

Babylonian Empire		Persian Empire								
J20. King Zedekiah, Judah & Jerusalem Captured by Babylon	70 Years of Captivity in Babylon	Cyrus	Ahasuerus		Artaxerxes (1st)	Darius		Artaxerxes (2nd)		
		Year 1: Zerrubabel to Jerusalem and Starts Rebuilding Temple	Year 7: Queen Esther	Year 12: Esther v. Haman	Temple Work Stopped	Year 2: Work Resumes	Year 6: Temple Completed	Year 7: Ezra to Jerusalem from Babylon	Year 20: Nehemiah to Jerusalem from Sushan. Walls and Gates Rebuilt	Year 32: Nehemiah reforms Judah

17. Esther

1. Overview: Even though God is not expressly mentioned once in the book of Esther, his providential care and direction of events is clearly seen as He delivers the Jews from annihilation.
2. Writer: Unknown.
3. Time Period: The events in Esther take place after **Zerubbabel** has returned to Jerusalem with the first wave of Jews, but before the Temple is completely rebuilt, which does not occur until the reign of the **Persian -King Darius**. (This assumes that the Persian King **Ahasuerus** Esther is the same King referenced in Ezra 4:6)
4. Chapter by Chapter

Chapter 1: Persian Queen Vashti Disobeys the King Reign of the Persian King Ahasuerus: Year 3.

Ahasuerus is King over the vast Persian Empire, which stretched from India to Ethiopia. His palace/capital is located in the city of Shushan. During the 3rd year of his reign, **King Ahasuerus** calls all of his nobles and princes from all over the kingdom unto a feast, which lasts for 180 days. After that feast for the nobles, **King Ahasuerus** calls a second feast for all the people who live in Shushan, both noble and common, but this feast only lasts a week. On the last day of the second feast, **King Ahasuerus** sends for his Queen, **Vashti**, to appear so he could show her off to everyone in attendance, but she refuses to come. Embarrassed and angry, the King consults with his top seven princes and they agree that **Vashti** should be fired and a new queen should be chosen. They also send a royal decree through the holy kingdom ordering all the wives to honor their husbands for they feared that wives across the kingdom would follow **Vashti's** example and hold their husbands in contempt.

Chapter 2: Ahasuerus seeks a new Queen and chooses Esther.

Verses 1-4 Sometime later, it says after the King's anger was appeased and he remembered what **Vashti** had done, then at his servant's suggestion, a nationwide search began for the best-looking virgins in the kingdom.

Verses 5-7 There was living at this time in Shushan, a certain Jew named **Mordecai**, who was a Benjamite. (He, or more likely one of his ancestors, was carried away during the capture of **King Jehoiachin (J19)**, which was 11 years before Jerusalem was destroyed, and would now be around 90 years ago.) **Mordecai** took his orphaned first cousin, **Hadassah aka Esther** (Esther is her Persian name) and raised her as his own daughter.

Verses 7-14 **Esther** being a lovely young lady is selected to be sent to the king with the other virgins after they all go through a 12-month purification process. At **Mordecai** command, **Esther** does not reveal to anyone that she is a **Jew**. Each virgin would get a one-night opportunity to please the king.

Reign of Ahasuerus: Year 7.

Verses 15- 20: Four years after **Vashti's** episode of disobedience, **King Ahasuerus** selects **Esther** to be the new Queen and the King hosts a feast in her honor. **Mordecai** begins to sit in the King's Gate on a regular basis.

Verses 21-23: While sitting in the King's Gate, **Mordecai** learns that two of the King's chamberlains are plotting to kill **King Ahasuerus**. **Mordecai** reports their plan to **Esther**, who notifies the King of **Mordecai's** discovery. The King has the matter investigated and upon the confirmation of the conspiracy the conspirators are promptly hung and the service that **Mordecai** had done for the king was noted down the book of the Chronicles of Persian Kings.

Chapter 3: **Haman Plots to Exterminate all Jews**

Verses 1-6 Sometime later, **Haman**, an Agagite grows in power and influence under **King Ahasuerus**. (An Agagite may refer to a descendant of King Agag of the Amalekites, the people who King Saul was sent to destroy, but he failed completely obey God's command. See I Samuel 15.) **Haman** is promoted to be second in command in the Persian Empire, but when he passes by the King's Gate **Mordecai** does not bow or prostrate himself before **Haman**, as required by the King's command. This is so infuriating to **Haman** that he decides that just killing **Mordecai** is insufficient revenge so he determines to cause the extermination of all of **Mordecai's** people- the Jews.

Reign of Ahasuerus: Year 12. 1st Month of the Hebrew Calendar (Abib aka Nisan)

Verses 7-15 In the first month of the Hebrew year, **Haman** put his plan into action to exterminate the Jew hence the express the "lot was cast" (kind of like "rolling the dice"). He appears before the King and slanders the Jews as a people who keep their own law and don't obey the laws of the king (such a **Mordecai** who did not obey the King's command to show reverence to **Haman**). **Haman** offers to contribute 10,000 talents of silver to cause this people to be exterminated. **King Ahasuerus** agrees to **Haman's plan** and letters are sent out to all the Provinces notifying everyone that they are authorized to attack and kill all the Jews on the 13th day of the 12th Month of the Year. The letters were sealed with the imprint of the King's ring, which he gave to **Haman**.

Chapter 4: **The Jews Mourn and Esther Risks Her Life**

Reign of Ahasuerus: Year 12. 1st Month of the Hebrew Calendar

Verses 1-3 As the news spread through the Kingdom, **Mordecai** and many Jews in all the Provinces of the Persian Kingdom rent their clothes, put on sackcloth with ashes upon their heads, mourned, fasted and wept loudly.

Verse 4-9 **Esther** hears that **Mordecai** is wailing in sackcloth and ashes outside the King's Gate. Distressed and apparently ignorant of the proclamation, **Esther** sends someone to put some clothes on **Mordecai**, but he refuses them. **Esther** sends a second messenger to discover what is troubling **Mordecai**. **Mordecai** relays all that has happened to the messenger, providing a copy of the proclamation letter, and charges **Esther** to beg the King on behalf of her people.

Verses 10-14 **Esther** initially responds that everyone knows that you cannot just go to the King uninvited because the penalty is death unless he elects to pardon you by raising his golden scepter to you. **Mordecai** responds: . . . *Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?* 4:13-14

Verses 16-17 **Esther** requests that **Mordecai** and all the Jews in the capital city of Shushan fast (and pray) for three days, while she and her ladies do likewise, and then afterwards, she will unlawfully present herself to the King and *if I perish, I perish*.

Chapter 5: **Esther is Spared and Invites the King and Haman to a Banquet.**

Verses: 1-8: **Esther** appears before the King **Ahasuerus** uninvited, but he spares her life by extending his golden scepter towards her. When the King ask **Esther** what she would like him to do,

Esther only requests that both the King and **Haman** join her a banquet that day. At a banquet of wine, the King asks **Esther** again what she would like from him. (The King knew that **Esther** would not have risked her life just to invite him to a supper, which could have easily been arranged through other channels.) **Esther** politely responds that she would like the King and **Haman** to join her for another feast tomorrow, and then, she will tell the King what she really wants.

Verses 9-14: Feeling quite proud of being included in these exclusive three person feasts, **Haman** walks home with a glad heart until he passes **Mordecai**, who does not rise to his feet or bow or show **Haman** any form of respect or reverence. Upon arriving home, **Haman** calls his wife and friends to him and proceeds to boast about his wealth, power, and position of influence in the kingdom, but finally, he admits that it is spoiled by that Jew - **Mordecai**. At his wife and friends' suggestion, **Haman** has a set of gallows built that day on his property 50 cubits tall (about 75 ft) so he can hang **Mordecai** on them the following day once he obtains the King's permission.

Chapter 6: **King Ahasuerus Can't Sleep; Mordecai is Honored, while Haman is Shamed.**

Verses 1-4: The night after the first banquet, King **Ahasuerus** is unable to sleep and calls for the record book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Persia to be read to him. (This seems like a good way to fall asleep, but perhaps, **Ahasuerus** was interested since they were reading about the years of his own reign) After reading about **Mordecai** preventing a plot against the King's life five years earlier, King **Ahasuerus** learns that nothing had been done to show gratitude to **Mordecai**.

Verses 5-9: At this moment, **Haman** enters the court with the intention of asking to hang **Mordecai** and the King asks his opinion on the best way to honor a man. Vain **Haman** assumes that the King is talking about him so he suggests the following:

- (i) the man should wear the King's own royal clothing;
- (ii) ride the King's own horse; and
- (iii) have the horse be led through the city by one of the most noble princes,
- (iv) who shall be shouting like a herald: "*Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour.*"

Verses 9-14: The King tells **Haman** to immediately go and do all those things to honor **Mordecai**. **Haman** obeys, but he returns home humiliated by this turn of events. His wife and friends bleakly tell him that if **Mordecai** is really a Jew, then **Haman** shall not prevail against him. At that moment, the King's servant arrives to bring **Haman** unto **Esther's** second banquet.

Chapter 7: **Esther Pleads for Her Life and All the Jews.**

Once **Ahasuerus** and **Haman** are both present at the banquet, **Ahasuerus** asks **Esther** again, what is your request? This time **Esther** asks for her own life and the lives of her people, who are going to be destroyed by an enemy. Likely shocked that someone would dare to threaten the life of the queen, **Ahasuerus** inquires who would think to do such a thing. **Esther** says: "*The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman.*" In a burst of anger, **Ahasuerus** storms out of the room into the garden. **Haman**, seeing that he is in mortal danger, attempts to beg **Queen Esther** for his life, while falling upon the bed or sofa where she was sitting. Returning into the room, **Ahasuerus** sees the scene, but interprets it as **Haman** attempting to rape **Esther** and he orders **Haman's** arrest. Almost immediately, a hood is put over **Haman's** head and he is taken away to be hanged upon the gallows that he had built for **Mordecai**.

Chapter 8: **Ahasuerus Authorizes the Jews to Defend Themselves.**

Verses 1-2: **Ahasuerus** transfers all of the property formerly owned by **Haman** to **Queen Esther**. After **Esther** reveals that **Mordecai** was a father unto her, **Mordecai** is called before the King, who gives him the same ring that **Ahasuerus** had previously given to **Haman** to write and seal letters on the King's behalf. **Esther** appoints **Mordecai** to be in charge of all the property that formerly belonged to **Haman**.

Verses 3-8: **Esther** begs the King to reverse the decrees written by **Haman** so the Jews would not be destroyed. **Ahasuerus** authorized **Esther** and **Mordecai** to write for the **Jews** whatever they would like and seal it with the King's ring, because whatever is written by the King cannot be reversed by anyone. (The Law of the Medes and Persians prevented any person, including the King himself, from reversing a command of the King so Haman's letters couldn't simply be cancelled.)

Reign of Ahasuerus: Year 12. 3rd Month of the Year.

Verses 9-17: New letters are sent throughout all the Kingdom authorizing the Jews gather and be ready to destroy their enemies and take their property as spoil on the 13th day of the 12th Month. **Mordecai** is promoted and clothed with royal clothing, which made the citizen of Shushan happy. The Jews around the whole empire rejoice upon receiving the letters and many people became Jews (they converted to worshipping God like the Jew) because *the fear of the Jews fell upon them*.

Chapter 9: The Jews Successful Defend Themselves and Feast of Purim instituted.

Reign of Ahasuerus: Year 12. 12th Month of the Year. (Adar- February/March)

Verses 1-5: On the 13th Day of the 12th Month, all the Jews gathered into their respective cities to fight against those that wanted to destroy them and no man was able to stand before them. Their efforts were aided by the local deputies, officers, and lieutenants of **King Ahasuerus**, who helped the Jews because they feared **Mordecai**, who continued to grow stronger and stronger in the kingdom.

Verses 6-15: In Shushan the capital city, the Jews killed 500 men plus the 10 sons of **Haman**, but they did not take anyone's property as spoil. **King Ahasuerus** informed **Esther** of the Jews victory that day and asked if she would like anything further. **Queen Esther** requested that the bodies of the sons of Haman be hung upon the gallows and that the Jews be authorized to fight against their enemies in Shushan on the next day as well. With the King's permission, the Jews killed an additional 300 men in Shushan the following day-the 14th.

Verses 16-19: Around the whole kingdom, the Jews killed in total 75,000 men, who had been among those that were going to attempt to destroy the Jews. The Jews did not take any of their enemies' property as spoils. On the day after the fighting, the 14th all the Jews in the providences celebrated, except in the Capital because they fought there for two days and celebrated on the 15th.

Verses 20-32: **Mordecai** wrote letters to all the providences establishing that all the Jews should keep a feast annually on the 14th and 15th day of the 12th Month to remember their deliverance from the hand of **Haman**, who had cast the lot against their lives. The feast is called "Purim" after the Hebrew word *Pur*, which means "Lot." Later, **Queen Esther** send a second letter to confirm all that **Mordecai** had established regarding Purim.

Chapter 10: Mordecai Advances Under King Ahasuerus.

This final chapter is a brief three verses.

Verse 1: **Ahasuerus** taxes all his lands and even the islands of the sea.

Verse 2: All the acts and greatness of **Ahasuerus** and the greatness of **Mordecai** are recorded in the book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia.

Verse 3: **Mordecai** rises until he is 2nd in command of the Persian Empire. *For Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.*