _____ and wide.
2. They wanted to make sure the _____ was told.
3. This is how the story of Purim was _____ down and shared for generations.

1.

--	--	--	--

2.

--	--	--	--	--	--

3.

--	--	--	--	--	--



CREATE YOUR OWN MEGILLAH!

Now it's your turn:
create your own illustrated
scenes from Megillat Esther!



Get ideas and inspirations from megillot from the NLI collections here (QR CODE) and other online sources.



Select one or more scenes from the story, for example, the first feast, the beauty contest, the guards at the gate, Mordechai being celebrated through the streets.



Illustrate your scene using online tools or arts and crafts. Consider the following:

- What does a megillah page look like?
- What text should be included? (You can copy the text from an online megillah) Where do the illustrations appear?

- What graphic features traditionally appear in megillot?
- What should the characters look like?
- What will the characters say to each other?
- Will you add images of the palace? What will that look like?



Do this activity with friends and collate your scenes into one large megillah, which you can display at home or at school.



Post your finished megillah on social media and send it to learning@nli.org.il!

Crossword answer:

Nuf fo stol evah





