

Esther

The Preservation Of The Jews



“Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king’s palace any more than all the other Jews. For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:13-14)

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Outline Of Esther

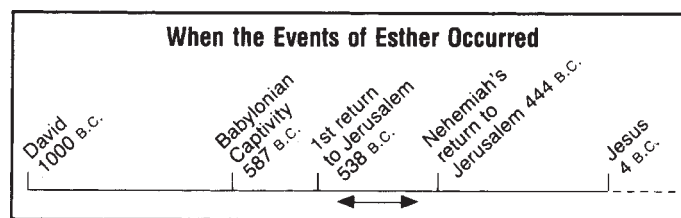
Part One: The Threat to the Jews (1:1—4:17)

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(The above outline is *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*, pp. 166–167)



About The Book Of Esther

“The events recorded in this book took place in the reign of Ahasuerus, otherwise called Xerxes. His Persian name, spelled in English letters, reads thus: Khshayarsha. The Greeks, in trying to render it into their language, got it Xerxes; and the Hebrews, Ahasuerus. The latter comes nearer the original, but European nations have adopted in common usage the Greek rendering. This king began to reign about fifty years after the decree of Cyrus permitting the Jews to return to their own land, and consequently, the events of the book, though they belong to the history of the Jews in exile, occurred between fifty and sixty years after the close of the seventy years predicted by Jeremiah. In other words, they occurred among those Jews who chose, after the proclamation of Cyrus, to remain in foreign lands.

“The book gives an account of a crisis in the history of the Jewish people. A decree was sent forth by the king that every Jew in his kingdom should be put to death on a certain day. The circumstance which led to the issuing of this decree, and the measures by which the calamity was averted, constitute the subject matter of the book, and they present a most remarkable series of divine providences. In Esther the name of God is not once mentioned. The reader is left to discover God’s hand for himself.” (J. W. McGarvey, *A Guide to Bible Study*, © 1897)



“Esther: the queen of Ahasuerus, and heroine of the book that bears her name. She was a Jewess named Hadas’sah (the myrtle), but when she entered the royal harem she received the name by which she henceforth became known (Esther 2:7). It is a Syro-Arabian modification of the Persian word *satarah*, which means a star. She was the daughter of Abihail, a Benjamite. Her family did not avail themselves of the permission granted by Cyrus to the exiles to return to Jerusalem; and she resided with her cousin Mordecai, who held some office in the household of the Persian king at ‘Shushan in the palace.’ Ahasuerus having divorced Vashti, chose Esther to be his wife. Soon after this he gave Haman the Agagite, his prime minister, power and authority to kill and extirpate all the Jews throughout the Persian empire. By the interposition of Esther this terrible catastrophe was averted. Haman was hanged on the gallows he had intended for Mordecai (Esther 7); and the Jews established an annual feast, the feast of Purim (q.v.), in memory of their wonderful deliverance. This took place about fifty-two years after the Return, the year of the great battles of Plataea and Mycale (B.C. 479).

“Esther appears in the Bible as a woman of deep piety, faith, courage, patriotism, and caution, combined with resolution; a dutiful daughter to her adopted father, docile and obedient to his counsels, and anxious to share the king’s favour with him for the good of the Jewish people. There must have been a singular grace and charm in her aspect and manners, since ‘she obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her’ (Esther 2:15). That she was raised up as an instrument in the hand of God to avert the destruction of the Jewish people, and to afford them protection and forward their wealth and peace in their captivity, is also manifest from the Scripture account.” (*Easton’s Bible Dictionary*)

The Book Of Esther

Part One: The Threat to the Jews (1:1—4:17)

I. THE SELECTION OF ESTHER AS QUEEN (1:1—2:20)

A. The Divorce of Vashti (1:1—22)

1. Describe the feast King Ahasuerus made “for all his officials and servants.”
2. Why did King Ahasuerus have his servants bring Queen Vashti into his presence?
3. What did the king ask his advisors regarding Vashti?
4. What advice did the king’s advisors give him?

B. The Marriage to Esther (2:1—20)

1. What happened after “the wrath of King Ahasuerus subsided”?
2. What was the relationship between Mordecai and Esther?
3. How did Mordecai find out what was happening to Esther day by day?

4. What was the Feast of Esther?

II. THE FORMULATION OF THE PLOT BY HAMAN (2:21—4:17)

A. Mordecai Reveals the Plot to Murder the King (2:21–23)

1. What did Mordecai discover as he “sat within the king’s gate”?
2. What happened to Bigthan and Teresh? Why?

B. Haman Plots to Murder the Jews (3:1—4:17)

1. What did Mordecai refuse to give to Haman?
2. How did Haman seek to get even with Mordecai?
3. What did Haman tell King Ahasuerus about “a certain people scattered and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom”?
4. What did King Ahasuerus give to Haman to do with as he pleased?
5. What was in the letter “sent by couriers into all the king’s provinces”?

6. What did Mordecai do when he first found out about Haman's plan?

7. What did Mordecai send to Esther?

8. Why was Esther hesitant about going before the king?

9. What did Mordecai tell Esther would happen to her if she remained silent?

10. What did Esther request that all of the Jews in Shushan do for her?

Part Two: The Triumph of the Jews (5:1—10:3)

I. THE TRIUMPH OF MORDECAI OVER HAMAN (5:1—8:3)

A. Setting for the Triumph (5:1—6:3)

1. How did Esther gain the king's attention?

2. What did the king offer to Esther? Why?

3. What did Esther request of the king?

4. What did Haman tell his wife and friends?
5. What was Haman's "thorn in the flesh"?
6. What did Zeresh and Haman's friends suggest to him?
7. What did the king do when he could not sleep?

B. Mordecai Is Honored (6:4–14)

1. What question did the king pose to Haman?
2. How did Haman answer the king's question?
3. What did the king order Haman to do?

C. Haman Dies on Gallows Prepared for Mordecai (7:1–10)

1. What favor did Queen Esther request of the king?
2. Why was Haman terrified before the king and queen?

3. What did Harbonah, one of the eunuchs, tell the king?

D. Mordecai Is Given Haman's House (8:1–3)

1. What did King Ahasuerus give to Queen Esther? What did he give to Mordecai?

2. What did Esther implore the king to do?

II. THE TRIUMPH OF ISRAEL OVER HER ENEMIES (8:4—10:3)

A. Preparation for the Victory of Israel (8:4–17)

1. What did the king allow Esther and Mordecai to do in his name?

2. What document was to be issued as a decree in every province and published for all people?

3. What did the Jews do when they found out their lives were to be spared?

B. Israel's Victory over Her Enemies (9:1–16)

1. Why did "the officials of the provinces, the satraps, the governors, and all those doing the king's work" help the Jews?

2. What did the Jews at Shushan do to their enemies?
3. Thought the Jews killed 75,000 of their enemies, what act did they not do?

C. Israel's Celebration (9:17—10:3)

1. What did Mordecai say in his letter to all of the Jews?
2. What was to be done during the new holiday Mordecai established? What did they call this new holiday?
3. What was recorded in the "book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia"?
4. How happened to Mordecai at the end of this book?

"Purim, the Feast of Lots, commemorates the deliverance of the Jews of Persia in the fifth century B.C.E. by Esther and her cousin (the son of her father's brother) Mordecai. Haman, second in command to King Ahasueros, planned to exterminate the Jews of Persia. He ordered that lots be drawn to determine on which day the massacre should take place, and it fell on the thirteenth day of the Hebrew month of Adar. The plan was frustrated when Queen Esther made a successful appeal to the king to have the decree nullified. Thereupon, the Jews of the country turned on their enemies and avenged themselves on the fourteenth day of the month; and in Shushan, the capital, the rampage continued for one more day. To commemorate the victory, the Book of Esther (called the Megilla, *i.e.*, the 'scroll') is read in the synagogue annually on the fourteenth of Adar (usually in the month of March)." (Alfred Kolatch, *The Jewish Book Of Why*, p. 270)

Jewish Feasts

<i>Feast of</i>	<i>Month on Jewish Calendar</i>	<i>Day</i>	<i>Corresponding Month</i>	<i>References</i>
Passover	Nisan	14	Mar.-Apr.	Ex. 12:1-14; Matt. 26:17-20
*Unleavened Bread	Nisan	15-21	Mar.-Apr.	Ex. 12:15-20
Firstfruits	Nisan or Sivan	16 6	Mar.-Apr. May-June	Lev. 23:9-14; Num. 28:26
*Pentecost (Harvest or Weeks)	Sivan	6 (50 days after barley harvest)	May-June	Deut. 16:9-12; Acts 2:1
Trumpets, <i>Rosh Hashanah</i>	Tishri	1, 2	Sept.-Oct.	Num. 29:1-6
Day of Atonement, <i>Yom Kippur</i>	Tishri	10	Sept.-Oct.	Lev. 23:26-32; Heb. 9:7
*Tabernacles (Booths or Ingathering)	Tishri	15-22	Sept.-Oct.	Neh. 8:13-18; John 7:2
Dedication (Lights), <i>Hanukkah</i>	Chislev	25 (8 days)	Nov.-Dec.	John 10:22
Purim (Lots)	Adar	14, 15	Feb.-Mar.	Esth. 9:18-32

*The three major feasts for which all males of Israel were required to travel to the Temple in Jerusalem (Ex. 23:14-19).